

FROM FEAR TO CONFIDENCE: THE DIGITAL SKILLS JOURNEY of UNDERSERVED WOMEN



Norma E. Fernandez, CEO of EveryoneOn

Published by the Benton Institute for Broadband & Society, April 2024

FROM FEAR TO CONFIDENCE: The DIGITAL SKILLS JOURNEY of UNDERSERVED WOMEN

By Norma E. Fernandez, CEO of EveryoneOn

Published by the Benton Institute for Broadband & Society

April 2024

Research and report are underwritten by the [Marjorie & Charles Benton Opportunity Fund](#)



Broadband Delivers Opportunities
and Strengthens Communities

1041 Ridge Road, Unit 214
Wilmette, IL 60091

benton.org



everyoneon.org

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 3.0 United States License. A copy of this license is available at [CC BY-NC 4.0 Deed](#) | [Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International](#)

Please include the following attribution when citing this report: Fefrnandez, Norma "From Fear to Confidence: The Digital Skills Journey of Underserved Women" Wilmette, IL: Benton Institute for Broadband & Society, April 2024. benton.org/publications/fear-to-confidence

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	4
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	6
INTRODUCTION	10
METHODOLOGY	12
MAPPING THE DIGITAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT JOURNEY of UNDERSERVED WOMEN of COLOR	19
THEME 1: Motivators to Building Digital Literacy and Skills	20
THEME 2: Family, Friends, and Community Organizations Facilitate Broadband Adoption and Learning	25
THEME 3: Juggling Fear, Domestic/Household Responsibilities and Unaffordable Internet Prices	28
THEME 4: Digital Skills Foster Confidence	31
CONCLUSION and CALL TO ACTION	35
APPENDIX A - Interview Guide	37
APPENDIX B - Survey	40
APPENDIX C - Intake Form	46
AUTHOR	51

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research project was inspired by, and only possible because of, the women who participated in the interviews and surveys. I extend my deepest gratitude to the 126 participants, extending from the San Francisco Bay Area and Los Angeles to Milwaukee, for sharing their time and experiences and trusting me with their stories. I embarked on this research project to learn about their journeys to broadband adoption and digital skills development, and I walked away with more knowledge—but most importantly, I walked away inspired, motivated, and with a more profound commitment to digital equity. This report is dedicated to them—for their perseverance, resilience, and powerful stories.

Additionally, this research project would not have been possible without the participation of various organizations and individuals.

I would like to thank the Benton Institute for Broadband & Society for funding this research project and investing in diverse digital inclusion practitioners through the Marjorie & Charles Benton Opportunity Fund. I especially appreciate Revati Prasad, vice president of programs. Her expertise and encouragement made the research and writing process a wonderful, fulfilling experience and ensured that I was effectively conveying the study findings. I cannot overstate my appreciation to Executive Director Adrienne B. Furniss for her leadership at the Benton Institute. The Institute has shepherded more than 40 years of research, informing and changing broadband policy that benefits all communities. It's not a coincidence that these two leaders happen to be women who funded and supported a research project about elevating the experiences of underserved women.

Thank you to EveryoneOn's partners in the Bay Area, Los Angeles, and Milwaukee who work with us to deliver the digital skills training to diverse communities, including the women who participated in this research project. These amazing partners are the Clinton & Bernice Rose Senior Center, Employ Milwaukee, Hispanic Foundation of Silicon Valley, Housing Authority

of the City of Milwaukee, Nava College Preparatory Academy, and Vaughn Next Century Learning Center. I also extend my appreciation to EveryoneOn’s expert cadre of digital skills instructors for helping coordinate the interviews and surveys with the study participants—and having a lasting impact on the communities we serve.

I am honored to have collaborated with Dr. Emir Estrada, associate professor at the School of Human Evolution and Social Change at Arizona State University. Dr. Estrada provided research guidance and developed the qualitative tools employed to respectfully capture the stories of the research participants.

Lastly, thank you to the entire team at EveryoneOn who contributed to the planning, design, and execution of this project. I am grateful for their dedication, passion, and unwavering support. I am also grateful for their partnership and humor, which kept me going throughout this process. They are rock stars.

Norma E. Fernandez

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In mid-2023, with funding from the Benton Institute for Broadband & Society’s Marjorie & Charles Benton Opportunity Fund, I launched a pilot study to capture the experiences and perspectives of African American/Black and Latina women who have embarked on a journey to build their digital skills in order to participate and thrive in our digital society.

Though the pandemic presented plenty of research on the barriers to broadband adoption and digital equity (e.g., lack of robust internet infrastructure and affordable internet options and limited investment in digital skills training programs), very little is known about the everyday experiences of African American/Black women and Latinas on the wrong side of the digital divide, like the ones we serve at EveryoneOn. This pilot study was designed to learn about and from these women. Specifically, it aims to understand the following:

- 1. What factors drive low-income African American/Black and Latina women to adopt broadband and learn digital skills?**
- 2. What facilitates and/or hinders their ability to connect to the internet and participate in digital skills trainings?**
- 3. What does it mean to them when they are connected and equipped with the skills needed to navigate our digital society and economy?**

A total of 126 African American/Black women and Latinas across three major cities—Los Angeles, Milwaukee, and San Jose, California—participated in interviews and surveys. My goal is to share the findings with digital inclusion practitioners, digital equity planners, corporations, the philanthropic sector, women-serving organizations, advocacy groups, and others working to address digital inequities.

THEMES

Twenty-six interviews and 100 survey responses resulted in robust data from the African American/Black women and Latinas who participated in EveryoneOn's Digital Connections program, a digital skills training. Common threads emerged in their narratives, transcending racial and ethnic boundaries.

Theme 1:

LEARNING, HELPING OTHERS, and INDEPENDENCE are MOTIVATORS to BUILD DIGITAL LITERACY and SKILLS

Participants conveyed their aspiration to enhance their digital skills because they recognize the imperative to stay connected, as well as the requisite know-how to remain current with technology to avoid falling behind in the fast-paced digital landscape. Overall, the women articulated three primary motivations behind developing their digital skills: 1) a profound eagerness to feel comfortable navigating the internet; 2) a keen interest in enhancing opportunities not only for themselves but also for their families and communities; and 3) a desire to reduce reliance on others, such as their children and friends, for assistance in conducting online activities.

Theme 2:

FAMILY, FRIENDS, and COMMUNITY SUPPORT BROADBAND ADOPTION and LEARNING

The women's participation in digital skills training was notably facilitated by robust family support. In particular, participants' children showed excitement about their involvement. Also, community partners emerged as key facilitators, emphasizing the importance of collaborative efforts, particularly with anchor institutions, to promote women's access to digital skills training.

Theme 3:

JUGGLING FEAR, DOMESTIC/HOUSEHOLD RESPONSIBILITIES, and UNAFFORDABLE INTERNET PRICES ARE REALITIES

When asked what challenges, if any, the women faced in adopting broadband and participating in digital skills trainings, several stood out. First, there is a shared universal fear about the internet and computers. Second, while not explicitly framed as challenges, most women shared the need to organize domestic responsibilities—such as preparing meals, doing laundry, and caring for parents—to accommodate their attendance at the trainings. Lastly, the majority of women (59 percent) find it somewhat difficult to pay their current internet bill, and 17 percent find it very difficult. This last challenge is significant, given the implications of lacking or having limited connectivity.

Theme 4: DIGITAL SKILLS FOSTER CONFIDENCE in LIFE

The women attended the digital skills training program to learn diverse tasks, such as using email to communicate with their children’s teachers, exploring new recipes online, and creating flyers for their volunteer activities. Their successful acquisition of these skills translated into a newfound confidence that extended beyond their digital endeavors. Remarkably, following their participation in the training, every interviewee, without exception, expressed heightened empowerment and overall confidence. Several women expressed sentiments such as “I feel like I can do anything now!”

