



WIC SNAPSHOT

State of Hawai'i 2021

Introduction

For over 40 years, the federal Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) has ensured the health of low-income, nutritionally at-risk pregnant women, postpartum and breastfeeding mothers, infants, and children up to age 5. WIC provides nourishing supplemental foods, nutrition counseling, breastfeeding support, and referrals to health care and social services. WIC serves women and children in families with incomes no more than 185% of the federal poverty level and/or who participate in other income-based programs.

The impacts of WIC on participants' overall health and well-being are well documented. Prenatal WIC participation is associated with lower infant mortality and has been found to improve birth outcomes – i.e., lowering the risk of preterm births and low birth weight babies.¹ The program improves nutritious food intake for infants and children with evidence suggesting that children who consistently participate in WIC throughout early childhood have the better diet quality needed for healthy development.² Research also suggests that prenatal and early childhood participation may improve access to preventive care and vaccinations³ and supports cognitive development, learning and academic achievement.⁴

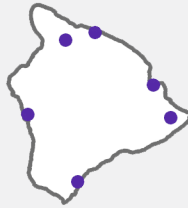
WIC in Hawai'i

WIC is federally administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), which distributes funds to state agencies, U.S. territories and Indian Tribal Organizations to operate local clinics. Hawai'i WIC Program is administered by the state's Department of Health WIC Services Branch (WSB), which operates WIC clinics across the state.

As part of ongoing planning and quality improvement activities, WSB engages in assessment and data analysis to better understand the characteristics of families enrolled in the WIC program. WSB partnered with the University of Hawai'i Center on the Family to analyze recent client participation data. The goal was to provide a more detailed description of client characteristics than is available through current reporting, including a focus on race and ethnicity that better reflects the state's population. This analysis aims to inform stakeholder efforts to improve outreach and services for WIC-eligible residents.

This snapshot presents data on WIC-participating women, infants and children in calendar year 2021 across a number of variables: client type, age, race/ethnicity, household size, per capita income, and simultaneous enrollment in Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program. Data are presented for the state and four counties.

WIC Locations by County



Sites



WIC sites are grouped into regions; families may use the clinic of their choice.

Characteristics of Hawaii WIC Participants

	Kauai County		C&C Honolulu		Maui County		Hawaii County		State	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Pregnant	215	14.1%	3,847	13.4%	451	12.0%	900	12.3%	5,413	13.1%
Postpartum ⁵	52	3.4%	1,277	4.4%	189	5.0%	259	3.5%	1,777	4.3%
Breastfeeding	152	9.9%	2,915	10.1%	438	11.6%	757	10.3%	4,262	10.3%
Infant	315	20.6%	5,886	20.5%	847	22.5%	1,469	20.1%	8,517	20.6%
1 Year Old	262	17.1%	4,649	16.2%	676	17.9%	1,152	15.7%	6,739	16.3%
2 Years Old	196	12.8%	3,807	13.3%	422	11.2%	992	13.6%	5,417	13.1%
3 Years Old	171	11.2%	3,049	10.6%	387	10.3%	849	11.6%	4,456	10.8%
4 Years Old	167	10.9%	3,291	11.5%	358	9.5%	942	12.9%	4,758	11.5%
Race/Ethnicity										

