DEFINITION

This indicator reports the percentage of New Hampshire infants and children ages 0 to 4 enrolled in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).

CONTEXT

The WIC program is federally funded and provides referrals, nutrition education, and checks or vouchers that participants can use to purchase approved food items. Among the food items are milk, eggs, cereal, bread, beans, canned fish, cheese, tofu, brown rice, fruit juice, soft corn and whole wheat tortillas, peanut butter, oatmeal, fruits, vegetables, and infant nutrition, including formulas and baby food (NH DHHS 2014b).

Infants, children under 5 years of age, and pregnant and breastfeeding women may be eligible for WIC benefits. In New Hampshire, infants and children ages 0 to 4 are eligible for WIC if the household income does not exceed 185 percent of the federal poverty level and if they are "nutritionally at risk" as determined by a staff nutritionist. For a family of two, the annual income limit to be WIC eligible is $29,101; for a family of four it is $44,123, with an allowance of $7,511 for each additional family member beyond that. Applicants for benefits receive a free health screening from a nurse, nutritionist, or doctor to determine if there is a medically-based risk that would require nutritional assistance such as an unhealthy body weight, or a dietary risk such as a protein-deficient diet. The state may limit access to benefits for children who are at the lowest risk level if funding is inadequate (NH DHHS, 2014a).

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) administers the WIC program, and refers to households that are "unable to acquire enough food to meet the needs of all their members because they [have] insufficient money or other resources for food" as "food insecure." Children who are food insecure are at particular risk for adverse outcomes, including poorer physical and mental health, behavioral problems, and low academic performance (Feeding America, 2012). WIC benefits can help to reduce the harmful effects of food insecurity on children.

NEW HAMPSHIRE FINDINGS

In New Hampshire, WIC enrollment rate has declined slowly but steadily from 20.1 percent in 2010 to 18.3 percent in 2013. There were 11,992 infants and children ages 0 to 4 enrolled in WIC in 2013. Grafton and Rockingham Counties experienced the sharpest declines in enrollment rates during this time, from 24.0 to 19.6 percent in Grafton, and 12.1 to 9.4 percent in Rockingham, or approximately half the statewide rate.

In the same time period, Coös County has consistently had the highest percentage of its infant and child population enrolled in WIC, and is the only county exceeding 30 percent enrollment in each of the years 2010 to 2013, peaking at 34.2 percent in 2012. In Carroll County, the enrollment rate has remained second to Coös

Infants and Children Under 5 Years Enrolled in WIC

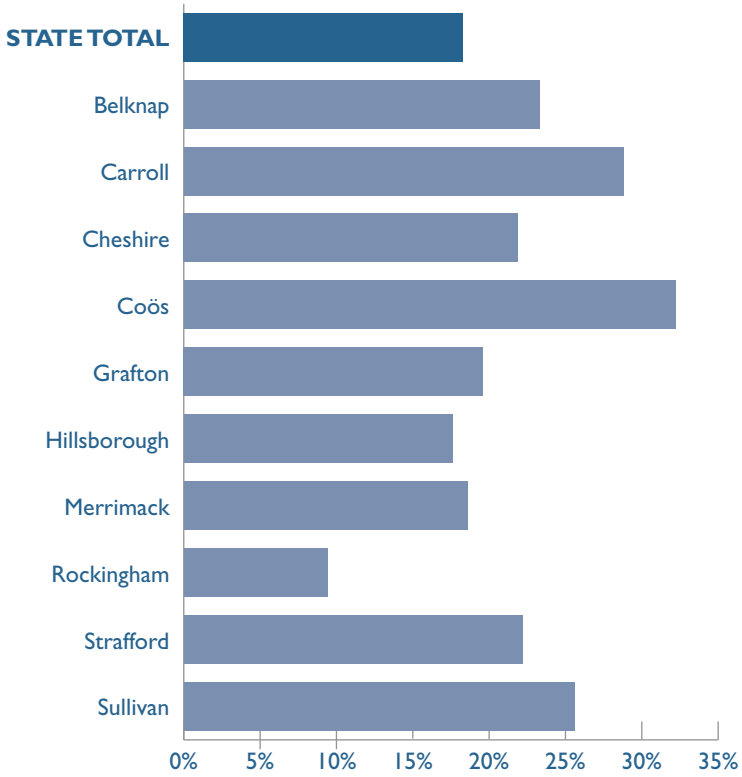
by County, 2010-2013

	2010		2011		2012		2013	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
STATE TOTAL	**13,940**	**20.1%**	**13,309**	**19.6%**	**12,592**	**19.0%**	**11,992**	**18.3%**
Belknap	748	24.6%	701	23.2%	652	22.1%	682	23.3%
Carroll	534	27.5%	475	25.7%	502	27.1%	525	28.8%
Cheshire	875	23.8%	793	21.6%	798	21.6%	808	21.9%
Coös	478	33.1%	444	32.0%	448	34.2%	427	32.2%
Grafton	977	24.0%	864	21.7%	840	21.1%	776	19.6%
Hillsborough	4,664	19.7%	4,548	19.5%	4,321	19.0%	3,958	17.6%
Merrimack	1,510	20.1%	1,376	18.6%	1,298	18.3%	1,300	18.6%
Rockingham	1,788	12.1%	1,802	12.6%	1,439	10.2%	1,298	9.4%
Strafford	NA	NA	1,463	22.0%	1,481	22.6%	1,439	22.2%
Sullivan	585	25.2%	553	24.5%	529	24.4%	535	25.6%

NOTES:
1. Annual WIC enrollment numbers are counts of infants and children under age 5 who were receiving benefits as of April 30 of each year. Source: New Hampshire DHHS.
2. Percentage based on child population under age 5. Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2013 Population Estimates, Table PEPAGESEX.

Infants and Children Under 5 Years Enrolled in WIC

by County, 2013



County's throughout this time. It is one of only two counties reporting an increase since 2010, rising from 27.5 percent to 28.8 percent in 2013. The other is Sullivan County, which has remained fairly stable but increased slightly in that time from 25.2 percent in 2010 to 25.6 percent in 2013.[i]

SOURCE OF DATA FOR ILLUSTRATION/METHODOLOGY

New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (2014).

REFERENCES

Feeding America (2012). *Map the Meal Gap: Highlights of Findings for Overall and Child Food Insecurity.*
- www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/our-research/map-the-meal-gap/2012/2012-mapthemealgap-exec-summary.pdf

New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (2014a). *Eligibility.*
- www.dhhs.state.nh.us/dphs/nhp/wic/eligibility.htm

New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (2014b). *WIC Foods: February 2014.*
- www.dhhs.state.nh.us/dphs/nhp/wic/documents/nh-wic-approvedfood.pdf

i Data were unavailable for Strafford County in 2010. It is not known whether there was a net increase or decrease in WIC enrollment in Strafford County between 2010 and 2013. There was only minimal change between 2011 and 2013.