WHY THIS MATTERS

Documenting and elevating the digital divide experiences of women, particularly low-income African American/Black and Latina women, is essential for several reasons.

There Is a Gender Digital Divide in the United States, and the Data Is Missing—In the past few years, extensive digital divide research has revealed the myriad of barriers to ubiquitous broadband access and adoption, such as digital redlining and expensive internet service options. The national research narrative lacks representation, notably of women and particularly those from diverse racial and ethnic groups, such as African American/Black women and Latinas—two of the most underrepresented sample groups. Most of the research on the [gender digital divide](#) takes a global view, which highlights the need to address digital inequities for women abroad. The limited data on the gender divide in the United States may be due in part to the fact that the digital divide wasn’t more seriously addressed until the pandemic illuminated the gaps in technology access.

States Are Developing and Implementing Their Digital Equity Plans, and Women’s Experiences Must Be Centered—State and local agencies are developing broadband deployment and digital equity plans, leveraging the unprecedented federal funding provided by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. Critical to the success of these efforts is the commitment to centering the voices and narratives of underrepresented groups, with a particular emphasis on the experiences of women, especially those belonging to low-income communities of color. By actively incorporating these perspectives, we can ensure that the resulting digital equity initiatives are inclusive and address the specific needs of diverse populations.

EveryoneOn’s [2022 national study](#) highlights five key strategies for digital equity planning that states and other jurisdictions can reference.

When Women Are Connected, Families and Communities Thrive—A key motivator for many of the study participants was a desire to help their families, whether by seeking new and improved employment opportunities or by supporting their children with schoolwork or the college application process. A few mentioned wanting to be more informed and equipped to increase their volunteer activities with churches and local community organizations. These desires and goals underscore the transformative impact of digital inclusion on broader social and economic well-being.

International research has found a [positive correlation](#) between women’s access to the internet and the overall prosperity of families and communities. Furthermore, [improved access to information and online resources](#) empowers women as decision-makers within their families, leading to better health care, education, and overall quality of life for their communities. Thus, the connection of women to the internet is not only a technological advancement but also a key driver for families and communities to flourish on a global scale.

The insights derived from this pilot study, captured through thoughtful qualitative research, reveal not just the motivations (e.g., desire to learn and help family) and barriers (e.g., unaffordable internet service) women face but also the powerful emotions and self-development they experience in their journey toward digital resilience. Access to and utilization of high-speed internet, computers, and digital skills are the obvious tangibles that result from investments in digital inclusion programs. But women’s intimate experiences of increased self-empowerment, self-love, and self-confidence—the “intangibles”—as revealed in this study are the most powerful outcomes and oftentimes not captured or even considered important data.

This report aims to contribute these valuable insights as informed by the experiences of African American/Black women and Latinas, even through this small sample, to inform and enrich the ongoing initiatives aimed at guaranteeing universal access to high-speed broadband and creating opportunities for digital skill development in all communities.

INTRODUCTION

“The internet is everything!” This is the sentiment of Lisa (fictitious name to protect the interviewee’s privacy), one of more than two dozen women I recently interviewed. Lisa, in her mid-thirties, proudly states that she was born and raised in Milwaukee, is the mother of two girls, and is the primary income earner in her household, working two jobs to provide for her family. When I asked her what the internet meant to her, she responded with such profound passion that it was clear to me that she knows what it means to be connected—and the implications if she is not. As with the interviews I had with other women in Milwaukee, Los Angeles, and San Jose, California, our conversation that day focused on understanding her journey to broadband adoption and digital literacy, and it underscored the transformative power unleashed when women have access to the internet and the wealth of online information and resources. They wield their knowledge and skills to foster personal growth and positively influence their families and communities, and they do it with a sense of purpose that is palpable.

And, yes, the internet is everything—it’s how we expand our learning through online courses, transfer money using mobile banking and financial apps, and keep up on the community events in our neighborhoods. Yet, the COVID-19 pandemic revealed that in the United States, not everyone has access to the internet and those most disproportionately affected are low-income communities of color in urban and rural settings. I see this day in and day out in my role at EveryoneOn, the nonprofit organization I lead as CEO. EveryoneOn helps unlock social and economic opportunity by connecting people in underresourced communities to affordable internet service and computers and by providing digital skills trainings.

Since 2012, EveryoneOn has addressed the digital divide. In mid-2020 we launched our digital skills training program, Digital Connections. The program offers computer and internet basics to diverse communities across the country. Within a few months of starting Digital Connections, we noticed a trend: The majority of our digital skills participants were women.



Three years later, this trend has not changed. To date, EveryoneOn has trained more than 4,000 people, and more than 90 percent of participants have been women, even though our outreach efforts haven't targeted women exclusively. The women are between the ages of 20 and 75, live in underserved communities, are predominantly African American/Black and Latina, are smartphone dependent, and have no-to-limited digital skills. Anecdotally, we've learned that these women are also mothers who found themselves helping their K-12 children with remote learning during the height of the pandemic, caregivers who scheduled telemedicine appointments for their aging parents, community college students who needed introduction classes to computers and the internet, and community leaders. Essentially, they are the experts on the digital divide and digital equity because they have stood at the center of what it means to be not connected.

These populations are frequently underrepresented in storytelling about the digital divide. I sought to capture their stories, identify themes, and elevate their journeys in pursuit of increasing their broadband adoption, computer ownership, and improving their digital skills. Now more than ever, we need to ensure that women, particularly underserved women like those we serve at EveryoneOn, are informing policies and initiatives that promote digital equity.

METHODOLOGY

This pilot study documents the experiences of and viewpoints on adopting high-speed internet and digital skills development, specifically from the African American/Black and Latina women who have participated in EveryoneOn's Digital Connections program, a digital-skills training. Since the majority of participants in EveryoneOn's Digital Connections program are women, it provided a unique and timely opportunity to learn from their experiences and insights.

I used in-person and phone interviews as well as online surveys to conduct this study. The core of the study was the in-depth qualitative interviews because they offer a nuanced, layered look into the lives and experiences of these women.

The intent was to have equal representation of African American/Black women and Latinas in the interviews and surveys; however, digital skills training schedules in Milwaukee (where the majority of participants are African American/Black women) did not coincide with the timing of conducting this study. As a result, only 8 percent of the data collected and shared in this report is from African American/Black women.



INTERVIEW and SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

26 interviewees

- 8 African American/Black women (interviews conducted in English)
- 18 Latina women (interviews conducted in Spanish)

126 survey respondents

- 9 women identified as African American/Black
- 117 women identified as Latina (combination of Mexicans and Central Americans)
- 26 interviewee respondents
- 100 additional respondents (recruited from EveryoneOn Digital Connections participant pool)

RECRUITMENT

All interview and survey participants self-selected to participate based on the following criteria:

- Identified as an African American/Black or Latina woman
- Lived in the San Francisco Bay Area, Los Angeles, or Milwaukee
- Recent participant in EveryoneOn's Digital Connections program
- Willingness to participate in an interview and/or respond to an online survey

I recruited 100 percent of the study participants from EveryoneOn’s Digital Connections program, a five-week-long training that improves participants’ digital literacy so they feel confident accessing critical services like health care, employment opportunities, and online educational resources. The curriculum is taught by EveryoneOn trained instructors and is delivered to cohorts of 15 adults with no-to-limited digital skills. Topics include:

- Connecting with video platforms like Zoom and Google Meet
- Conducting internet searches
- Using email and Google apps
- Creating résumés
- Building financial literacy and learning to budget
- Exploring digital content and resources such as LinkedIn Learning and Ready, Set, Bank

Digital Connections is delivered in virtual and hybrid formats. In hybrid formats, participants have the opportunity to attend in-person sessions and receive hands-on support from the instructors, partner organizations, and one another. Each participant receives a donated laptop to facilitate their ability to learn and to call their own.

