

WIC INFANT AND TODDLER FEEDING PRACTICES STUDY 2: INFANT YEAR REPORT (SUMMARY)

Background

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) was established to safeguard the health of low-income pregnant women and infants who are at nutritional risk. The WIC Infant and Toddler Feeding Practices Study–2 (WIC ITFPS-2)/ “Feeding My Baby” captures data on WIC caregivers and their children over the first 5 years of each child’s life to address a series of research questions regarding feeding practices, the effect of WIC services on those practices, and the health and nutrition outcomes of children on WIC. Additionally, the study assesses changes in behaviors and trends that may have occurred over the past 20 years by comparing findings to the WIC Infant Feeding Practices Study–1 (WIC IFPS-1)<sup>1</sup>, the last major study of the diets of infants on WIC. This study will provide a series of reports. The current report focuses on breastfeeding intention, initiation and duration, and the introduction of complementary foods.

Methods

The study was designed to represent the national population of infants on WIC. Study participants were recruited in person as they enrolled in WIC from July 2013 to November 2013 (either prenatally or before their infant was 2.5 months old) from 80 WIC sites across 27 States and territories nationwide.

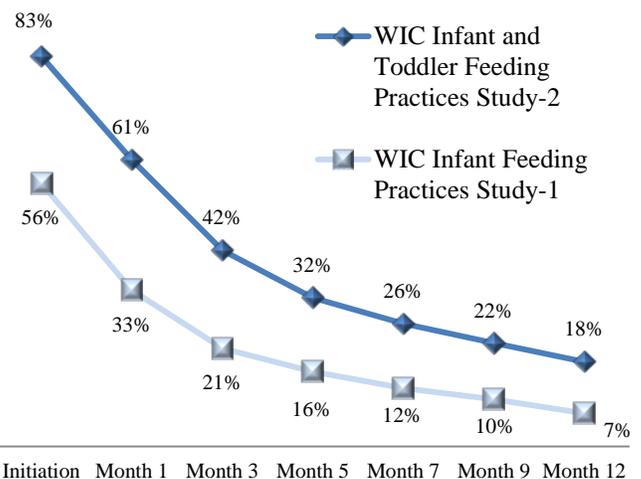
Findings are based on responses from 3,777 mothers/caregivers of the infants who participated in a series of telephone interviews that focused on feeding practices and behaviors. In addition, the postnatal interviews included a 24-hour dietary recall to collect detailed information on the infant’s consumption. The current report reflects the responses from the prenatal interview and the 1-, 3-, 5-, 7-, 9-, 11-, and 13-month interviews that were conducted from July 2013 to August 2015.

<sup>1</sup> Baydar, N., McCann, M., Williams, R., et. al (1997). Final Report: WIC Infant Feeding Practices Study.

Findings

**Breastfeeding rates have risen dramatically over the past 20 years.** The current study found that in 2013, the breastfeeding initiation rate was 83 percent<sup>2</sup>—a 48-percent increase—from the 56 percent of women who reported initiating breastfeeding in the WIC IFPS-1 conducted during 1994 and 1995. The percentage of women participating in WIC who continue to breastfeed (exclusively or in combination with formula) also has risen notably since WIC IFPS-1. The percentage of women on WIC breastfeeding at 1 month postpartum has increased by 85 percent. From 3 months to 12 months postpartum, the breastfeeding rates have more than doubled since the first study.

Breastfeeding Rates by Month



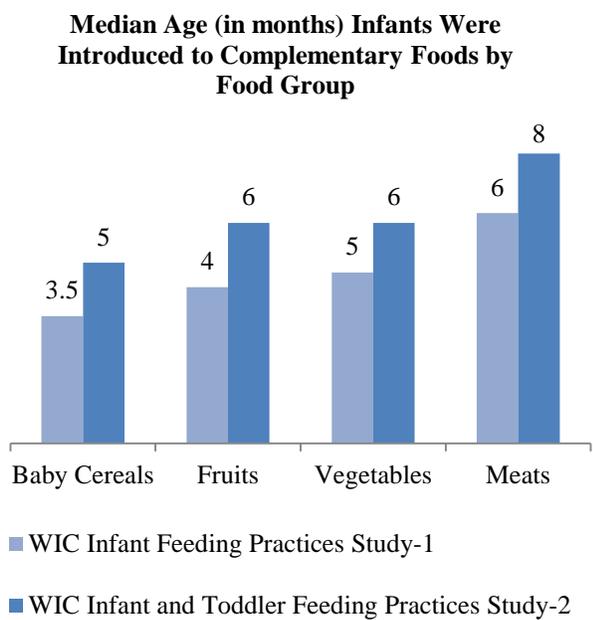
The similar slopes of the WIC IFPS-1 and the WIC ITFPS-2 trend lines suggest that despite the increase in breastfeeding initiation and duration, the drop-off rate has not changed substantially over the past 20 years. In both studies, more than one-half of the mothers ceased breastfeeding by 3

