

# Women and Children Participating in WIC

## DEFINITION

*Women and children participating in WIC* is the percentage of eligible women, infants and children served by the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) during federal Fiscal Year 2007 (October 1, 2006 – September 30, 2007).

## SIGNIFICANCE

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) is a preventive program that provides participants with nutritious food, nutrition education, screening and referrals to health care and social services.<sup>1,2</sup> WIC is a federally-funded program that serves pregnant, postpartum and breastfeeding women, infants, and children under five years of age with household incomes below 185% of the poverty level. In addition, any individual who participates in the Food Stamp program, RIte Care, Medicaid, the Family Independence Program, or is a member of a family in which a pregnant woman or infant receives Medicaid benefits, is automatically income-eligible. Participants must also have a specified nutritional risk, such as anemia, high-risk pregnancy, abnormal growth, or be in need of supplemental foods for their diet.<sup>3,4</sup>

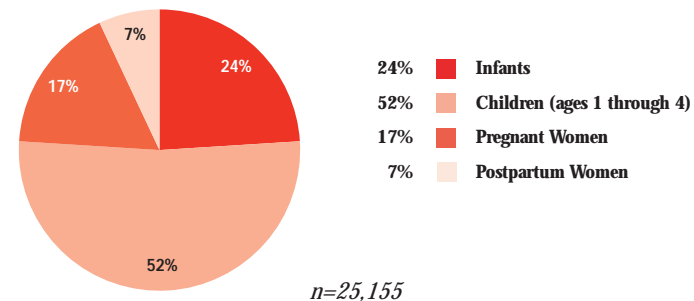
Young children who experience food insecurity, hunger and poor nutrition

can be negatively impacted during times of critical growth and development.<sup>5</sup> They are at greater risk for negative health, psychological, behavioral and educational outcomes and increased hospitalization.<sup>6</sup> Pregnant women also have special nutritional needs that influence pregnancy outcomes and the health of their children.<sup>7</sup>

WIC participation has been shown to reduce infant mortality (especially neonatal mortality), improve birth outcomes (including reducing the likelihood of low birthweight), protect against underweight and poor nutrition in infants, prevent overweight in young children, increase immunization rates, improve cognitive development, and increase the likelihood of having a source of regular medical care.<sup>8,9</sup> WIC promotes breastfeeding as the optimal method of infant feeding, and program eligibility for breastfeeding mothers is extended from 6 months to one year from giving birth.<sup>10,11</sup> In Rhode Island, 20% of WIC infants were breastfed in federal Fiscal Year 2007.<sup>12</sup>

In 2007, the U.S. Department of Agriculture revised the WIC food packages in order to increase the number of food choices available to participants, improve the nutritional quality of qualifying foods and include food options that reflect the cultural needs of the diverse population served by the WIC program.<sup>13</sup>

Women, Infants and Children Participating in WIC, Rhode Island, Monthly Average, Federal Fiscal Year 2007



Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Division of Family Health, WIC Program, federal Fiscal Year 2007.

- ◆ **During federal Fiscal Year 2007, infants and children ages 1 through 4 comprised the majority of the population being served by WIC (76%). Women accounted for 24% (17% pregnant and 7% postpartum) of the population being served.**<sup>14</sup>
- ◆ **In August 2007, 68% of WIC participants identified as White, 17% identified as Black or African American, 4% identified as Asian, and 12% identified as other races or multiple races. Thirty-five percent of WIC participants identified as Hispanic or Latino and are included in any of the racial groups.**<sup>15</sup>
- ◆ **The statewide WIC participation rate increased from 67% in 2006 to 71% in 2007. Four of the six core cities – Central Falls (75%), Pawtucket (83%), Providence (76%) and Woonsocket (73%) – had WIC participation rates that exceeded the statewide participation rate in 2007.**<sup>16,17</sup>
- ◆ **WIC is not an entitlement program and is not funded at a level that is sufficient to serve all eligible women, infants, and children.**<sup>18</sup> Rhode Island received \$22.4 million dollars in federal funding during Fiscal Year 2007.<sup>19</sup>
- ◆ **The WIC Farmer's Market Nutrition Program improves participants' intake of fresh fruits and vegetables by providing coupons for purchasing produce at local farmer's markets.**<sup>20</sup> In Rhode Island, 48 farmers were authorized by WIC to provide fresh produce to 15,439 participants in Fiscal Year 2007, down from 16,882 in 2006.<sup>21,22</sup>

# Women and Children Participating in WIC

Table 14. Women, Infants and Children Participating in WIC, Rhode Island, August 2007

