

Food Economics

Findings from the Texas Child Feeding Study¹

How is food insecurity related to income and WIC involvement?

Background

"Food security for a household means access by all members at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life."²

What did we ask?

- Do you run out of food before the end of the month?
- Do you worry that you will run out of food before you can afford to buy more?

What did we learn?

In this sample, how do WIC participants compare to non-WIC households on food insecurity? See Figure 1.

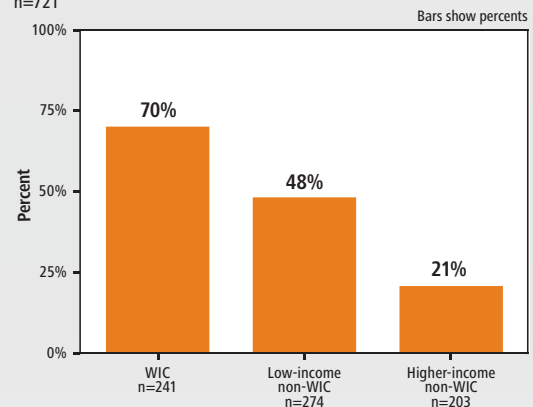
- WIC households reported more food insecurity than other low-income households.
 - 70% of WIC households were food insecure compared to 48% of non-WIC, low-income households.
- Higher-income households reported the least food insecurity.
 - 21% of higher-income households were food insecure.
- Food security was not associated with what children ate. However, food security was associated with parents' worries about the expense of nutritious foods and concern about their children's eating.
- Respondents who were more food insecure were:
 - More likely to describe their children's diets as fair or poor.
 - More likely to report that it is "too expensive to eat a lot of nutritious foods."
- Food insecurity was also related to food shopping. Respondents who were food insecure were:
 - Less likely to shop with a grocery list.
 - More likely to participate in food assistance programs other than WIC.
 - More likely to spend less on weekly groceries.
 - More likely to push their children to eat.

This study assessed food security by asking two questions:

- 1) Do you run out of food before the end of the month?
- 2) Do you worry that you will run out of food before you can afford to buy more?

Respondents answered the questions on a 3-point scale of Always, Sometimes, Never. Responses to the two questions were summed and averaged to create an index score. Respondents were coded as food insecure if they responded affirmatively to either one or both items.

Figure 1.
FOOD INSECURITY BY WIC AND INCOME STATUS
n=721



¹ Results from the Texas Child Feeding Study, conducted by the University of Texas at Austin Nutrition Education Team, in conjunction with the Texas Dept. of State Health Service. Seven hundred and twenty-one (721) Texas households were surveyed. Households had at least one child between the ages of 1 and 5 years and were grouped into the following categories WIC households (n=241); low-income, non-WIC households (n=274); middle to high-income households (n=203). For more information on the study, contact Shellie Shores at: shellie.shores@dshs.state.tx.us.

² Source: United States Department of Agriculture.
URL: http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/ut/pl/_s_7_0_A/7_0_10B?parentnav=FOOD_NUTRITION&navid=FOOD_SECURITY&natype=RT

Continues on back.



What did we learn? (continued)

Within the WIC population in this sample:

What is the relationship between ethnicity and food insecurity? (WIC clients only). See Figure 2.

- Differences among ethnic groups were not insignificant

Among Hispanics, what is the relationship between language and food security? (Hispanic WIC clients only). See Figure 3.

- Spanish-speaking Hispanics reported being more food secure than English-speaking Hispanics.

What is the relationship between education and food insecurity? (WIC clients only). See Figure 4.

- Level of education was not related to food insecurity
- 1/3 of WIC participants have at least some college education. — Level of education was not related to food security.

Implications for WIC Nutrition Educators

- Recognize that food insecurity is a concern for the majority of WIC clients. This can create stress for clients and may influence shopping or feeding decisions.
- Know the resources in your area and be proactive in making referrals, even if clients don't ask.
- Create a bulletin board of community resources.
- Enhance basic shopping.
- Reassure parents that they can feed their children a healthy diet without spending a lot of money.

For more information about this study series, please visit:

www.dshs.state.tx.us/wichd/nut/riskreport-nut.shtm

Figure 2.
FOOD INSECURITY WITHIN WIC BY DEMOGRAPHICS
n=241

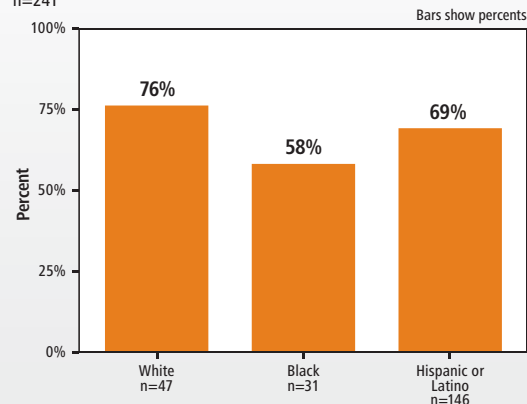


Figure 3.
MAIN LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME
n=140

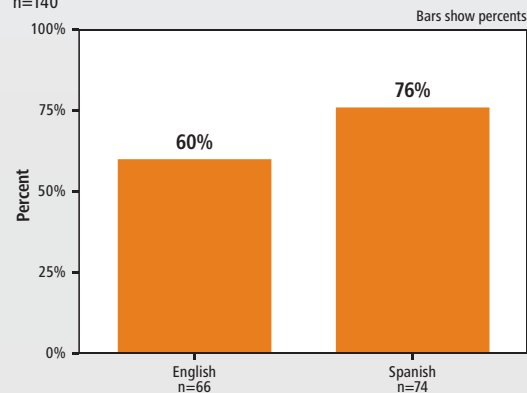


Figure 4.
HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION
n=241

