

## WOMEN AND FEDERAL NUTRITION PROGRAMS

Federal programs can provide essential help to low-income women and their families in obtaining food and income support. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly the Federal Food Stamp Program, helps low-income individuals and families purchase food. In 2010, following an economic recession, the number of people served by SNAP hit a record high of 39.8 million per month, on average. Of the 21.2 million adults served, over 13 million (62.8 percent) were women (data not shown).<sup>9</sup> Between 1990 and 2010, the number of people served by SNAP tracked strongly over time with the number of people

in poverty, demonstrating the critical role of SNAP in responding to need. In 2010, 1.7 million children and 2.2 million adults, 61 percent of whom were women, were lifted above the poverty line after adding the value of SNAP benefits to household income.<sup>10</sup>

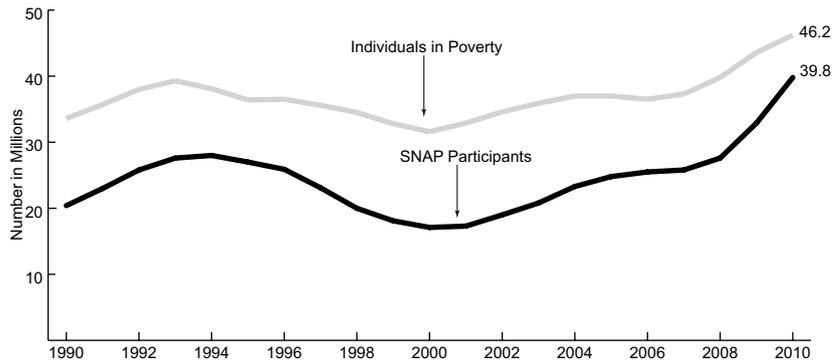
Among the households that relied on SNAP in 2010, 4.6 million (25.2 percent) were female-headed households with children, accounting for 51.8 percent of all SNAP households with children (data not shown).<sup>9</sup>

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) also plays an important role in serving low income women and families by providing supplementary nutritious foods, nutrition education, and re-

ferred to health and other social services. WIC serves pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, as well as infants and children up to age 5. In 2011, more than three-quarters of all individuals receiving WIC benefits were infants and children (76.6 percent); however, the program also served nearly 2.1 million pregnant women and mothers, representing 23.4 percent of WIC participants. In contrast to SNAP, WIC is not an entitlement program that guarantees benefits to all eligible applicants. However, funding for WIC has increased over the years, and the number of women, infants, and children served by WIC has increased by over 100-fold between 1974 and 2011, from 88,000 to 8.9 million (data not shown).<sup>11</sup>

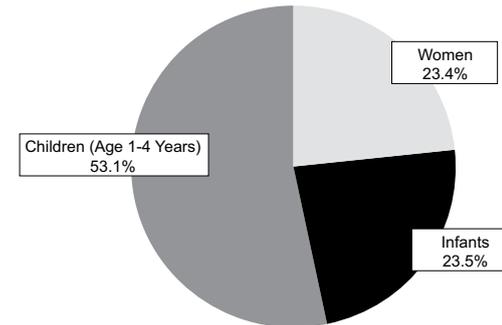
### SNAP Participants and Individuals in Poverty, 1990–2010

Sources I.7: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food Stamp Quality Control Sample; U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement



### Participants in WIC, 2011\*

Source I.8: U.S. Department of Agriculture, WIC Program Participation Data



\*Based on Federal Fiscal Year (October to September)