



EVIDENCE-BASED WIC ADVOCACY: USING DATA

WIC is an evidence-based program. WIC has a strong and long history of conducting research and collecting data. Historically, WIC has collected data to evaluate the program and identify opportunities for program development. Much of the data that is collected through WIC is publicly available and can be a valuable advocacy tool.

Strong advocates use both qualitative and quantitative data to tell compelling and influential stories that garner support for a specific issue. Quantitative data describes something with words, whereas qualitative data defines something with numbers. Both types of data are valuable and often complementary.

WHY USE DATA IN ADVOCACY?

Data can:

- » **Demonstrate** that WIC is accomplishing its mission.
- » **Strengthen** a position.
- » **Complement** a WIC success story.
- » Add **context** to make an issue area relatable or clearer.

For example, strengthen the following statement:

WIC HELPS CHILDREN TO EAT HEALTHY FOOD.

...by adding in data:

LAST YEAR, WIC HELPED 3.9 MILLION¹ CHILDREN ACCESS HEALTHY FOOD. A RECENT STUDY SHOWED THAT CHILDREN PARTICIPATING IN WIC HAD HIGHER QUALITY DIETS THAN LOW-INCOME CHILDREN NOT PARTICIPATING IN WIC.

COMBINE QUALITATIVE DATA AND QUANTITATIVE DATA FOR PERSUASIVE ADVOCACY.

For example, if advocating for the breastfeeding peer counselors, support a story with facts and figures.

“ THE BREASTFEEDING PEER COUNSELOR WAS A BREASTFEEDING LIFESAVER. SHE WORKED WITH ME TO HELP ME CONTINUE BREASTFEEDING MY BABY. ”

WIC PARTICIPANT, TENNESSEE

The impact of the above statement is enhanced by the contextual data below:

IN TENNESSEE, BREASTFEEDING INITIATION RATES AMONG WIC PARTICIPANTS HAVE INCREASED FROM ONLY 22% IN 1998 TO 50% IN 2014.² BREASTFEEDING IN WIC IS TRENDING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION AND THE WIC BREASTFEEDING PEER COUNSELING PROGRAM (BFPC) HAS BEEN KEY TO THIS AMAZING PUBLIC HEALTH SUCCESS STORY. CURRENTLY, 93%³ OF STATE WIC PROGRAMS ARE OPERATING SOME TYPE OF PEER COUNSELOR PROGRAM.

WHERE CAN I FIND WIC DATA?

NWA provides lots of data and research through fact sheets and position papers. These can be found [here](#).

OTHER SOURCES OF DATA ARE:

- » [USDA-FNS WIC Program data](#) (including program costs, participation)
- » [USDA-FNS published reports.](#)
- » [USDA-ERS published reports.](#)



DO'S AND DON'TS WHEN USING DATA FOR ADVOCACY

DO:

- » Approach audiences with relatable values, and then as needed **win them with relatable facts.**
- » **Always reference data in written materials** — i.e. include a footnote or endnote saying what you are referencing and where the reader can find the data.
- » **Use the newest available data.**
- » **Quality control:** Where possible, use peer-reviewed research.
- » **Make data visual:** Numbers and statistics can be hard to remember. Increase the impact of the data that you present while advocating for WIC by including charts or info-graphics. For example, NWA's [WIC breastfeeding infographic](#).

DON'T:

- » **Rely too heavily on data:** Too much of the same sort of data can be overwhelming and off-putting.
- » **Try to make data fit your position:** If data is not relevant to your specific advocacy position, then don't include it.

¹ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service (2018) WIC program Data. Accessed online: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/wic-program>.

² Thorn B, Tadler C, Huret N, Trippe C, Ayo E, Mendelson M, Patlan K. L, Schwartz G, & Tran V. (2015). WIC Participant and Program Characteristics 2014. Prepared by Insight Policy Research under Contract No. AG-3198-C-11-0010. Alexandria, VA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service.

³ Forrestal S, Briefel R, Mabli J (2015) WIC Breastfeeding Policy Inventory. Prepared by Mathematica Policy Research under Contract No. AG-3198-B-10-0015. Alexandria, VA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. P. 41.