Participants, including the women who participated in this study, learn about Digital Connections through EveryoneOn’s diverse partner organizations in cities where we operate, including the Bay Area, Los Angeles, and Milwaukee. Local partners, including nonprofits, schools, and senior community centers, support with outreach, scheduling, and onsite logistics.

Information about the pilot study, including objectives and participant criteria, were disseminated to recent graduates of Digital Connections via the instructors and EveryoneOn’s local partners. The interviews were scheduled with support from the local partners, and the online surveys (Google Forms) were distributed within a week of a completed Digital Connections session.

INTERVIEW and SURVEY DESIGN

The interview guide was developed by Dr. Emir Estrada, associate professor at the School of Human Evolution and Social Change at Arizona State University. Dr. Estrada is a sociologist and qualitative researcher who examines gender and immigration. The survey questions were informed by the interview questions and were reviewed by Dr. Estrada.

The interview guide (see Appendix A) consisted of four sections and 21 questions designed to understand the following:

- 1. How did participants learn about the training and what interested them in the training;**
- 2. What was their journey to adoption and developing digital skills like;**
- 3. How did they feel post-training; and**
- 4. Who are they as humans (e.g., did they migrate from another state/ country, are they employed, what is their language preference).**

Each interviewee also completed an intake form to capture demographic data. I conducted and recorded the interviews in English and Spanish, depending on the language preference of each participant. No names were captured in the interview recordings to protect the anonymity of the participants.

The survey (see Appendix B) consisted of 24 questions, captured demographic information, and asked questions about broadband affordability, digital skills confidence levels pre- and post-training, and what arrangements needed to be made in order to participate in Digital Connections. Participants were able to use their newly developed digital skills to access and complete the survey via Google Forms in either English or Spanish.

The women were appropriately compensated for the time they dedicated to participating and sharing their lived experiences. Accordingly, interviewees were compensated via a \$125 gift card, and survey respondents entered a drawing for a \$50 gift card.

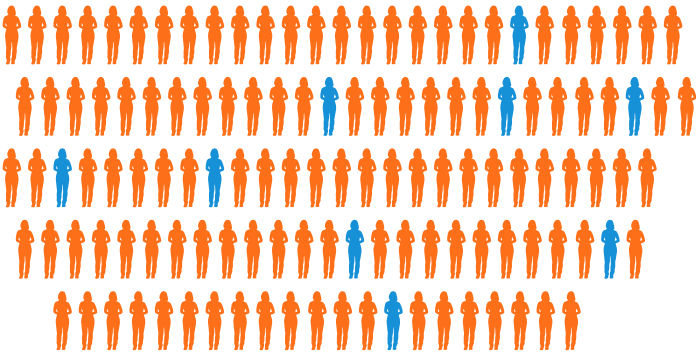
Lastly, it was important to me to establish trust and a sense of privacy with the interviewees. To do this, I took the time to do the following at each interview:

- Introduced myself and the mission of EveryoneOn, and thanked them for their time;
- Shared a one-page description of the study (see Appendix C) that detailed the objectives and process at the beginning of the interview (including how their insights were going to be used), and also provided a voice-over of the document in a conversational tone;
- Asked which language they preferred to conduct the interview in;
- Informed them that the interview was going to be recorded and emphasized that to ensure privacy, I wouldn't use their name;
- If relevant, shared a bit about myself, my family, and my experiences, as a way to establish relatedness and convey understanding; and
- Reminded them that their insights are valuable and that I look forward to sharing the final report with them.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Following is a breakdown of the demographic characteristics of the women who participated in the interviews and online survey.

RACE and ETHNICITY



9 women identified as **African American/Black**

117 women identified as **Latina** (combination of Mexicans and Central Americans)

GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

65% of participants are based in the **Bay Area**, including **San Jose** and **San Francisco**

27% of participants are based in **Los Angeles**

8% of participants are based in **Milwaukee**



AGE

The average age range of all participants is **41-50** years old. The breakdown:

47% are **41-50** years

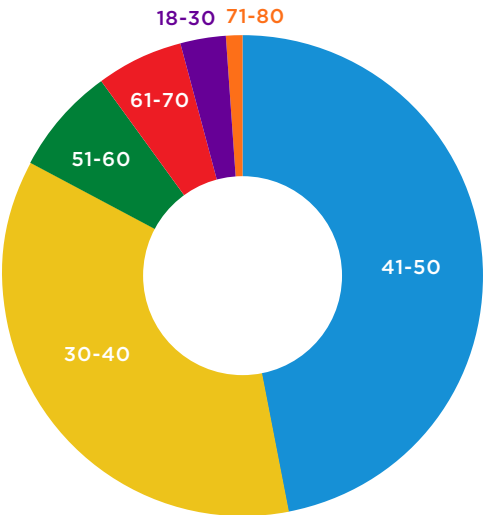
36% are **30-40** years

7% are **51-60** years

6% are **61-70** years

3% are **18-30** years

1% are **71-80** years



There were noticeable age differences between the African American/Black women and the Latinas who participated in the interviews. For example, **seven out of the eight African American/Black interviewees are above the age of 51, with four women between the ages of 61 and 70.** Of the 18 Latina interviewees, **nine are between the ages of 41 and 50, and seven are between the ages of 31-40.**

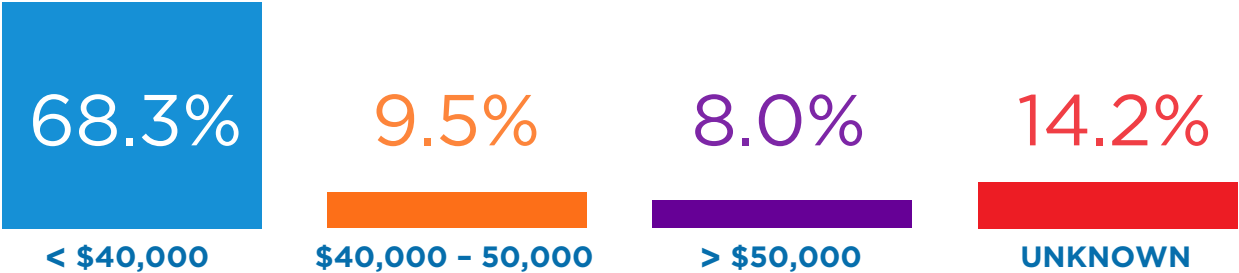
The age difference between the African American/Black women and Latinas is due to the diversity of community partners EveryoneOn engages to deliver the digital skills trainings. In Milwaukee, the partners we engaged at the time this study was conducted included a community center and an employment training program, both serving older adults. In the Bay Area and Los Angeles, the partners included K-12 schools and parent education programs targeting parents of K-12 students.

CHILDREN and DEPENDENTS

All of the women who participated in this study are parents; **their average number of children is 2.8.** The African American/Black women had no school-age children in the household, and 100 percent of the Latina participants had school-age children in the household.

