

## WIC Improves the Health of Nebraska’s Pregnant Women & Young Children

- The federally funded WIC program—the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children—is a cost-effective program that improves lifetime health for low-income pregnant and postpartum women, infants and young children.
- WIC provides nutritious foods, nutrition education, breastfeeding support, and referrals to health care and social services to more than 36,000 Nebraskans in low-income families.<sup>1</sup> But only about 60% of eligible Nebraskans participate in WIC.<sup>2</sup>
- Extensive research shows that participating in WIC improves the nutrition and health of families with low incomes—leading to healthier infants, more nutritious diets and better health care for children, and subsequently to higher academic achievement for students.<sup>3</sup>

## Birth Outcomes in Nebraska Must Be Improved

Infant mortality <sup>4</sup> (deaths per 1,000 live births)		Maternal mortality <sup>5</sup> (deaths per 100,000 live births)		Low birth weight <sup>6</sup> (percent of live births)	
Nebraska	United States	Nebraska	United States	Nebraska	United States
<b>5.8</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>25.1</b>	<b>23.2</b>	<b>7.8%</b>	<b>8.6%</b>

## WIC Helps Thousands of Low-Income Nebraska Mothers and Young Children

In fiscal year 2024, 36,093 Nebraskans participated in WIC, including nearly a third of all babies born in Nebraska. In comparison, 155,034 Nebraskans participated in SNAP in fiscal year 2024.<sup>7</sup> Applicants enrolled in SNAP, Medicaid or receiving TANF cash assistance are automatically income-eligible for WIC, which avoids duplicative work for the state. For other applicants, family income must be at or below 185% of the poverty level (\$49,303 for a family of three in January 2026).<sup>8</sup> Average annual family income of WIC participants in Nebraska was \$25,109 in April 2022 and national average household size was four.<sup>9</sup> Seventy-eight percent of Nebraskan WIC participants initiated breastfeeding in 2022, but only about 36% of infants participating in WIC breastfed at three months and 22% at six months.<sup>10</sup>

**28,366**  
Nebraska infants and children under the age of five and  
**7,727**  
pregnant and postpartum women in Nebraska participated in WIC in 2024<sup>11</sup>

## WIC Improves Birth Outcomes

Extreme preterm <sup>12</sup> (percent of births 2005–2007)		Infant mortality <sup>12</sup> (deaths per 1,000 live births)	
Prenatal WIC	Non-WIC	Prenatal WIC	Non-WIC
<b>3.3%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>8.0</b>	<b>10.6</b>

# Nebraskans Struggle to Afford Food<sup>13</sup>

**105k** households experienced food insecurity annually in 2021–2023

**49k** households experienced very low food security annually in 2021–2023

## WIC Provides Supplemental Groceries

The average monthly value of WIC food benefits in fiscal year 2024 was \$76.49 per participant in Nebraska as compared to \$81.49 nationwide.<sup>14</sup> In comparison, the average monthly value of SNAP food benefits in fiscal year 2024 was \$178.30 per participant in Nebraska as compared to \$186.17 nationwide.<sup>15</sup> Unlike SNAP, which provides funds to purchase a wide range of groceries, WIC provides monthly benefits that cover specific nutritious foods tailored to improving maternal and child health.

## WIC Contributes to Local Economies<sup>16</sup>

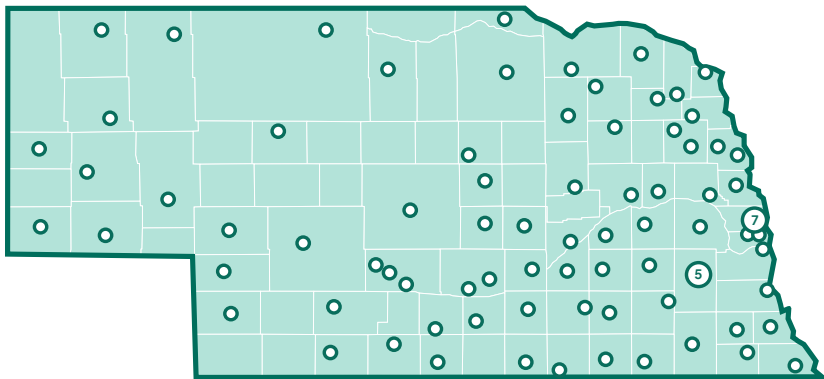
In fiscal year 2024, the value of WIC food benefits that Nebraskans spent in grocery stores was \$33,128,946. WIC agencies received \$12,644,435 in federal funds to pay staff and rent space to provide services to WIC participants. WIC does not require states or localities to contribute funding.

## WIC Could Help Many More Nebraskans

In 2023, only 60% of eligible individuals in Nebraska participated in WIC, which means that more than 24,000 eligible Nebraskans missed out on the health and developmental benefits associated with participating in WIC. Take up is even lower for specific groups.

In particular, many Medicaid recipients miss out on WIC even though they are automatically income-eligible for WIC. Nationwide in 2023, only 44% of WIC-eligible Medicaid enrollees participated in WIC.<sup>17</sup> In 2024, 9,366 births in Nebraska were covered by Medicaid, but on average only 2,596 pregnant women participated in WIC each month.<sup>16</sup> Likewise, in 2023, 57.6% of WIC-eligible SNAP enrollees participated in WIC nationwide.<sup>2</sup>

## WIC Clinics Across Nebraska



## WIC-Approved Foods

- 100% Juice
- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Yogurt
- Beans
- Canned Fish
- Milk & Soy Alternatives
- Bread (*whole wheat, grain*)
- Tortillas (*whole wheat, corn*)
- Rice (*brown, wild*)
- Pasta (*whole wheat*)
- Cereal (*whole grain*)
- Nut & Seed Butters
- Infant Formula & Baby Food
- Eggs
- Cheese
- Tofu
- Quinoa
- Oats

**43.8%**

of eligible pregnant Nebraska women participated in WIC in 2023

**55.2%**

of eligible Nebraska 1- to 4-year-olds participated in WIC in 2023<sup>2</sup>

## WIC Is Modernizing

Nebraska participates in the Midwest States WIC Online Ordering Pilot (MSWOOP), which implemented an online shopping and payment solution with regional grocer Hy-Vee. When surveyed, 93% or more of WIC participants who used WIC online shopping through the pilot reported that online shopping saved them time and made it easier to find WIC-approved foods and pick up their orders.<sup>18</sup>

## References

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