

Women and Children Receiving WIC

DEFINITION

Women and children receiving WIC is the percentage of eligible women, infants and children served by the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC).

SIGNIFICANCE

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children is a preventive program providing nutritious food, nutrition education and improved access to health care.¹ This federally-funded program 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, cash assistance through the Family Independence Program or is a member of a family in which a pregnant woman or infant receives Medicaid benefits, is deemed automatically income eligible. Participants must have a specified nutritional risk, such as anemia, history of poor pregnancy outcomes or inadequate dietary patterns.^{2,3}

WIC is not an entitlement program and is not funded at a level that is sufficient to serve all eligible women, infants and children.⁴ Rhode Island received \$14.3 million dollars in federal

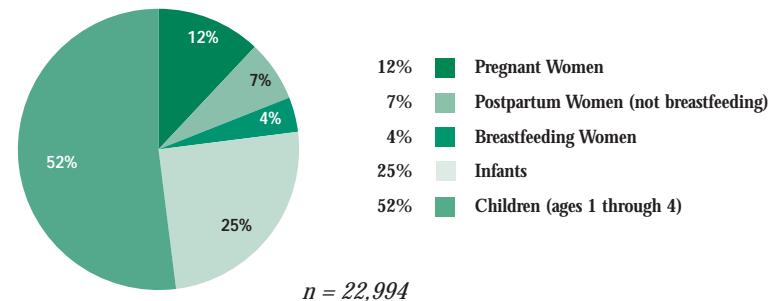
funding during fiscal year 2004 and served an average of 22,994 people per month.^{5,6}

WIC participants purchase a monthly food package – an individually prescribed combination of targeted foods to improve the nutritional quality of their diets – at local retailers with checks or coupon vouchers.^{7,8} Through the WIC program participants also receive education on the value of proper nutrition, healthy eating practices and positive food related behaviors, as well as receive referrals to health care and social services.^{9,10} WIC promotes breastfeeding as the optimal method of infant feeding and program eligibility for breastfeeding mothers is extended for up to one year.¹¹ In Rhode Island, the percentage of WIC infants who were breastfed in 2004 was 16%.¹²

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. In Rhode Island in 2004, 17 farmer's markets authorized by WIC provided fresh produce to 21,116 recipients.¹³

WIC participation improves birth outcomes, increases the nutrient intake of preschoolers, increases breastfeeding rates and immunization coverage, improves cognitive development and increases the likelihood of having a regular medical care provider.¹⁴

Women, Infants and Children Served by WIC, Rhode Island, 2004



Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Division of Family Health, WIC Program, 2004. Data represent the monthly average for fiscal year 2004.

◆ In August 2004, pregnant women accounted for 12% of the population being served by WIC. Infants (25%) and children ages one through four (52%) comprised the majority of the population being served.¹⁵

◆ During fiscal year 2004, 42% percent of WIC participants were White, 35% were Hispanic and 11% were Black.¹⁶

Access to WIC in Rhode Island

◆ Four of the six core cities with the highest child poverty rates – Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence and Woonsocket – have WIC participation rates that exceed the statewide average participation rate of 63%.¹⁷

◆ In fiscal year 2004, Rhode Island was selected as one of eight states to receive an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) grant award. This grant will allow the current process of issuing benefit checks to participants to be changed to issuing benefits onto a debit card. WIC clients will be able to shop without the stigma of handling WIC checks and the likelihood of theft or fraud will be reduced. The two pilot sites in Rhode Island are located in Newport and Middletown.^{18,19,20}

Women and Children Receiving WIC

Table 13. Women, Infants and Children Receiving WIC, Rhode Island, August 2004

CITY/TOWN	ESTIMATED NUMBER ELIGIBLE	NUMBER PARTICIPATING	% OF ELIGIBLE PARTICIPATING
Barrington	87	33	38%
Bristol	291	158	54%
Burrillville	306	203	66%
Central Falls	2,104	1,567	74%
Charlestown	145	62	43%
Coventry	607	323	53%
Cranston	1,772	1,002	57%
Cumberland	435	240	55%
East Greenwich	101	35	35%
East Providence	1,217	803	66%
Exeter	93	36	39%
Foster	37	26	70%
Glocester	89	28	31%
Hopkinton	129	84	65%
Jamestown	41	14	34%
Johnston	550	308	56%
Lincoln	285	160	56%
Little Compton	29	9	31%
Middletown	255	214	84%
Narragansett	166	59	36%
New Shoreham	7	1	14%
Newport	910	513	56%
North Kingstown	436	216	50%
North Providence	583	321	55%
North Smithfield	107	42	39%
Pawtucket	4,006	2,736	68%
Portsmouth	190	90	47%
Providence	13,689	8,980	66%
Richmond	115	65	57%
Scituate	150	69	46%
Smithfield	144	92	64%
South Kingstown	394	189	48%
Tiverton	219	133	61%
Warren	229	114	50%
Warwick	1,579	892	56%
West Greenwich	52	17	33%
West Warwick	1,004	588	59%
Westerly	510	303	59%
Woonsocket	2,386	1,640	69%
Unknown Residence	NA	10	NA
Core Cities	24,099	16,024	66%
Remainder of State	11,350	6,341	56%
Rhode Island	35,449	22,375	63%

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Health, Division of Family Health, WIC Program, August 2004.

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

The denominator is 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 according to the 2000 Census of Population as estimated by the United States Department of Agriculture.

Note: The "estimated number eligible" is now based on data from Census 2000. Factbooks prior to 2005 were based on the 1990 Census estimates.

Race and ethnicity data are for all active cases as of August 2004. As such, percentages include some cases for which services were not provided during August 2004, but were provided during the previous two months.

References for Indicator

- ¹ American Academy of Pediatrics. (2001). WIC program. *Pediatrics*, 108(5), 1216-1217.
- ^{2,4} *Federal food programs: Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children*. (2002). Washington, DC: Food Research and Action Center.
- ^{3,7} Food and Nutrition Service. (2002). *Frequently asked questions* (Fact sheet). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture.
- ⁵ Food and Nutrition Service. (2004). *Summary of FY2004 food and NSA grant levels*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture.
- ^{6,12,13,15,16,17,20} Rhode Island Department of Health, Division of Family Health, WIC Program, Fiscal Year 2004.
- ⁸ *Proposed criteria for selecting the WIC food packages*. (2004). Washington, DC: Institute of Medicine of the National Academies.
- ⁹ Food and Nutrition Service. (2002). *About WIC*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture.
- ¹⁰ Cole, N., Fox, M. & Lin, B. (2004). *Nutrition and health characteristics of low-income populations: Volume II, WIC participants and non-participants*. Washington, DC: Economic Research Service, United States Department of Agriculture.
- ¹¹ Food and Nutrition Service. (2002). *WIC at a glance* (Fact sheet). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture.
- ¹⁴ Food and Nutrition Service. (2001). *How WIC helps*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture.
- ¹⁸ *Women, infants and children: FNS awards FY 2004 WIC electronic benefit transfer (EBT) grants to states*. (2004). Retrieved January 2005 from <http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/EBT/grants04.htm>.
- ¹⁹ *New England Partners pilot sites*. (n.d.). Retrieved February 1, 2005 from <http://www.newengland-partners.com/Pilot.htm>.