The interviewees were also asked if there are any dependents living in the household: **five have dependents such as parents and grandchildren.**

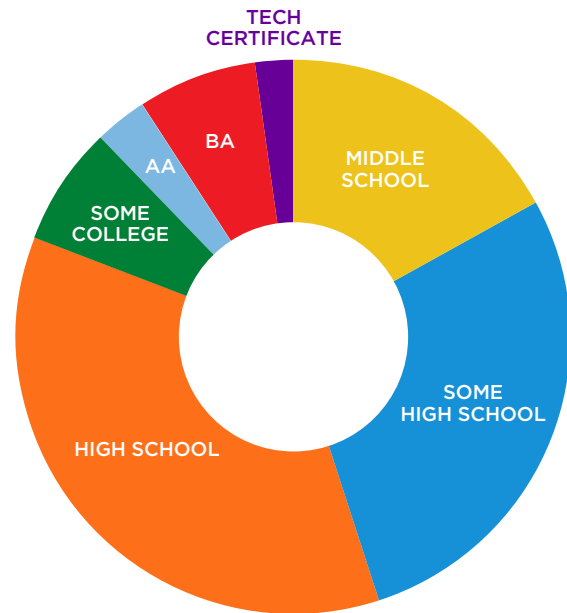
HOUSEHOLD INCOME



- Household income is **less than \$40,000 for 68.3 percent** of participants
- Household income is **between \$40,000 and \$50,000 for 9.5 percent** of participants
- Household income is **\$50,000 or above for 8.0 percent** of participants
- **14.2 percent reported being unemployed**; however, the survey form did not ask them to elaborate on whether there is income other than salary, such as unemployment benefits

EDUCATION

- 17%** have middle school education
- 28%** have some high school education
- 36%** graduated from high school
- 7%** have some college education
- 3%** have an A.A. degree
- 7%** have a B.A. degree
- 2%** have a certificate in a technical field



EMPLOYMENT

38% reported being employed

PLACE of BIRTH

In order to uphold participant privacy and foster a comfortable study environment, inquiries regarding immigration status were deliberately omitted from this study. Nevertheless, we obtained valuable insights by asking the 26 interviewees about their place of birth. Strikingly, all but two disclosed being born outside their present state of residence. The breakdown reveals the following:

24 were born out of state, coming from states such as **Arkansas, Illinois,** and **Mississippi**, and countries such as **Mexico** (primarily) and **El Salvador**

2 were born in their current state of residence: **California** and **Wisconsin**

Despite variations in age, language, and cultural practices documented between the African American/Black women and Latina interviewees, a common thread emerges in their shared migration experiences, influencing and shaping their identities.

MAPPING THE DIGITAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT JOURNEY OF UNDERSERVED WOMEN OF COLOR

Since the launch of Digital Connections three years ago, the demand for EveryoneOn's digital skills training program has grown consistently. Our community partners and participants, predominantly composed of women of color residing in underserved communities, express an ongoing need for additional training opportunities. The enthusiasm is palpable not just in their requests but also in the post-training surveys, which overflow with positive feedback, and vibrant images capturing the participants' joyous smiles. Intrigued by this enthusiasm, I decided to delve deeper into understanding the motivations propelling underserved women of color toward embracing the internet and honing their digital skills, as well as the barriers inhibiting them.

The following sections delineate the four key themes identified through interviews and surveys with 126 women, providing a comprehensive overview of the journey they embarked on to develop their digital skills. The themes map the motivators sparking their journey (theme 1), external support propelling their progress (theme 2), overcoming fears and challenges (theme 3), and ultimately achieving skill milestones, accompanied by a renewed sense of self-confidence and empowerment (theme 4). Moreover, the themes reveal that the study participants' personal and collective journeys are defined by powerful desires and emotions. These range from a profound passion for learning and helping others, grappling with embarrassment and fear, and experiencing dependence on others, to demonstrating determination, achieving self-fulfillment, and fostering self-love. These sentiments underscore that while the catalyst and outcome of any digital inclusion activity may focus on increasing access to the internet, the ultimate goal and outcome may be igniting self-empowerment.

Theme 1: Motivators to Building Digital Literacy and Skills

The interviews and survey responses illustrate that the women were driven to adopt broadband and develop digital skills because of a combination of factors. An overarching theme is the awareness and understanding of the power of the internet, recognizing that staying connected is crucial for virtually every aspect of modern life. As a Milwaukee interviewee emphasized, “The internet is everything!” This sentiment resonates throughout the study, with participants demonstrating a profound understanding of the internet’s significance, acknowledging the need to have skills in order to stay connected and conduct essential tasks like scheduling medical appointments, shopping online, and managing finances through online banking. Beyond this universal recognition, three distinct factors emerge as pivotal motivators driving these women toward broadband adoption and digital skill development.

Learning and growth—Not surprisingly, 100 percent of the interviewees and survey participants attended the digital skills training to learn how to safely and confidently navigate their computers and the internet so that they can perform common activities like using email, searching for information, and using Zoom. Beyond everyday use, the women expressed a deep desire to seek out better opportunities for themselves and explore new things. This is what they shared when asked, “What do you hope to do/accomplish with your new skills?”:

- 45%** would like to learn new things
- 23%** would like to take online courses
- 13%** would like to schedule telemedicine appointments
- 12%** would like to apply for jobs
- 4%** would like to apply for public benefits
- 3%** would like to connect with loved ones

Their desires are more fully expressed in their responses:

“Learn and practice more English.” –BAY AREA PARTICIPANT

“To have better opportunities and apply for jobs that would require my new skills.” —MILWAUKEE PARTICIPANT

“Learning to create spreadsheets and other office applications.”
—MILWAUKEE PARTICIPANT

“Learn about the efficient management of current devices and programs that help me improve as a mother of students and empower me when looking for alternatives for work, entrepreneurship, and training.” —BAY AREA PARTICIPANT

“Continue learning to value myself as a woman and then continue learning more how to use a computer and be able to develop many more things that I did not know before.”
—BAY AREA PARTICIPANT

“Make my medical appointments and know how to answer emails and [make] purchases since my daughters have already gone to college and the little one can’t help me.”
—LOS ANGELES PARTICIPANT

Helping others—Another common motivator among women, transcending differences in race/ethnicity and age, was using their digital skills to contribute meaningfully to their families and communities. This is not an isolated phenomenon. Women, regardless of their cultural backgrounds, frequently engage in activities that support their children’s education and actively participate in community volunteer efforts. Although this study did not delve into the complex dynamics of gender roles, expectations, or cultural norms, it is noteworthy that women often assume significant roles related to children’s educational support and community volunteering.

The mothers in this study group expressed helping their children as one of the primary motivators behind acquiring high-speed internet and developing their digital skills. Out of the 26 interviewees, 14 (53 percent) mothers cited wanting to be able to help their kids with homework and other school-related activities. Of survey respondents, 18 (18 percent) cited similar sentiments. One story shared by a mother in Los Angeles stands out because it speaks to her frustration with her use of technology and also the lengths to which she went to help her children. The following was shortened for clarity:

“I believe that the pandemic made us live in a very difficult times...and it made me realize that I did not have the knowledge or skills to use Chromebooks or access the internet. My child’s teachers noticed he wasn’t joining classes via Zoom, and she called to ask why. I explained that I was trying to help them log on but that I couldn’t because I didn’t know how to. I asked the teacher for help and she walked me to the steps to turn on the computer, log on to Zoom, and access the assignments—all this via phone. She was very patient. That’s how I started to slowly learn a little bit about technology and support my children to attend virtual classes. From then on, I decided that when classes resumed in person, I would ask the school to provide computer classes for the parents. So, I was happy to learn that [EveryoneOn’s] Digital Connections was being offered at the school and I signed up for it.”

In addition, knowing how to keep their children safe online and monitoring their internet usage was a priority for those who have young children at home. One mother cited applying her new digital skills to help her daughter apply to colleges and for financial aid.

Many of the women are also active citizens and volunteer in their communities. Several shared their desire to use their skills to create flyers for their churches, stay abreast of school board meetings and what elected officials are prioritizing, and create spreadsheets in their roles as community leaders. This collective commitment underscores the broader societal impact of women leveraging their digital proficiency for the betterment of their communities.

