

Assessing the Austin Free-Net DeWitty Center Computer Clinic

A preliminary report

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Presented to:

**Austin Community Technology and Telecommunications
Commission, City Hall**

May 14, 2008

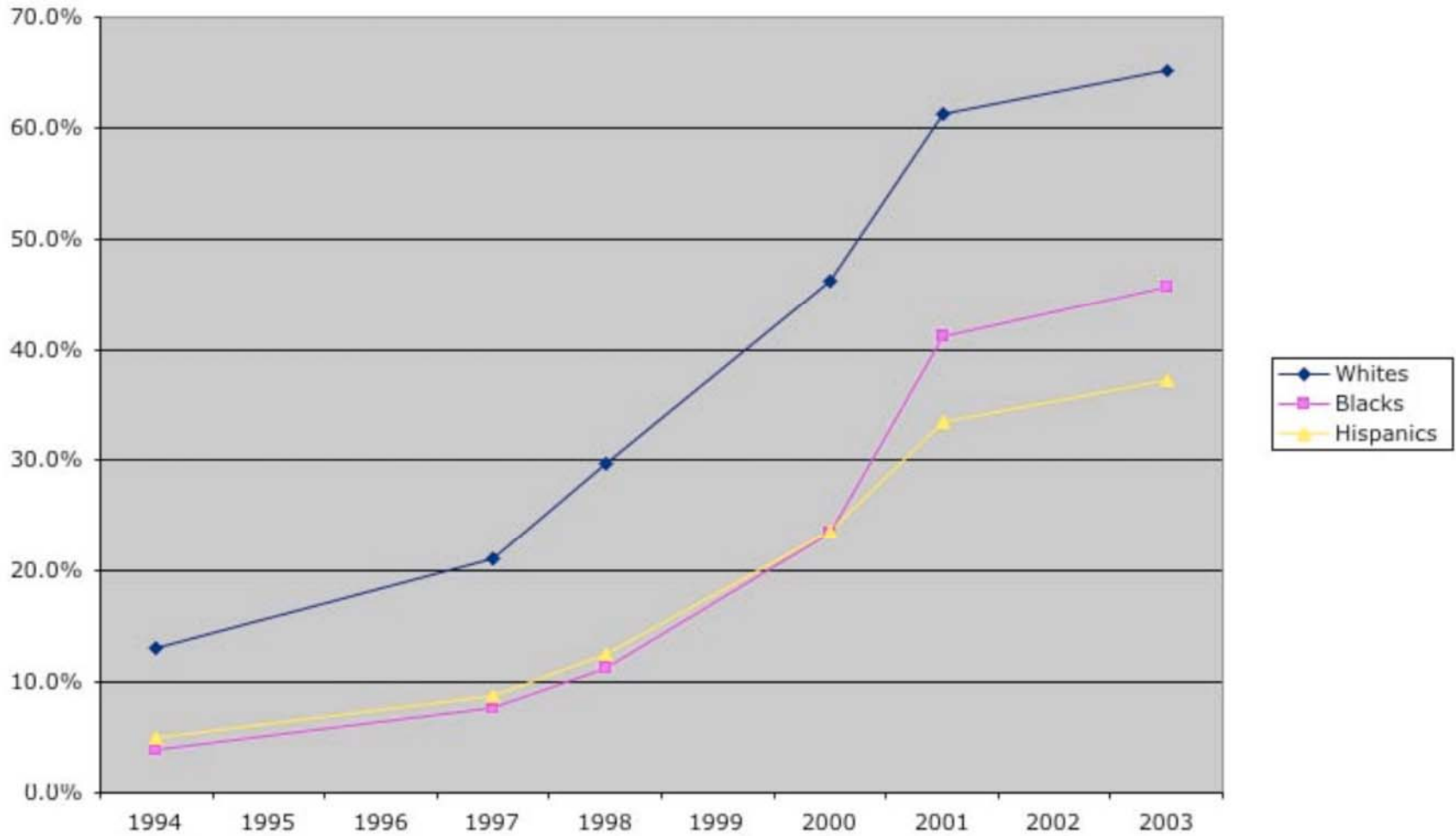
**FALLING THROUGH THE NET:A
Survey of the "Have Nots" in Rural and
Urban America**

Key Findings

- **Inserted terms like “information disadvantaged” and “technology have” & “technology have nots” into a larger discussion about the changing state of social and economic life in the U.S.**
- **Information "have nots" are disproportionately found in this country's rural areas and its central cities**

Percentage of Households with Internet Access, by Race, 1994-2003

Source: NTIA



KEY POINT:

In the 1990s the digital divide was defined largely as an ACCESS problem.

