

### Background

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) provides food, nutrition education, breastfeeding support, and health care and social service referrals to nutritionally at-risk low-income pregnant women, new mothers, infants, and children through age 4.

This report offers updated estimates of the population that met these criteria and was eligible for WIC benefits in each of the years 1994 through 2007.

### Methodology

The estimates presented below are based on a methodology developed in 2003 by the Committee on National Statistics of the National Research Council (CNSTAT). FNS refined the CNSTAT methodology for this report, with contracted assistance from Mathematica Policy Research, to better reflect actual breastfeeding practice and reported cessation among postpartum women.

### Results

#### WIC-Eligible Population

- FNS estimates that the average monthly WIC eligible population totaled 14.2 million individuals in 2007. This is down from 14.5 million in 2006.

Population Eligible for WIC Benefits, CY 2007		
Population Subgroup	Number Eligible	Percent of Total Eligible
Pregnant Women	1,384,468	9.7%
Breastfeeding Women	642,914	4.5%
Postpartum Women	901,144	6.3%
Infants	2,688,320	18.9%
Children	8,629,883	60.6%
<b>All WIC Eligibles</b>	<b>14,246,729</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

- Children ages 1 to 4 made up more than 60 percent of the eligible population.

Overall, the WIC eligible population grew at an average annual rate of 0.3 percent from 1994 to 2007. However, growth varied considerably by participant subgroup.

- Among eligible subgroups, the population of breastfeeding women increased the most, expanding at an average annual rate of 2.8 percent.
- The population of eligible children saw the lowest growth over this period, contracting at an average annual rate of 0.3 percent.

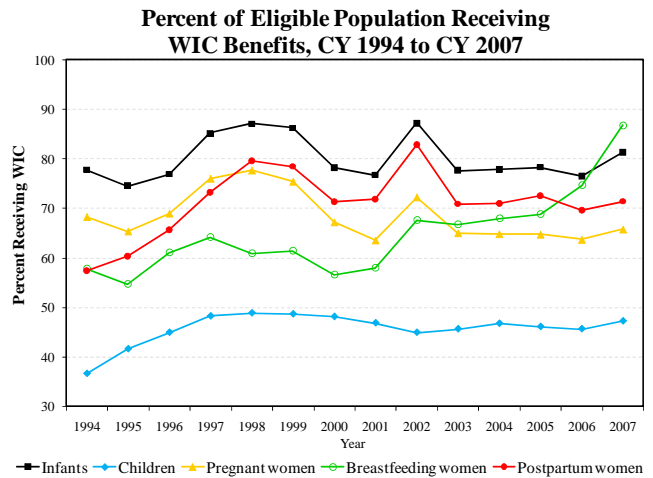
#### Coverage Rates

The percent of the eligible population that receives WIC benefits is the program’s “coverage rate.”

- In 2007, WIC served an estimated 59 percent of the population eligible for program benefits. This coverage rate is unchanged from 10 years earlier, but is up from 48 percent in 1994.
- Coverage of WIC-eligible infants exceeded 80 percent.
- Coverage of WIC-eligible breastfeeding women grew by half from 1994 to 2007. WIC served nearly 87 percent of eligible breastfeeding women in 2007, the highest of all participant subgroups.
- Coverage of WIC-eligible children was the lowest among participant subgroups in 2007, at just 47 percent.
- Gains in coverage of children and non-breastfeeding postpartum women were realized in the mid to late 1990s. Although growth in

coverage of these subgroups has been flat in recent years, the gains recorded earlier have been sustained.

For more than a decade, WIC's estimated coverage rate has fluctuated in a narrow range from 56 to 61 percent. Although WIC participation grew by 1 million between 1997 and 2007, the coverage rate did not increase because the number of eligible individuals also increased.



