

**Background**

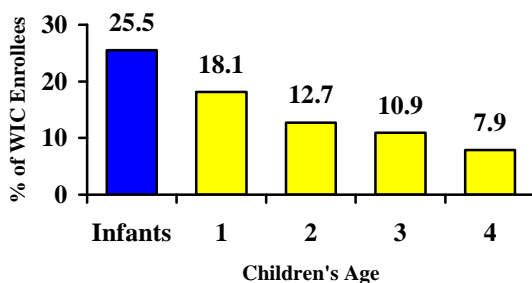
*WIC Participant and Program Characteristics* (PC2008) summarizes the demographic characteristics of Women, Infants and Children participants nationwide in April 2008, along with information on participant income and nutrition risk characteristics, a national estimate of breastfeeding initiation for WIC infants, and a description of WIC members of migrant farmworker families. PC2008 is the most recent in a series of reports that have been generated from WIC State management information systems biennially since 1992.

**Findings**

In April 2008, there were 9.5 million women, infants, and children enrolled in the WIC Program. The number of enrollees include individuals who did not pick up food instruments. Approximately 91 percent of WIC enrollees actually picked up their food instruments for April 2008 and were counted according to WIC regulations as participants for WIC food and administrative funding purposes. Among WIC enrollees, half (49.5 percent) are children. Infants account for 25.5 percent, and women are 25 percent of those enrolled in WIC.

Three-fourths of WIC enrollees were under age 5, and child enrollment was weighted toward younger children (Figure 1).

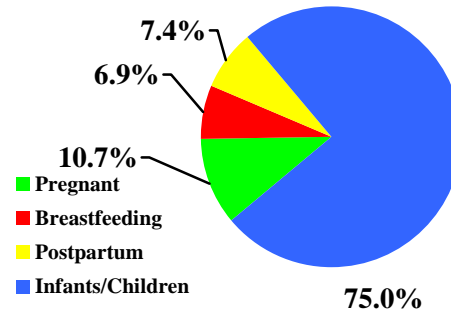
**Figure 1**  
Age of Children Enrollees



Women, as a percent of all participants, were divided into pregnant (10.7 percent), breastfeeding (6.9 percent), and postpartum (7.4 percent) (Figure 2). The percentage of breastfeeding women has risen

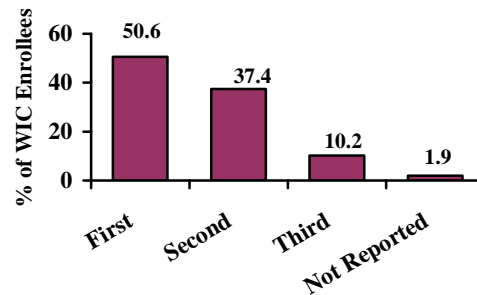
steadily from 3.6 percent in 1992 to 6.9 percent in 2008.

**Figure 2**  
Status of Women



In 2008, more pregnant WIC participants enrolled in the program during their first trimester than during their second trimester, with 50.6 percent in the first trimester and 37.4 in the second. Only 10.2 percent enrolled in the third trimester (Figure 3). Between 1992 and 2006, enrollment in the first trimester increased steadily, but has shown a slight decline (by 0.6 percentage points) in 2008 to stabilize this trend.

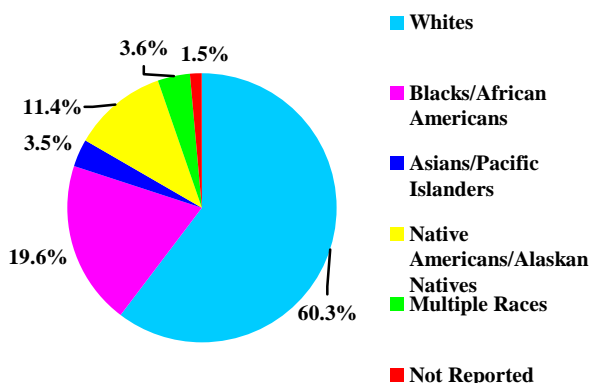
**Figure 3**  
Trimester of WIC Enrollment



