



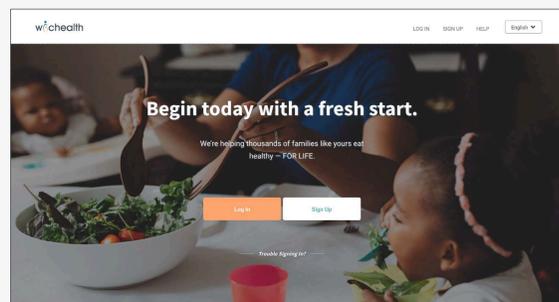
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Transforming Food Systems with WICHEALTH: A Digital Tool for Online Nutrition Education

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Introduction

WIC provides nutritional support to participants through wichealth.org, an online nutrition education and behavior change system. This study explored whether providing online knowledge, tools, and skills in food sustainability motivates WIC participants to adopt several beneficial lifestyle behaviors leading to improved health and access to a safe, healthy food supply. The primary focus was on WIC participant willingness to engage in sustainable feeding practices associated with increasing fresh fruits and vegetables, increasing breastfeeding initiation and duration, and reducing food waste.

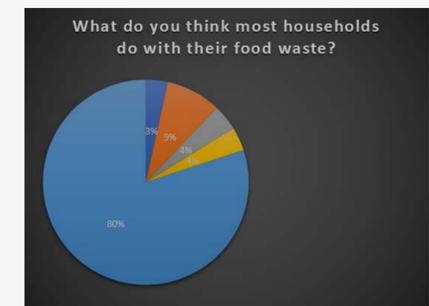
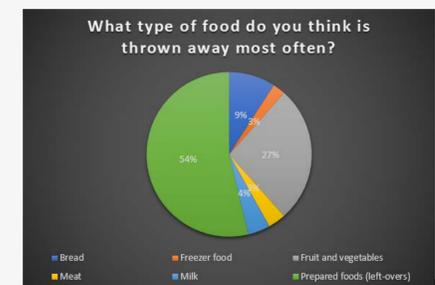
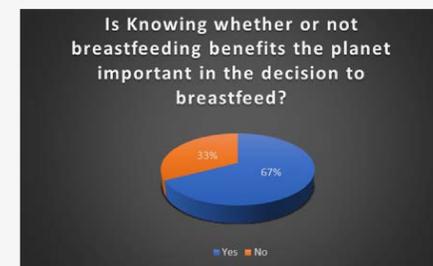
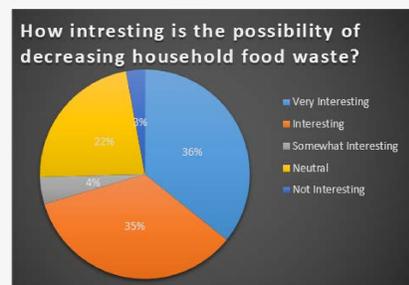


Methods

Three online surveys were developed and delivered over a six-day period to WIC participants in 7 out of 28 wichealth.org member states. The Breastfeeding (n=612), Food Waste 1 (n=1,178), and Food Waste 2 (n=773) surveys were voluntary, in English, and added at the end of existing wichealth.org lessons. Data from binary or multiple choice answers were analyzed by frequency. Descriptive statistical analysis was used.

Results

Breastfeeding survey respondents were twice as likely to agree sustainability knowledge would impact breastfeeding choices. More than half (53%) of food waste survey respondents believed food waste is a problem for most households, with big portion sizes the most often answered (30%) reason for food waste and 71% were interested in decreasing food waste. Respondents estimated 80% of food waste is thrown away, with leftovers more than twice as likely than fruits and vegetables to be thrown away. But only 12% correctly estimated the monetary value of food waste, while 80% underestimated the national average.



Conclusions

Wichealth.org is an effective tool in transforming food systems. Findings of this survey posit the greatest barrier to adoption of food waste-reducing behavior is lack of awareness of the issue. Providing online knowledge, tools and skills for sustainability can motivate WIC participants to change key individual behaviors increasing access to a safe and healthy food supply. Practical applications include further research, digital resource development and expansion to other online nutrition education programs.