Population Eligible for WIC Benefits, Average Monthly Participation, and Coverage Rates														
Calendar Years 1994 - 2007														
Eligible population (millions)	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Infants	2.311	2.440	2.389	2.195	2.174	2.193	2.431	2.512	2.214	2.525	2.607	2.625	2.739	2.688
Children	8.996	8.505	8.382	7.887	7.654	7.452	7.375	7.782	8.368	8.430	8.534	8.674	8.730	8.630
Pregnant women	1.176	1.242	1.216	1.117	1.106	1.116	1.252	1.294	1.141	1.301	1.342	1.352	1.411	1.384
Breastfeeding women	0.450	0.505	0.497	0.518	0.581	0.591	0.671	0.712	0.645	0.686	0.706	0.734	0.710	0.643
Postpartum women	0.805	0.832	0.814	0.721	0.669	0.680	0.757	0.771	0.675	0.807	0.839	0.823	0.886	0.901
<b>Total</b>	<b>13.739</b>	<b>13.523</b>	<b>13.297</b>	<b>12.439</b>	<b>12.183</b>	<b>12.033</b>	<b>12.486</b>	<b>13.072</b>	<b>13.044</b>	<b>13.750</b>	<b>14.029</b>	<b>14.207</b>	<b>14.476</b>	<b>14.247</b>
Average monthly participation (millions)	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Infants	1.796	1.817	1.835	1.869	1.893	1.892	1.900	1.926	1.932	1.959	2.028	2.053	2.094	2.185
Children	3.298	3.542	3.769	3.808	3.741	3.629	3.551	3.649	3.764	3.850	3.992	4.002	3.988	4.080
Pregnant women	0.803	0.811	0.838	0.849	0.859	0.841	0.841	0.822	0.824	0.845	0.870	0.874	0.898	0.910
Breastfeeding women	0.260	0.276	0.303	0.332	0.354	0.363	0.380	0.413	0.436	0.458	0.480	0.505	0.530	0.558
Postpartum women	0.462	0.502	0.534	0.528	0.532	0.533	0.540	0.553	0.559	0.572	0.595	0.596	0.616	0.643
<b>Total</b>	<b>6.619</b>	<b>6.948</b>	<b>7.279</b>	<b>7.385</b>	<b>7.378</b>	<b>7.258</b>	<b>7.211</b>	<b>7.363</b>	<b>7.514</b>	<b>7.684</b>	<b>7.965</b>	<b>8.030</b>	<b>8.126</b>	<b>8.376</b>
Coverage rates	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Infants	77.7%	74.5%	76.8%	85.1%	87.1%	86.2%	78.2%	76.7%	87.2%	77.6%	77.8%	78.2%	76.4%	81.3%
Children	36.7%	41.6%	45.0%	48.3%	48.9%	48.7%	48.2%	46.9%	45.0%	45.7%	46.8%	46.1%	45.7%	47.3%
Pregnant women	68.2%	65.3%	68.9%	75.9%	77.6%	75.4%	67.2%	63.5%	72.2%	65.0%	64.8%	64.7%	63.7%	65.7%
Breastfeeding women	57.8%	54.7%	61.1%	64.2%	60.8%	61.5%	56.6%	58.0%	67.6%	66.7%	67.9%	68.8%	74.6%	86.8%
Postpartum women	57.4%	60.4%	65.6%	73.2%	79.6%	78.4%	71.2%	71.8%	82.8%	70.8%	71.0%	72.5%	69.5%	71.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>48.2%</b>	<b>51.4%</b>	<b>54.7%</b>	<b>59.4%</b>	<b>60.6%</b>	<b>60.3%</b>	<b>57.8%</b>	<b>56.3%</b>	<b>57.6%</b>	<b>55.9%</b>	<b>56.8%</b>	<b>56.5%</b>	<b>56.1%</b>	<b>58.8%</b>

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Research and Analysis. *WIC Eligibles and Coverage – 1994 to 2007: Estimates of the Population of Women, Infants, and Children Eligible for WIC Benefits*. E. Harper, J. Hirschman, J. Mabli, S. Nelson, and K. Hourihan. Alexandria, VA, September 2009.

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