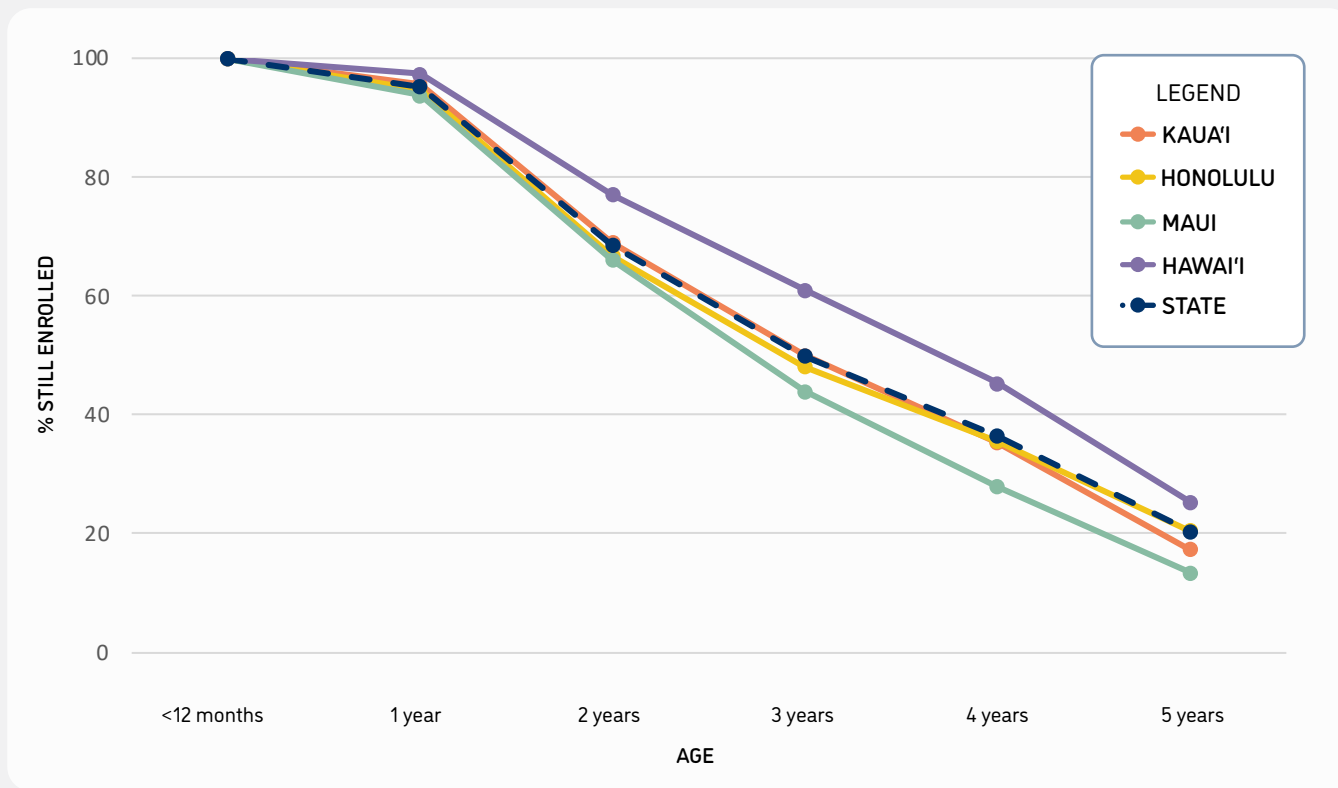
● Native Hawaiian
 ● Filipino
 ● Other Asian
 ● Black
 ● AIAN
 ● White
 ● Pacific Islander
 ● Other NH or PI
 ● Mixed
 ● Missing
 ● Suppressed

Note: Native Hawaiian includes Part-Hawaiian; AIAN = American Indian/Alaska Native. An "" or blank indicates <5%. Race/ethnicity data are rounded and may not total 100%.

Other Participant Characteristics

	Kaua'i County	C&C Honolulu	Maui County	Hawai'i County	State
Maternal Age (average)	29.7	28.7	28.9	28.8	28.6
Household Size (average)	4.3	4.2	4.1	4.2	4.2
WIC Participants per Household (average)	1.8	1.8	1.7	1.7	1.8
Per Capita Income (median)	\$8,020	\$7,319	\$8,017	\$5,880	\$7,200
QUEST Participant	79.9%	61.7%	74.7%	65.6%	64.2%
SNAP Participant	38.0%	33.0%	33.9%	48.5%	36.0%
TANF Participant	5.4%	5.8%	6.3%	10.0%	6.6%