- **The emphasis was on providing access to hardware**
- **Improving access to technology outside the home**
- **Wiring schools, public libraries, and building community tech centers**

The Skills Gap

**Closing the divide is less about
creating access and more about
producing citizens who have the skills
to navigate the information and
technology landscape**

Rethinking the Technology Gap: Austin Free-Net and the Digital Divide



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Methods

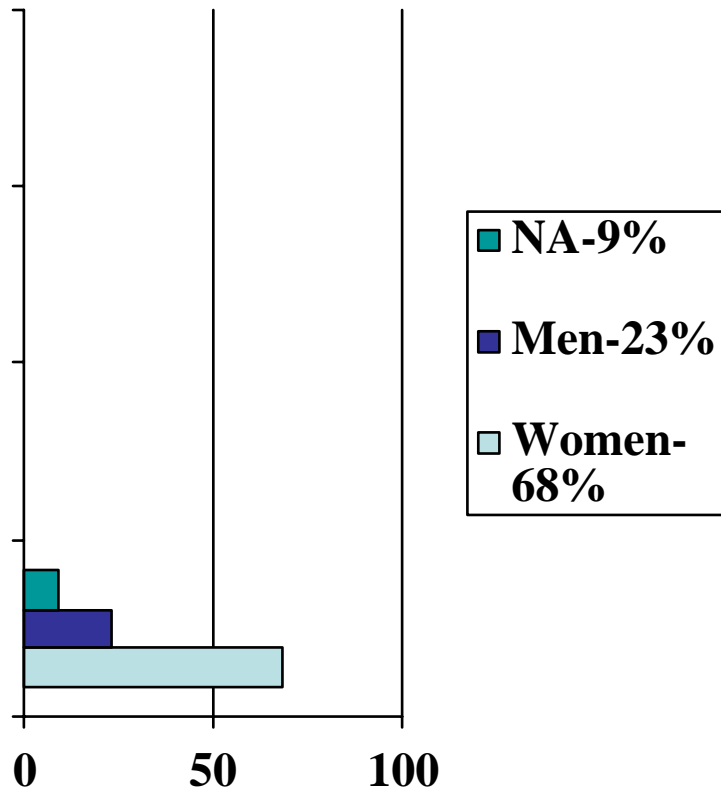
- **Collected, coded, and analyzed data from Austin Free-Net**
- **Conducted follow-up interviews with AFN clients**
- **Conducted interviews with AFN staff**

Computer Clinic Courses

What do you hope to accomplish by taking these classes?

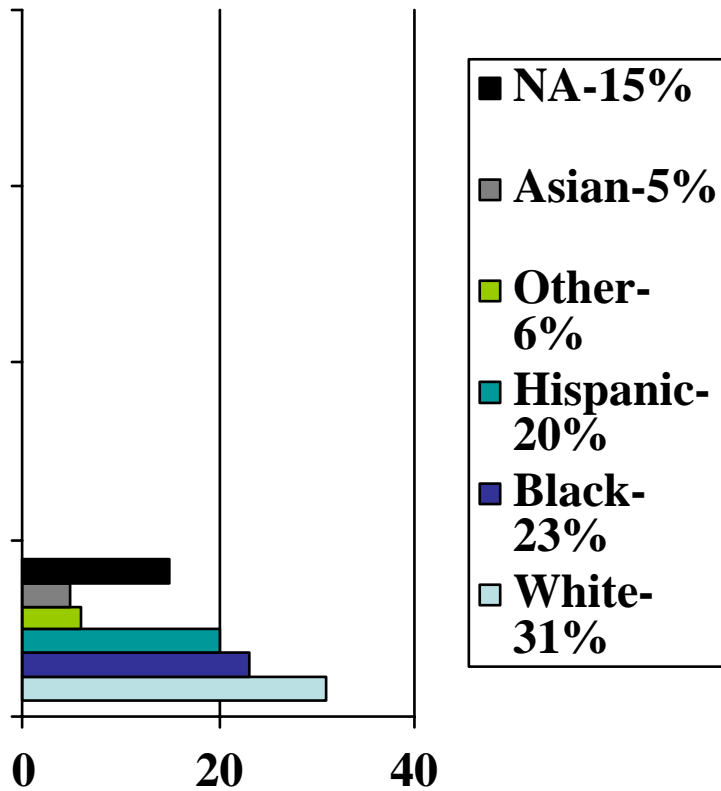
- **Improved computer skills- 76%**
- **Personal satisfaction- 27%**
- **Find a job- 23%**
- **Other- 8%**

Who's attending: Sex?



