

## **Title: Cell Phones, Internet, and Apps: Who's Using What in WIC?**

Contact: Julie Reeder, PhD, MPH, CHES, Senior Research Analyst, Oregon WIC program

Background/Introduction: Every two years the Oregon WIC program re-evaluates a selection of food items that are offered as part of its food packages. To gather participant input, hard copy surveys have traditionally been sent to local WIC offices. With the continued growth of internet and smart phone usage, the program sought to explore how these might be used to communicate with WIC participants.

Project Goals: 1) Determine whether survey distribution by participant email yields a representative sampling of respondents, 2) Measure participant's current cell phone, internet, and app usage.

Methods: Six hundred hard copy (HC) surveys (English/Spanish) were sent to a representative sampling of 17 of 34 local WIC agencies. In addition, an email with a link to an electronic version of the survey (ES) was sent to participants in those same agencies who provided an email address during program enrollment.

Results: The number of participant emails varied greatly between agencies and participant language. More than 30% of all respondents said they had either a basic cell phone or no cell phone at all. While only 3% of ES respondents said they hardly ever look things up on the internet, 18% of English HC respondents and 50% of Spanish respondents reported this. Only 7% of HC and 13% of ES respondents said they used a food, grocery, or nutrition app. Even among ES respondents fewer than 8% reported using their cell phone to scan UPC's or QR codes.

Summary/Discussion: Electronic technologies hold great potential for connecting WIC with its participants. However, relying solely on email addresses to gather information from WIC families may yield skewed results. Additionally, while some WIC families are ready to use smart phone or internet tools to interact with WIC, a significant number still have limited contact with these technologies.