Under new OMB definitions, ethnicity (i.e., Hispanic or non-Hispanic) and race are reported separately. In 2008:

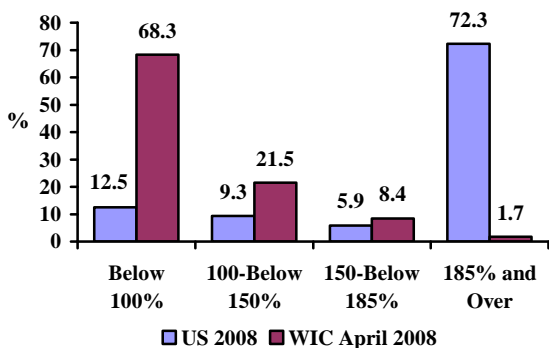
- Hispanics made up 42.1 percent of WIC participants.
- Race data were reported by the States for 98.5 percent of WIC participants. Whites are the largest group (60.3 percent), followed by Blacks/African Americans (19.6 percent), American Indians-/Alaskan Natives (11.4 percent), and Asian or Pacific Islanders (3.5 percent) (Figure 4).
- While the race of most Hispanics was identified by themselves and/or WIC staff as White, many were identified as American Indian/Alaskan Native.

Figure 4  
Race



The distribution of participants by poverty level shows about two-thirds of WIC participants (68.3) at or below the poverty line (Figure 5). This compares to 12.5 percent in the U.S. general population and is substantially below the WIC income-eligibility limit.

Figure 5  
Poverty Level of WIC Participants Compared to Persons in the U.S. Population



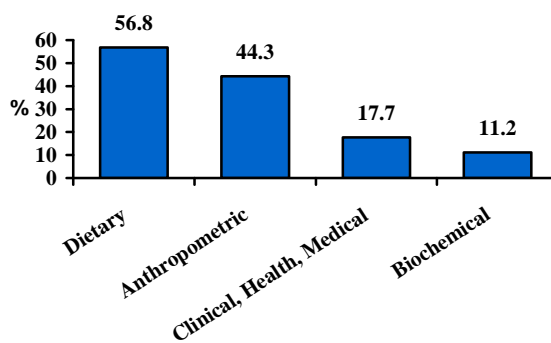
In April 2008, there were 42,477 individuals identified on State WIC enrollment files as being from migrant farmworker families, making up less than 1 percent of the population receiving WIC services.

Download full report for WIC PC 2002, 2004, 2006 or 2008 at: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/>

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Research and Analysis, *WIC Participant and Program Characteristics 2008, WIC-08-PC*, by Patty Connor, Susan Bartlett, Michele Mendelson, Katherine Condon, James Sutcliffe, et al. Project Officer, Fred Lesnett. Alexandria, VA: January 2010.

Predominant risks reported for women were low/high weight-for-height, inappropriate weight gain, hematocrit or hemoglobin below Food and Nutrition Service criteria, delivery of low-birthweight or premature infant, general obstetrical risks, nutrition-risk-related conditions, substance abuse, and "other dietary." Children showed dietary and anthropometric risks as their most frequently reported risks (Figure 6). Eighty-three percent of WIC infants were recorded at risk due, at least in part, to the WIC eligibility of their mothers or because their mothers were at risk during pregnancy.

Figure 6  
WIC Participants With Specific Nutritional Risks at Certification



In PC2008, 59.0 percent of WIC mothers initiated breastfeeding, up from 41.3 percent in PC1998. Across the 64 State WIC Agencies reporting breastfeeding duration data, the median duration of breastfeeding was 13 weeks, with substantial variation existing among States. The proportion of infants and children breastfed for 6 or more months has an estimated lower bound estimate of 19.7 percent and an upper bound estimate of 29.6 percent.

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