Becoming independent—The recurrent theme of becoming independent surfaced frequently during the interviews. **Out of the 26 individuals interviewed, a striking 23 candidly revealed experiencing a sense of embarrassment and dependence on family members, especially younger kids, for assistance in navigating their computers and engaging in online activities.** This sentiment was echoed by three women in the survey responses. Notably, the high percentage of interviewees highlighting their reliance on family or others for digital assistance suggests that if the survey had included a specific question addressing this aspect, the overall count of women expressing such experiences and sentiments would likely have been even higher.

The women described their kids, primarily between the ages of seven and early twenties, as the primary helpers. Some women also noted nieces, friends, and colleagues as helpers. In addition, a few shared that fellow Digital Connection training participants offered support. The women would ask for help, oftentimes reluctantly, on a variety of tasks, including but not



limited to responding to emails from their kids' teachers, logging on to Zoom or other video platforms for meetings, attaching files to an email, creating flyers for meetings, searching for information online, and paying bills online. Several women described their experiences:

“Out of fear, I wouldn't open the computer. The only thing I would use was the phone, but that was also difficult for me. I participated in the class to learn everything. I have four sons, and the eldest always did everything for me. Then he left, and I'd ask the others for favors to do things online. Then another son left, and the two sons that are left were busy with their activities. They would tell me, 'Mom, why don't you learn?' I would feel powerless.” —LOS ANGELES PARTICIPANT

“It's kind of embarrassing to have to keep asking the person, 'Can you help me with this?' They don't mind helping, but at some point you start internalizing, 'Oh, they think I'm slow.’”
—MILWAUKEE PARTICIPANT

“My kids help me but don't teach me.” —LOS ANGELES PARTICIPANT

“I would ask my sister-in-law, my eldest son, and sometimes my nieces for help. Sometimes I wouldn’t mind asking them for help, but other times I would feel bad because I know they are busy and I was using their time. On several occasions, I’d ask my younger kids for help to pay bills online via my phone but felt concerned about them making a mistake, like sending two payments.” —BAY AREA PARTICIPANT

“I think they [older kids] feel like it’s too elementary. You know, nobody has time to sit down and show you that.”
—MILWAUKEE PARTICIPANT

Based on these experiences, the women emphasized that learning to navigate the internet on their own and specifically becoming self-fulfilled and independent was a significant motivator.

“Now I don’t feel stuck. I can do it myself.” —MILWAUKEE PARTICIPANT

“I don’t go around asking other people for help anymore.”
—BAY AREA PARTICIPANT

“I feel liberated now. And if I need help, I refer to my notebook to get through the task.” —LOS ANGELES PARTICIPANT

“Before, I would have to wait on the teacher to call me, when she had time, to explain something to me. Now I feel more sure and confident that I can send her an email and don’t have to depend on her availability.” —LOS ANGELES PARTICIPANT

“Now I do things for myself like open emails and respond. I feel independent.” —LOS ANGELES PARTICIPANT

This desire for autonomy and the quest for knowledge underscore the significance of digital skills trainings as a means to uplift women in their pursuit of a better future for themselves and their families. Also, it is essential to dispel the misconception that individuals who lack connectivity or digital skills are indifferent to acquiring them. This theory is false, as evidenced by the thoughts and feelings shared by the participants.

Theme 2: Family, Friends, and Community Organizations Facilitate Broadband Adoption and Learning

Family, friends, and community organizations play a pivotal role in facilitating women's connectivity to the internet and fostering their development of digital skills. For example, as revealed in the interviews, 100 percent of the women reported receiving support and encouragement from their family members and friends throughout their digital skills development process. A snapshot of their experiences:

“We all came to the trainings with the knowledge that each of us didn't know how to use the computer. So no one felt like they were dumb. And that is important. A lot of women... we don't want to feel like we don't know what we're doing or what's wrong with me. We all made everyone feel like we're all learning together.” —Milwaukee participant

“My mom has always been very supportive of me, and she encouraged my participation in the training. And my daughter was also very excited for me and noticed we had similar computers so immediately showed me how to do new things.”
—LOS ANGELES PARTICIPANT

“I created more social connections with the older adults in the class and helped someone. It made me feel good to support.”
—MILWAUKEE PARTICIPANT



“My family was very supportive. One of my daughters took care of my grandchild, whom I typically babysit, so that I could attend the training.” –LOS ANGELES PARTICIPANT

“My daughter who is in fifth grade said, ‘My mom is in school again!’ and that was motivational.” –BAY AREA PARTICIPANT

Similar to the inspiration and motivation one might find when attending college or making a career pivot, individuals draw strength and encouragement from those in their immediate circles. Regardless of the tool (the computer) or platform (the internet), the process of learning is oftentimes intertwined with a sense of community, where support and guidance from close connections play a pivotal role in fostering enthusiasm and perseverance. As three participants shared:

“My kids would remind me to attend the training. It was beautiful and it made me happy. I noticed that they were interested in what I was learning and asked me questions. Then they started to teach me things too. My husband also rearranged his schedule for me to attend the training.” –BAY AREA PARTICIPANT

“I would also help the other moms who were having challenges connecting to Zoom. All the moms would talk to each other and help each other as much as possible—we created a community.”

—LOS ANGELES PARTICIPANT

“It was a family affair—my family supported me. We all knew the trainings would be a huge benefit to me.”

—LOS ANGELES PARTICIPANT

Based on the survey data and anecdotes shared during and after the interviews, Digital Connections may have served as the sole or one of the few formal training experiences for many women, particularly those who did not graduate from high school (45 percent of participants fell into this category). Given this, the support and motivation provided during their training sessions assumed paramount importance, considering the unique position this program held as a potentially rare, but hopefully not the last, educational opportunity for a significant proportion of the participants.

The collaborative efforts of family and community organizations are instrumental and contribute significantly to narrowing the gender gap in digital access and proficiency—this cannot be overstated. Local organizations, such as nonprofits, advocacy groups, schools, and public housing agencies, often serve as crucial intermediaries, bridging the digital divide for underserved communities. For example, current efforts to generate awareness about the Affordable Connectivity Program, a monthly federal subsidy for internet service for eligible households, are being led by such entities, given their expertise providing critical services to underserved communities.

At EveryoneOn, we collaborate extensively with multiple organizations to engage diverse populations as we deliver Digital Connections: 100 percent of the study participants learned about the training through our community partners. The organizations play an essential role helping us connect directly to training participants, distribute the computers participants will use, and provide hands-on technical support tailored to each community. Additionally, these organizations provide and foster a supportive environment where EveryoneOn hosts the trainings either in person or in a hybrid format (virtual and in person). During the interviews and in conversations outside of the interviews, the participants expressed appreciation for attending the trainings in spaces they were familiar with and comfortable in, and where they have built relationships and trust with the organizations and other participants.

Moreover, because the study participants are already being served by the partner organizations in some way—whether through job training, community services, or parent workshops—the wraparound support that includes digital inclusion programming, such as

digital skills training, not only enhances the existing services but also addresses the evolving needs of the women in an increasingly digital society. This integrated approach provides a comprehensive and personal support system that encourages participants to navigate the digital landscape while complementing the broader spectrum of online resources and services provided by the partner organizations. Lastly, several of EveryoneOn’s partners promote the Affordable Connectivity Program. As trusted community anchor institutions, they play a key role in messaging and providing enrollment support to get more people connected to affordable internet options. Supporting these organizations through strategic investments is crucial for bridging the digital divide for women, yielding positive outcomes that benefit entire communities.