| CITY/TOWN                 | ESTIMATED NUMBER ELIGIBLE | NUMBER PARTICIPATING | % OF ELIGIBLE PARTICIPATING |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Barrington                | 79                        | 35                   | 44%                         |
| Bristol                   | 334                       | 199                  | 60%                         |
| Burrillville              | 293                       | 191                  | 65%                         |
| Central Falls             | 2,148                     | 1,601                | 75%                         |
| Charlestown               | 154                       | 66                   | 43%                         |
| Coventry                  | 621                       | 354                  | 57%                         |
| Cranston                  | 2,043                     | 1,311                | 64%                         |
| Cumberland                | 457                       | 285                  | 62%                         |
| East Greenwich            | 104                       | 43                   | 41%                         |
| East Providence           | 1,331                     | 929                  | 70%                         |
| Exeter                    | 104                       | 42                   | 40%                         |
| Foster                    | 81                        | 57                   | 70%                         |
| Glocester                 | 103                       | 47                   | 46%                         |
| Hopkinton                 | 134                       | 95                   | 71%                         |
| Jamestown                 | 40                        | 15                   | 38%                         |
| Johnston                  | 576                       | 390                  | 68%                         |
| Lincoln                   | 346                       | 169                  | 49%                         |
| Little Compton            | 33                        | 18                   | 55%                         |
| Middletown                | 304                       | 289                  | 95%                         |
| Narragansett              | 129                       | 80                   | 62%                         |
| New Shoreham              | 12                        | 7                    | 58%                         |
| Newport                   | 884                       | 573                  | 65%                         |
| North Kingstown           | 509                       | 250                  | 49%                         |
| North Providence          | 594                       | 403                  | 68%                         |
| North Smithfield          | 119                       | 74                   | 62%                         |
| Pawtucket                 | 4,279                     | 3,560                | 83%                         |
| Portsmouth                | 147                       | 102                  | 69%                         |
| Providence                | 13,438                    | 10,168               | 76%                         |
| Richmond                  | 93                        | 79                   | 85%                         |
| Scituate                  | 125                       | 40                   | 32%                         |
| Smithfield                | 134                       | 81                   | 60%                         |
| South Kingstown           | 341                       | 243                  | 71%                         |
| Tiverton                  | 217                       | 141                  | 65%                         |
| Warren                    | 244                       | 153                  | 63%                         |
| Warwick                   | 1,655                     | 886                  | 54%                         |
| West Greenwich            | 52                        | 37                   | 71%                         |
| West Warwick              | 1,101                     | 587                  | 53%                         |
| Westerly                  | 579                       | 359                  | 62%                         |
| Woonsocket                | 2,694                     | 1,964                | 73%                         |
| <b>Core Cities</b>        | <b>24,544</b>             | <b>18,453</b>        | <b>75%</b>                  |
| <b>Remainder of State</b> | <b>12,087</b>             | <b>7,470</b>         | <b>62%</b>                  |
| <b>Rhode Island</b>       | <b>36,631</b>             | <b>25,923</b>        | <b>71%</b>                  |

## Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Health, Division of Family Health, WIC Program, Fiscal Year 2007.

Core cities are Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, West Warwick and Woonsocket.

Note: Due to a change in methodology, WIC participation rates in this Factbook cannot be compared with Factbooks before 2007. This year, the "estimated number eligible" are based on calculations done by the Rhode Island Department of Health to determine the number of pregnant and postpartum women, infants and children under age 5 who live in families with an income less than 185% of poverty. In past years, the "estimated number eligible" was based on 2000 Census data (2005 and 2006 Factbooks) and 1990 Census data (all Factbooks prior to 2005).

## References

- <sup>1</sup> Fox, H. B., McManus, M. A. & Schmidt, H. J. (2003). *WIC reauthorization: Opportunities for improving the nutritional status of women, infants and children*. Washington, DC: George Washington University, National Health Policy Forum.
- <sup>2,3,18</sup> *WIC Fact Sheet*. (n.d.). Retrieved January 22, 2008 from [www.fns.usda.gov/wic/wic-fact-sheet.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/wic-fact-sheet.pdf)
- <sup>4,11,12,14,15,16,19,21</sup> Rhode Island Department of Health, Division of Family Health, WIC Program, Fiscal Year 2007.
- <sup>5</sup> Neault, N. & Cook, J. (2004). *The safety net in action: Protecting the health and nutrition of young American children*. Boston, MA: Children Sentinel Nutrition Assessment Program.
- <sup>6</sup> *The consequences of hunger and food insecurity for children: Evidence from recent scientific studies* (2002). Waltham, MA: The Center on Hunger and Poverty at the Heller School for Social Policy and Management, Brandeis University.
- <sup>7</sup> The National Women's Health Information Center. *Frequently asked questions about pregnancy and a healthy diet*. (2005). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health of Human Services, Office of Women's Health.
- <sup>8</sup> *WIC in the states: Thirty-one years of building a healthier America*. (2005). Washington, DC: The Food Research and Action Center.
- <sup>9,10</sup> Food and Nutrition Service. (n.d.). *How WIC helps*. Retrieved January 22, 2008 from [www.fns.usda.gov/wic/aboutwic/howwichehelps.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/aboutwic/howwichehelps.htm)
- <sup>13</sup> Food and Nutrition Service. (n.d.). *Background: Revisions to the WIC food package*. Retrieved January 22, 2008 from [www.fns.usda.gov/wic/benefitsandservices/revisionstofoodpkg-background.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/benefitsandservices/revisionstofoodpkg-background.htm)
- <sup>17</sup> Rhode Island Department of Health, Division of Family Health, WIC Program, Fiscal Year 2006.
- <sup>20</sup> Food and Nutrition Service. (2007). *WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program*. Retrieved January 22, 2008 from [www.fns.usda.gov/wic/WIC-FMNP-Fact-Sheet.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/WIC-FMNP-Fact-Sheet.pdf)
- <sup>22</sup> Rhode Island Department of Health, Division of Family Health, WIC Program, Fiscal Year 2006.