- **Why are women more assertive about upgrading their computer skills?**

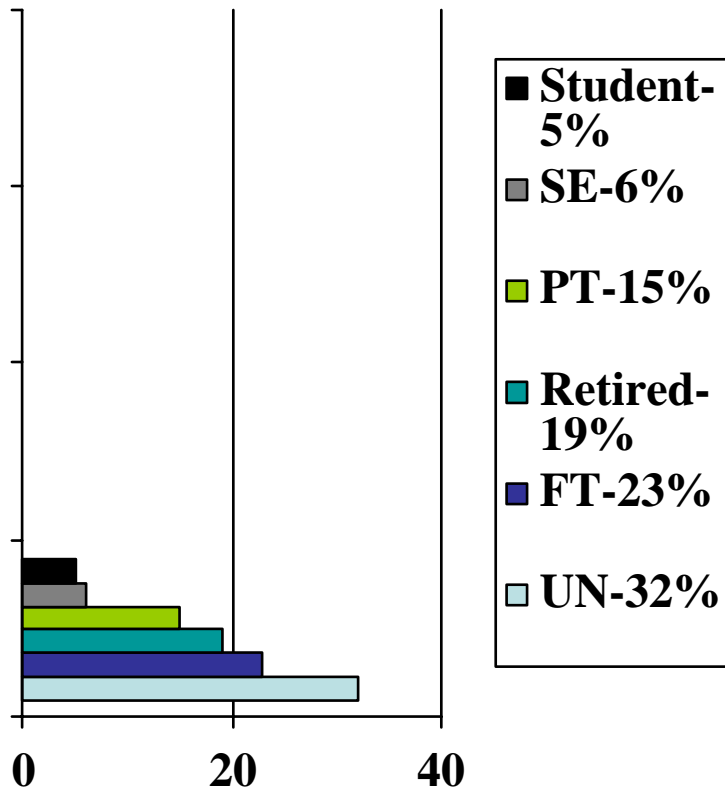
Who's attending: Race?



- The classes attract a cross-section of participants

Source: Austin Free-Net DeWitty Center, 2007

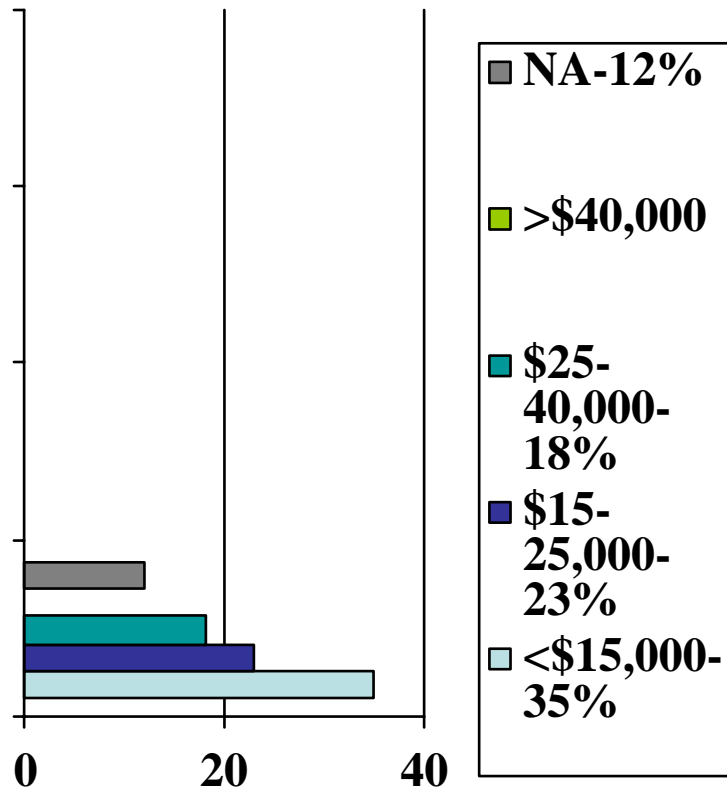
Who's attending: Employment Status?



- Almost one-third are unemployed
- Nearly one-quarter are employed full-time

Source: Austin Free-Net DeWitty Center, 2007

Who's attending: Income?



- More than half, 58% report income at \$25K or less
- Serving a population that may be unable to access computers and the Internet from home

Source: Austin Free-Net DeWitty Center, 2007

**How did you find out about
AFN-DeWitty Center?**

32%

**Friend, family, or
acquaintance**

25%

Newspaper

**What kinds of computer skills
are walking through the door?**

47%

“I have used a mouse and a keyboard but I am not always comfortable using the computer.”

27%

“I have never used a computer before. I do not know how to use a mouse or the keyboard.”

18%

“I have used the computer to type documents and to get information from the Internet.”

10%

**“I am very confident using the
computer for word processing,
Internet, and e-mail.”**

Follow-up interviews

1. Classic late adopters

- older
- low-income
- technology skeptics
- recognize the world is changing

2. Technophobia

➤ fear

➤ stress

➤ uncertainty

➤ “I’m even afraid to touch computers.”

3. A desire to improve their quality of life

➤ **professional**

➤ **personal**

➤ **“AFN has made it easier for me
to manage my diabetes.”**

**These classes are a real asset
and a source of personal
empowerment and social
mobility for those who
register.**

Thank you.

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