Theme 3: Juggling Fear, Domestic/Household Responsibilities, and Unaffordable Internet Prices

This pilot study sought to uncover the potential challenges faced by African American/Black women and Latinas in their digital skills development. It became evident that, irrespective of race/ethnicity and age, participants commonly grappled with fear of technology, domestic/household responsibilities, and unaffordable internet prices.

Fear of technology—The interviews and survey responses revealed that there is a universal and paralyzing fear about the internet and computers among the women who attend Digital Connections. This fear stems from the unknown, past negative experiences, concerns about breaking something, and a lack of personal computers for learning—many had never owned their own device until Digital Connections provided one for them to keep after the training. Women described their fear in this way:

“Before taking the digital skills training, I felt I didn’t know how to use the internet. I was scared. I was scared to open an email and commit an error. I was timid and fearful. I realized afterwards that these were superficial fears.” —LOS ANGELES PARTICIPANT

“There were times that I conducted searches on Google but I never knew which sites were safe or scams.”
—LOS ANGELES PARTICIPANT

“Out of fear I wouldn’t touch or open the computer my kids had at home. I didn’t want to erase anything they had on there.”

—BAY AREA PARTICIPANT

“I didn’t feel very confident about my skills. I had a fear of going online even though I was interested in researching lots of things. Also, I didn’t feel comfortable utilizing the devices at home. I thought I was going to break things.”

—BAY AREA PARTICIPANT

Fortunately, the women who initially expressed fear also reported a positive shift as they progressed in skill development and gained confidence in navigating the internet safely. This transformation is substantiated by survey responses: Post-training, 52 percent expressed a high level of confidence, and 45 percent reported moderate confidence in their skills, a notable increase compared with the 16 percent and 27 percent, respectively, who reported such confidence levels before the training. Anecdotally, it is clear that in-person and hands-on support plays a crucial role in alleviating apprehension related to technology. Patient and caring instructors contribute to this process by demystifying devices and the internet through applied learning instruction.

Domestic/household responsibilities—The majority of study participants (62 percent) had to coordinate household chores, such as preparing meals, doing laundry, and arranging care for parents and children, and other responsibilities to accommodate their ability to attend digital skills training. The survey responses illustrate the following:

52% had to rearrange household responsibilities to make the trainings

10% had to arrange for childcare

Household responsibilities included several activities, as captured in the interviews:

“Usually I did laundry on the days of the training, so I changed my laundry days to be able to attend.”

—BAY AREA PARTICIPANT

“I chose to attend the morning classes so that I had the evening to pick up my daughter and cook dinner.”

—LOS ANGELES PARTICIPANT

“I would prepare everything early in the morning, before attending the training.” –LOS ANGELES PARTICIPANT

The women pragmatically described these household chores not as impediments but as inherent expectations necessitating attention in order to attend the trainings. These are their realities—unpaid household labor needs to get done no matter what. This is the reality for millions of women in the United States. According to the [New York Times](#), based on data from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, “Women perform an average of four hours of unpaid work per day compared to men’s two and a half hours.” While these women successfully navigated arrangements and accommodations, what about the thousands of other women who have yet to start their digital skills journey because of household responsibilities and childcare challenges? This underscores the critical role of policy. Policies must be designed to provide robust support systems, especially for low-income women of color, ensuring equitable access to opportunities that propel both personal and familial advancement. The data and personal insights presented in this report serve as valuable resources to inform policies aimed at bridging the digital divide and fostering gender parity.



Unaffordable internet—In an era where the internet has evolved into an indispensable platform to access vital information and participate fully in the digital economy, the cost of the internet should not be unreachable or a burden for anyone. Yet the majority of women who participated in this study conveyed their household’s struggle with internet costs. Specifically, 59 percent of survey respondents find it somewhat difficult to pay their current internet bill, and 17 percent find it very difficult.

When it comes to costs, 38 percent are paying \$60 or more on their monthly internet bill, and 19 percent pay \$20 to \$40 a month. Though the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), the federal internet subsidy program, has been around for more than two years, 47 percent of women reported that they are not enrolled in it, and 25 percent were not familiar with it and therefore have been paying prices that are unaffordable for them and their families. Only 21 percent are currently enrolled in ACP. In addition, 7 percent indicated that they attempted to enroll but it was too difficult.

The implications of unaffordable internet access and the possibility of losing connectivity are great and should not be ignored. As Congress considers refunding ACP, and as states and local municipalities develop digital equity plans and roll out broadband infrastructure projects, affordability needs to be prioritized. However, this endeavor requires a foundational shift—an acknowledgment that the internet is a universal and essential service. To actualize this vision, we must enact policies that unequivocally reflect these values, ensuring that affordable and accessible internet becomes a fundamental right for all.

Theme 4: Digital Skills Foster Confidence

The potency of both reliable internet access and digital skills lies not just in the access to information and the opportunities it facilitates but also in helping to tap into self-awareness and confidence. This noteworthy effect was shared by the African American/Black women and Latinas who participated in Digital Connections and in this study. The interviewees and survey participants came to the digital skills training program to learn computer and internet basics and walked away inspired, motivated, with newfound confidence, and eager to continue their learning and growth. Through both interviews and survey responses, *100 percent of participants overwhelmingly communicated a burgeoning confidence in their ability to apply their growing digital skills in practical ways, viewing themselves not just as learners but as self-empowered women, mothers, and community leaders.*

Here are a few of the responses women shared when asked how they felt about themselves after the Digital Connections training:

“I felt lost, and now I feel more prepared, and life feels easier, day-to-day activities. I feel empowered.” –LOS ANGELES PARTICIPANT

“I feel like I can do anything now!” –BAY AREA PARTICIPANT

“That I am capable of learning and that I should not be afraid. I am very proud of myself.” –BAY AREA PARTICIPANT

“I learned that it is never too late to learn a skill, and with what I learned, I can help other people in my community and at home as well.” –LOS ANGELES PARTICIPANT

“I feel more alive...like I started to explore a new world I didn't know existed.” –LOS ANGELES PARTICIPANT

“I enjoyed taking my time and learning something for myself, not for somebody else. I learned that I can do more and I can be better at it.” –MILWAUKEE PARTICIPANT

“To have love for myself.” –BAY AREA PARTICIPANT

During the in-person interviews, the women's expressions were rich with emotion, hope, and a palpable sense of confidence. It's difficult to capture the sentiment in writing, but it can be heard in the recordings, and certainly felt in the interview rooms. A few women held back tears when sharing how much it meant to them to learn something new and in particular discover that they can build skills and knowledge on a topic and tool that had seemed overwhelming and scary to them. A participant in Milwaukee expressed, “I'm not afraid to navigate through the system [internet] anymore.”

In addition, although this study did not focus on evaluating the efficacy of EveryoneOn's Digital Connections program, survey responses revealed that the participants gained the skills they sought to develop. Participants were asked to describe how confident they were with their digital skills before participating in the training. The women reported the following:

- 16%** were very confident
- 27%** were somewhat confident
- 37%** were not too confident
- 20%** were not confident at all

The women’s confidence increased significantly after training:

- 52%** were very confident
- 45%** were somewhat confident
- 3%** were not too confident
- 0%** reported not confident at all

The following testimonials capture how the women are using their new skills to conduct online activities:

“I try new things on the internet, like adding a signature line to email, clearing out spam, jumping onto Zoom, and things like that.” –LOS ANGELES PARTICIPANT

“I am able to pull up my [job readiness] assignment and get it done on my laptop.” –MILWAUKEE PARTICIPANT

“I learned how to send a message to the teachers and open the email.” –LOS ANGELES PARTICIPANT

“I learned the efficient and safe use of my email, to look for applications and pages that help me develop as a mother and person. I learned to use the keyboard more easily and to get to know the Chromebook device better, to make documents in Google Docs and to use Google Drive.” –BAY AREA PARTICIPANT

“Now I’m saving a lot of time by paying my bills online, scheduling appointments, and requesting city services like a new trash bin for my house. Before I was doing these things over the phone, which required a lot of my time.”

