

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) on September 30, 2008.

SIGNIFICANCE

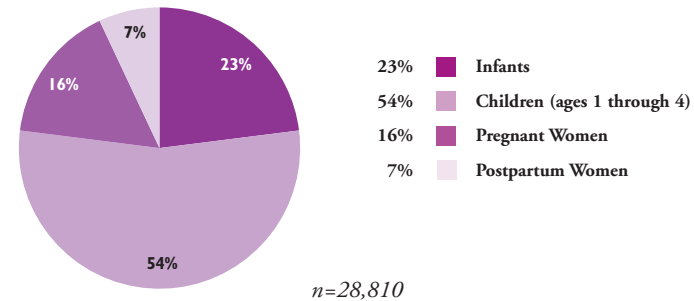
The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) is a preventive program that provides participants with nutritious food, nutrition education, screening and referrals to health care and social services.^{1,2} WIC is a federally-funded program that serves pregnant, postpartum and breastfeeding women, infants, and children under age five with household incomes below 185% of the poverty level. In addition, any individual who participates in SNAP (formerly the Food Stamp Program), RIte Care, Medicaid, and the Rhode Island Works Program (formerly FIP), or who 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.³

Young children who experience food insecurity, hunger and poor nutrition can be negatively impacted during times of critical growth and development.⁴ Food insecurity in early childhood can lead to impaired cognitive and socio-emotional development, limiting school achievement.⁵ Pregnant women also have special nutritional needs that influence pregnancy outcomes and the health of their children.⁶

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.^{7,8} WIC promotes breastfeeding as the optimal method of infant feeding.⁹ In Rhode Island, 19% of infants participating in WIC were breastfed in Federal Fiscal Year 2008.¹⁰

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 populations served by the WIC program.¹¹

Women, Infants and Children Participating in WIC, Rhode Island, September 30, 2008



Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Division of Family Health, WIC Program, September 30, 2008. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

- ◆ On September 30, 2008, infants and children ages one through four comprised the majority of the population being served by WIC (77%). Women accounted for 23% (16% pregnant and 7% postpartum) of the population being served.¹²
- ◆ In August 2008, 66% of WIC participants identified as White, 17% identified as Black or African American, 3% identified as Asian, and 14% identified as other races or multiple races. Thirty-six percent of WIC participants identified as Hispanic or Latino. Hispanics are also included in the racial groups above.¹³
- ◆ The statewide WIC participation rate increased from 71% in 2007 to 78% in 2008. Four of the six core cities – Central Falls (83%), Pawtucket (92%), Providence (83%) and Woonsocket (83%) – had WIC participation rates that exceeded the statewide participation rate of 78% in 2008. Newport (72%) and Pawtucket (66%) had participation rates below the state rate.^{14,15}
- ◆ WIC is not an entitlement program and is not funded at a level that is sufficient to serve all eligible women, infants, and children.¹⁶ Rhode Island received \$24.2 million dollars in federal funding for WIC during Federal Fiscal Year 2008.¹⁷
- ◆ The WIC Farmer's Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) improves participants' intake of fresh fruits and vegetables by enabling participants to purchase produce at authorized local farmers' markets using WIC benefits.¹⁸ In Rhode Island, 50 farmers were authorized by WIC to provide fresh produce to 17,200 participants in Federal Fiscal Year 2008, up from 15,439 in Federal Fiscal Year 2007.^{19,20}

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Table 14. Women, Infants and Children Participating in WIC, Rhode Island, September 30, 2008

CITY/TOWN	ESTIMATED NUMBER ELIGIBLE	NUMBER PARTICIPATING	% OF ELIGIBLE PARTICIPATING
Barrington	86	34	40%
Bristol	321	254	79%
Burrillville	299	254	85%
Central Falls	2,019	1,673	83%
Charlestown	127	69	54%
Coventry	649	405	62%
Cranston	2,062	1,517	74%
Cumberland	489	358	73%
East Greenwich	147	74	50%
East Providence	1,288	1,063	83%
Exeter	70	43	61%
Foster	77	55	71%
Glocester	105	63	60%
Hopkinton	177	133	75%
Jamestown	39	15	38%
Johnston	648	533	82%
Lincoln	324	177	55%
Little Compton	44	23	52%
Middletown	315	290	92%
Narragansett	154	92	60%
New Shoreham	11	7	64%
Newport	802	580	72%
North Kingstown	475	245	52%
North Providence	666	442	66%
North Smithfield	120	99	83%
Pawtucket	4,195	3,878	92%
Portsmouth	211	124	59%
Providence	13,241	11,042	83%
Richmond	130	92	71%
Scituate	107	41	38%
Smithfield	162	126	78%
South Kingstown	339	251	74%
Tiverton	181	130	72%
Warren	221	169	76%
Warwick	1,690	1,032	61%
West Greenwich	50	33	66%
West Warwick	1,092	723	66%
Westerly	600	443	74%
Woonsocket	2,639	2,193	83%
Unknown	424	35	NA
Core Cities	23,988	20,089	84%
Remainder of State	12,384	8,686	70%
Rhode Island	36,796	28,810	78%

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Health, Division of Family Health, WIC Program, September 30, 2008.

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

References

- ¹ 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.
- ^{2,3,16} *WIC Fact Sheet*. (n.d.). Retrieved January 30, 2009 from www.fns.usda.gov/wic/wic-fact-sheet.pdf
- ⁴ 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.
- ⁵ *Reading, writing and hungry: The consequences of food insecurity on children, and on our nation's economic success*. (2008). Washington, DC: Partnership for America's Economic Success.
- ⁶ *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.
- ⁷ *WIC in the states: Thirty-one years of building a healthier America*. (2005). Washington, DC: The Food Research and Action Center.
- ^{8,9} Food and Nutrition Service. (n.d.). *How WIC helps*. Retrieved January 30, 2009 from www.fns.usda.gov/wic/aboutwic/howwichhelps.htm
- ^{10,17,19,20} Rhode Island Department of Health, Division of Family Health, WIC Program, Federal Fiscal Years 2007 & 2008.
- ¹¹ Food and Nutrition Service. (n.d.). *Background: Revisions to the WIC food package*. Retrieved February 3, 2009 from www.fns.usda.gov/wic/benefitsandservices/revisionstofoodpkg-background.htm
- ^{12,13,14,15} Rhode Island Department of Health, Division of Family Health, WIC Program, 2007 & 2008.
- ¹⁸ Food and Nutrition Service. (2007). *WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program*. Retrieved January 30, 2009 from www.fns.usda.gov/wic/WIC-FMNP-Fact-Sheet.pdf