<sup>2</sup>This rate is higher than the breastfeeding initiation rate of 70 percent observed in the 2014 WIC Participant and Program Characteristics (WIC PC) report. This is primarily due to differences in study methodologies and analytic techniques.

months. The top three reasons for breastfeeding cessation around 3 months postpartum reported by WIC ITFPS-2 mothers were: breastmilk alone did not satisfy the baby (57 percent), inability to produce enough breastmilk (56 percent), and the baby lost interest in nursing (34 percent).

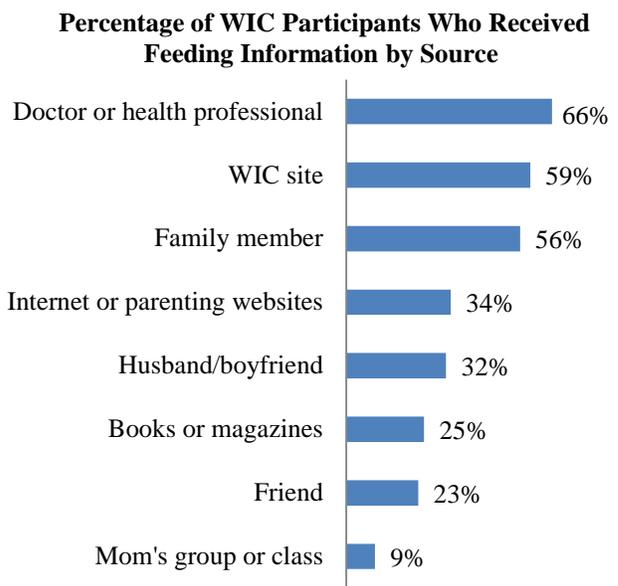
At 1 month postpartum, the majority (73 percent) of WIC ITFPS-2 breastfeeding mothers reported that they planned to breastfeed for more than 6 months. However, followup inquiries revealed that 70 percent of mothers did not breastfeed as long as they had intended. This finding emphasizes the need for continued support to help mothers achieve the breastfeeding duration they intend and to increase the proportion of mothers meeting the American Academy of Pediatrics recommendation that infants continue breastfeeding until at least 12 months of age.

**Introduction of complementary foods too early is much less prevalent among WIC participants than before.** For the current study, few caregivers (20 percent) introduced foods prior to 4 months of age. However, for WIC IFPS-1, approximately 60 percent of caregivers started serving complementary foods prior to 4 months. In addition, WIC ITFPS-2 caregivers introduced foods from key food groups (baby cereals, fruits, vegetables, and meats) at least 1 month later than observed in WIC IFPS-1.



**Caregivers credited WIC with making positive changes in how they fed their infants and themselves.** More than 95 percent of study mothers who initiated breastfeeding reported that their WIC site played an important role in their decision to breastfeed. At 3 months, among study mothers aware of the enhanced food package for fully breastfeeding mothers, 61 percent identified the food package as an important factor in their breastfeeding decision and breastfed approximately 1.5 months longer than the mothers not aware of the exclusive breastfeeding package.

**WIC participants received extensive support from WIC.** Nearly 60 percent of caregivers reported that they have turned to their WIC site for information on feeding their infant. WIC sites are the second most frequent source of feeding information after doctors and other health professionals. In addition, mothers are turning to WIC sites for advice on breastfeeding problems. Among mothers that encountered problems with breastfeeding, approximately 50 percent sought advice from WIC.



**For More Information**

May, L., Borger, C., Weinfield, N., et. al (2016). WIC Infant and Toddler Feeding Practices Study 2: Infant Year Report. Prepared by Westat, Contract No. AG-3198-K-11-0073. Alexandria, VA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Policy Support, Project Officer: Allison Magness. Available online at: [www.fns.usda.gov/research-and-analysis](http://www.fns.usda.gov/research-and-analysis).