—LOS ANGELES PARTICIPANT

As federal agencies, states, and local governments continue to invest in digital inclusion initiatives and programs, it is imperative that significant and long-term investments be made in digital skills training programs that provide hands-on support to women. The findings from this pilot study underscore the importance of such investments, highlighting that fostering digital resilience in women goes beyond getting more people online. These initiatives play a crucial role in cultivating confidence, nurturing independence, and igniting aspirations. The ripple effects of such investments are profound; when women are fortified with confidence and fueled by dreams, the resulting benefits are not only personal but extend exponentially, enriching the lives of individuals and society as a whole.

CONCLUSION AND CALL TO ACTION

The data captured in this research project are rich, thought-provoking, and evocative, but they only scratch the surface in documenting and understanding the broadband adoption and digital skills journeys of women, and specifically African American/Blacks and Latinas. As the United States continues its historic investments to foster digital equity, investing in underserved women of color is part of the solution. After all, **women make up 51 percent of the U.S. population, and African American/Black and Latina women collectively make up 20 percent, representing powerful economic and voting blocks.**

To get started, the report findings reveal several opportunities for policymakers, corporations, private philanthropy, research groups, advocacy groups, and women-serving organizations, including EveryoneOn:

Build on this research project—EveryoneOn intends to dive deeper into each theme. We also envision expanding the sample size to ensure a wider representation of African American/Black women. We welcome the opportunity to work with diverse groups on this project. And we encourage others to also launch more in-depth research projects that center the experiences of underserved women of color.

Diversify digital divide research samples—Groups conducting digital divide research should expand sample sizes to specifically engage underserved women of color, a population that is likely underrepresented in national samples. A few recommendations include:

- Partner with women-focused or women-serving organizations to engage this target population. Community organizations are trusted institutions that can serve as messengers and facilitators;

- Ensure that survey instruments are culturally sensitive and inclusive;
- Ensure that researchers are culturally competent and sensitive to the experiences of women of color and, if conducting interviews, ideally speak the primary language of the interviewees; and
- Compensate research participants for their time and participation.

Fund digital skills trainings—As the research findings underscore, digital skills trainings have a profound impact on women. Funding trainings that introduce computer and internet basics to new digital learners must remain a priority. Oftentimes, digital skills training initiatives focus on K-12 learners, young adults entering the workforce, and upskilling workers—overlooking women like those who participated in this research project. The “return on investment” is significant when women are equipped with the digital tools and skills needed to unlock their dreams and elevate their families and communities, because that’s what women do.

Engage women-led organizations and organizations that serve majority women—Historic investments in broadband infrastructure and digital inclusion programs provide a unique opportunity for federal, state, and local governments to prioritize and intentionally engage underrepresented populations, such as underserved African American/Black and Latina women. These women are the experts on the digital divide and digital equity because they have stood at the center of what it means not to be connected. To engage them, collaborating with women-led organizations and organizations that serve such populations is essential. Whether they are nonprofits, parent centers at schools, advocacy groups, grassroots organizations, church groups, or others, such organizations should be enlisted as valuable partners in the design and implementation of digital inclusion initiatives.

To learn more about EveryoneOn and how we might work together to deliver digital skills trainings to underserved women across the nation, email us: support@EveryoneOn.org.

Interview Guide

A. How did they hear about the training:

1. You participated in digital skills training hosted by EveryoneOn. How did you hear about the training opportunity?

If they were referred to by another organization ask:

- a. How do you normally participate with _____ organization?
 - b. What services do they provide to you or your family?
2. Can you tell me what interested you about participating in the digital skills training?
 - a. What were you looking forward to doing or learning?
 - b. What motivated you to participate?

B. Journey to adoption and digital skills

3. In most households, people use technology such as a phone, a laptop, and the internet for important family tasks such as scheduling medical appointments, emailing kids' teachers, etc. In your household, how do you use this technology?
 - a. Who typically helps when using this technology?
 - b. Can you give me an example?
4. Using the internet for everyday tasks is relatively new.
 - a. When do you remember connecting the internet for your household?
 - b. Who in your household initiated signing up for internet service to support your household's needs?
 - c. How did you use it once your household was connected?
And how did you connect to it?
 - i. Cell phone only
 - ii. Laptop
 - iii. Desktop

5. How has your daily life changed now that you have learned new digital skills to access the internet?
6. What does having access to the internet and knowing how to use it mean to you?
 - a. Can you give me an example of how having access to the internet has benefited you and your family?
 - b. Can you give me an example of how having access to the internet has hindered you and your family?
7. We understand that attending the digital inclusion training required a big commitment from you.
 - a. In order for you to participate, did you need to make any arrangements (i.e. babysitter, transportation, work schedule)?
 - b. Did you experience any challenges to participate in the training? If so, what were they?
8. Did anyone in your household, family, or others, support your participation in the training?
 - a. If yes, who and how did they support?
 - b. If no, what kind of support would you have liked?

C. Post-training insights

9. Before participating in the digital skills training, how did you feel about your ability to use technology?
10. How do you feel now after the training?
11. Did participating in the training change your perspective about the internet and technology?
12. Post training, do you see a difference in yourself? If so, how?
13. What did you learn about yourself?
14. How will you use your new skills in other areas of your life? OR What do you hope to do with your new skills?
15. What things or resources would have made it easier for you to participate in the training?

16. What support do you think women need to facilitate their access to high speed internet and digital skills trainings?

D. Migration, Work and Language Question:

17. How long have you lived in CA / TX / WI?

18. What are your plans for the future? Do you plan to remain living in CA / TX / WI or are you planning on relocating to another state?

19. Where are you originally from?

If from a different country PROBE:

a. Can you tell me about your immigration experience to the U.S.?

b. What is your primary language?

What language do you predominantly speak at Home?

20. Are you currently employed? If yes, what do you do for work?

a. What language do you predominantly speak at work?

b. How have you been able to use the new digital skills you learned at work?

21. Is there anything else you would like to share with me that I have not already asked?

PRESS STOP ON THE RECORD BUTTON

MAKE SURE TO SAVE TO CLOUD

APPENDIX B



Survey

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this EveryoneOn survey! EveryoneOn is a national nonprofit organization that is working to ensure all communities have access to high-speed internet, computers, and digital skills trainings. We are conducting this survey to:

- Document and share the journeys of women in their pursuit of broadband adoption, computer ownership, and improving their digital skills; and
- Share the findings with digital inclusion practitioners, digital equity planners, corporations, the philanthropic sector, women-serving organizations, and others working to address digital inequities

Please answer as honestly as you can. There are no right or wrong answers.

Your name will not be used in any reports. We will identify you as “participant A” in order to protect your privacy. All survey participants will be entered into a raffle to win a \$50 gift card.

Intake Information

1. First name ONLY:
2. Email address:
3. What is your Zip code:
4. What is your state of residence:
5. What is your race/ethnicity?
6. What is your age?