Infant Cohort: Retention Over Time



Note: n=7,928 infants in the 2018 WIC database who were born in 2017. This graph shows how retention of the original group of children declines over time. Data points are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Summary of Findings

- Kaua'i County has the largest share of participants who are pregnant women (14.1%) compared to all other counties and to the state average (13.1%). Maui County has the highest shares of breastfeeding women, infants and toddlers (11.6%, 22.5% and 17.9%, respectively). Hawai'i County has the largest share of participants who are 4 years old (12.9%) while Maui County has the smallest share (9.5%).
- A little over a third of WIC participants across the state are Native Hawaiian (34.3%), while Whites (15.3%) and those of mixed race/ethnicity (13.2%) comprise the next two largest groups. Honolulu County has the most diverse clientele, with the lowest share of Native Hawaiian participants (28.2%) and the highest shares of Whites (16.8%), Pacific Islanders (12.2%) and Other Asians (11.7%) compared to the other counties and the state.
- Hawai'i County has the lowest median per capita income, \$5,880 compared to the state average of \$7,200.
- Hawai'i County has a larger share of participants who also receive SNAP (48.5%) and/or TANF (10%) compared to other counties and the state (36% and 6.6% for the state, respectively). Kaua'i and Maui counties have larger shares of participants who are also enrolled in QUEST (79.9% and 74.7%, respectively) compared to the state (64.2%).
- WIC participation throughout early childhood supports positive outcomes, making retention a high priority. Among a cohort of children who first participated as infants, 20.4% were certified at the cusp of their fifth birthday. This share is largest in Hawai'i County (25.3%) and smallest in Maui County (13.4%)

Endnotes

¹ Carlson, S., & Neuberger, Z. (2021). *WIC works: Addressing the nutrition and health needs of low-income families for more than four decades*. Washington, D.C.: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Accessed March 24, 2023 from <https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/5-4-15fa.pdf>; Caulfield, L.E., Bennett W.L., Gross, S.M., Hurley, K.M., Ogunwole, S.M., Venkataramani, M., Lerman, J.L., Zhang, A., Sharma, R., & Bass, E.B., (2022). *Maternal and child outcomes associated with the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)*. Comparative effectiveness review No. 253. Prepared by the Johns Hopkins University Evidence-based Practice Center. AHRQ Publication No.22-EHC019. Rockville, MD: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.23970/AHRQEPCCER253>; Chorniy, A., Currie, J., & Sonchak, L. (2020). Does prenatal WIC participation improve child outcomes? *American Journal of Health Economics*, 6(2), 169–198; Venkataramani, M., Ogunwole, S. M., Caulfield, L. E., Sharma, R., Zhang, A., Gross, S. M., Hurley, K. M., Lerman, J. L., Bass, E. B., & Bennett, W. L. (2022). Maternal, infant, and child health outcomes associated with the Special Supplemental Nutrition

Program for Women, Infants, and Children: A systematic review. *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 175(10), 1411-1422.

² Borger, C., Zimmerman, T., Vericker, T., DeMatteis, J., Gollapudi, B., Whaley, S., Ritchie, L., Au, L., Sallack, L., & May, L. (2020). *WIC infant and toddler feeding practices study – 2: Fourth year report*. Prepared by Westat for Office of Policy Research, Food and Nutrition Services, USDA. Accessed on March 24, 2023 from <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/WIC-ITFPS2-Year4Report.pdf>; Carlson et al. (2021); Caulfield et al. (2022).

³ Caulfield et al. (2022); Venkataramani et al. (2022).

⁴ Bolbocean, C. (2018). *U.S. safety net programs and early life skills formation: Results from a prospective longitudinal cohort study*. Cambridge, MA: NBER Working Paper Series, 24832; Carlson et al. (2021); Chorniy et al. (2020); Jackson, M. I. (2015). Early childhood WIC participation, cognitive development and academic achievement. *Social Science & Medicine*, 126, 145–153.

⁵ Non-nursing mothers up to six months after birth or end of pregnancy.

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