7. Do you have children?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
8. If yes, how many children do you have?
9. How did you attend the trainings? Select all that apply:
- a. Trainings were via zoom
 - b. I drove
 - c. I took the bus
 - d. Someone gave me a ride
 - e. Other: _____
10. What device did you use to participate in the training? *Select all that apply:*
- a. My Phone
 - b. My personal laptop
 - c. Laptop donated by EveryoneOn
 - d. Someone else's laptop
 - e. Other: _____
11. What is your household's annual income? Do not include income from dependents (children). *Select the one that best describes you:*
- a. Unemployed
 - b. 5,000 to 10,000
 - c. 10,000 to 20,000
 - d. 20,000 to 30,000
 - e. 30,000 to 40,000
 - f. 40,000 to 50,000
 - g. 50,000 to 60,000
 - h. 60,000 to 100,000
 - i. Over 100,000

12. What is your highest level of education? *Select the one that best applies to you:*

- a. I did not graduate from middle school
- b. Some high school
- c. High school graduate or GED
- d. Some College
- e. Graduated from a two year college with an AA or AS
- f. Graduated from a four year university with a BA or BS
- g. Master's degree
- h. Ph.D.
- i. Technical Career

13. Are you employed?

- a. Yes
- b. No

About the digital skills training

1. How did you hear about the EveryoneOn digital skills training you recently completed?

- a. Referred by an organization. If so, which one: _____
- b. Friend or family member
- c. Flyer
- d. Social media
- e. Other _____ (please explain)

2. What motivated you to participate in the digital skills training? For example, what were you looking to learn or do that you believed digital skills training would help you with?

3. What arrangements, if any, did you need to make in order to participate in the training?
Check all that apply and explain a bit.
- a. Childcare
 - b. Transportation
 - c. Work schedule
 - d. Household chores (i.e. do the laundry, make dinner ahead of time)
 - e. Other _____ (please explain)
 - f. I didn't need to arrange anything
 - g. Please briefly describe the arrangements you needed to make:

After the digital skills training

4. Before participating in the digital skills training, how confident did you feel about your ability to use technology?

Very confident

Somewhat confident

Not too confident

Not at all confident

[Optional] Describe anything you'd like to share about your ability:

5. How do you feel now that you have completed the training?

Very confident

Somewhat confident

Not too confident

Not at all confident

[Optional] Describe anything you'd like to share about your ability:

6. Did participating in the training change your perspective about the internet and technology?
If so, how?

7. Please give a specific example of what you learned about yourself from taking the training.

8. What do you hope to do with your new skills? *Check all that apply.*
- a. Schedule medical appointments
 - b. Apply for jobs
 - c. Connect with loved ones
 - d. Learn new things
 - e. Take online classes
 - f. Apply for public services
 - g. Find information on the internet
 - h. Other_____ (please explain)

Accessing the internet

9. How much do you pay for the internet each month at home?

\$0 - \$10

\$20 - \$40

\$40 - \$60

\$60 or more

10. How difficult do you find it to pay your internet bill?

a. Not difficult at all

b. Somewhat difficult

c. Very difficult

11. Are you signed up with the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). ACP is a \$30/month federal subsidy that is applied towards to your internet bill.

a. Yes

b. No

c. I don't know what the ACP is

d. I tried to enroll but it was too difficult

Affordable Connectivity Program

If you are signed up with the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), please answer the following question. If you are not, please skip and move to question 13.

12. How did you find out about the ACP?

- a. Local organization
- b. Friend, family or neighbor
- c. Flyer
- d. Social media
- e. Other_____ (please explain)

13. May we follow up with you to share a testimonial of your experience taking the digital skills training and how it has helped you? EveryoneOn will use the testimonial and a picture of you to increase support, funding and engagement in our work and to build digital inclusion.

Yes

No

Intake Form

Project: Understanding the Broadband Adoption Journey of Women

Thank you for participating in this project! EveryoneOn is a national nonprofit organization that is working to ensure all communities have access to high-speed internet, computers, and digital skills trainings. We are conducting this research project to:

- Document and amplify the journeys of women in their pursuit of broadband adoption, computer ownership, and improving their digital skills; and
- Share the findings with digital inclusion practitioners, digital equity planners, corporations, the philanthropic sector, women-serving organizations, and others working to address the digital inequities

We are conducting a study with Latina and African American women who previously participated in a digital inclusion training. If you agree to participate in this study, it will involve filling out an intake form and an interview that should take no more than 1 hour. The interview will be audio recorded. In the interview, we will ask you a variety of questions regarding your life before and after partaking in the digital inclusion class. We are mostly interested in learning about your experience in digital skills training. You have the right not to answer any question, and to stop the interview at any time. We are asking up to 40 women to participate in this study.

We want your decision about participating in the study to be absolutely voluntary. And we recognize and value your experiences and perspectives. For your time and insights, I am offering you a gift card in the amount of \$120.00. You will receive the gift card at the beginning of the interview and it is yours to keep even if you do not complete the interview.

You must be 18 years of age or older to participate in this part of the research. Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

This interview is confidential and we will not be asking your full name. In order to protect your identity please do not indicate your last name at any time during the interview. Moreover, please do not use the full names of any other person when discussing events, but rather use her or his first name or general terms such as “my friend.” The results of this research project may be used in reports, presentations, or publications, but your name will not be used and any identifying information will be kept private.

1. Email:
2. First name:
3. What is your Zip code:
4. What is your state of residence:
5. In which digital inclusion class did participate?
 - a. Month -
 - b. Year -
 - c. Location or organization -
6. What is your race/ethnicity?
7. What is your age?
 - a. 18 - 30
 - b. 31 - 40
 - c. 41 - 50
 - d. 51 - 60
 - e. 61 - 70
 - f. 71 - 80
 - g. 81+
8. What is your Marital Status? *Select the one that best applies to you:*
 - Single
 - Married
 - Seperated
 - Divorced
 - Widow
 - Never been married

9. Do you have children?

Yes

No

10. If yes, how many children do you have?

1

2

3

4

5

6

Other:

11. Do you have other dependents who live at home with you? In other words, do you have other people under your care such as an elderly parent?

Yes

No

If yes, Who: _____

12. How did you find out about the digital skills trainings?

Friend

News

Organization

Other: _____

13. How did you commute to the trainings? *Select all that apply:*

Trainings were via zoom

I drove

I took the bus

Someone gave me a ride

Other: _____

14. What device did you use to participate in the training? *Select all that apply:*

My Phone

Someone else's phone

My personal laptop

Someone else's laptop

Desktop computer

15. What is your household's annual income? Do not include income from dependents (children). *Select the one that best describes you*

Unemployed

5,000 to 10,000

10,000 to 20,000

20,000 to 30,000

30,000 to 40,000

40,000 to 50,000

50,000 to 60,000

60,000 to 100,000

Over 100,000

16. What is your highest level of education? *Select the one that best applies to you:*

I did not graduate from middle school

High school

Some College

Graduated from a two year college with an AA or AS

Graduated from a four year university with a BA or BS

Master's degree

Ph.D.

Technical Career

17. Are you employed?

Yes

No

Thank you for filling out this intake form! You will receive your gift at the start of your interview.

AUTHOR



Norma Fernandez has extensive experience in the nonprofit and public sectors designing and managing social impact initiatives, fostering cross-sector partnerships, and leading community engagement initiatives. Her efforts have helped revitalize neighborhoods and increase access to essential resources for small businesses and families in Los Angeles.

Norma currently leads EveryoneOn, a nonprofit with national reach and local impact, helping underserved communities connect to the power of the internet. Her volunteer work includes the Chicano Latino Youth Leadership Project, a statewide organization focused on youth leadership development; served as the chair of Pasadena Commission on the Status of Women; and most recently as a referee on her daughter's soccer team with AYSO. Norma is passionate about social justice and helping all communities thrive. She draws from her experiences as the daughter of Mexican immigrants, a first-generation college student, and an active volunteer over the years to inform her work. Norma is a proud product of public education institutions, including Santa Monica College and UCLA.



Broadband Delivers Opportunities
and Strengthens Communities