

2012

# Readiness for Employment: Milwaukee Teens without Driver's Licenses

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## Recommended Citation

Pawasarat, John and Quinn, Lois M., "Readiness for Employment: Milwaukee Teens without Driver's Licenses" (2012). *ETI Publications*. Paper 18.

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## **Readiness for Employment: Milwaukee Teens without Driver's Licenses**

*Planning report prepared by John Pawasarat and Lois M. Quinn,  
Employment & Training Institute, School of Continuing Education,  
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2012.*

### **Introduction**

For this report the Employment and Training Institute used Wisconsin driver's license records from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (DOT) to document problems faced by lower-income residents of Milwaukee County, and particularly by teens living in Milwaukee. The driver's license is an essential asset for employment for most workers but increasingly expensive to obtain for lower-income youth.

- The State of Wisconsin has discontinued its support for driver's education while requiring that school age youth participate in a school or commercial driving program as a condition for obtaining their license.
- Paying for a driving course and maintaining a working vehicle is a costly undertaking for many financially strapped families.
- Auto insurance rates are high for all teens but particularly for teens in central city Milwaukee zipcodes.
- Longstanding concerns have been expressed about police in suburban neighborhoods targeting minority drivers in older vehicles – adding further to residents' risks of financial liabilities and licensing charges.
- Job seekers without driver's licenses or with suspended or revoked licenses are disadvantaged in seeking and holding employment in the Milwaukee area, where three-fourths of job openings are located outside the bus lines for public transportation.
- Unfortunately, thousands of Milwaukee teens drive even though they have not taken driver's education, do not have a driver's license, and cannot afford auto insurance.

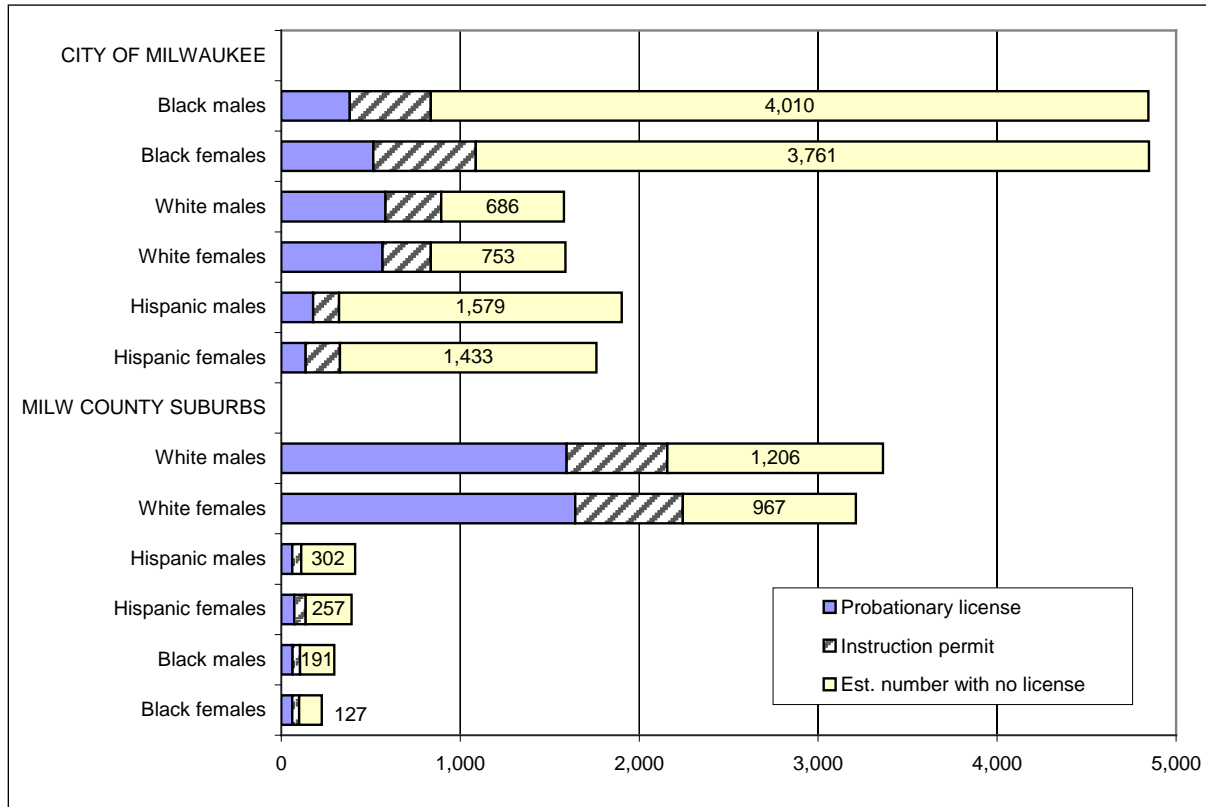
For this report driver's license records, including license suspensions and revocations, were examined for the period 2008 through January 2012. While some teens may have no interest in securing a driver's license or may wish to wait until they are older before driving, for most youth the license represents a critical competence for employment. The DOT data show many teens and young adults drive without licensing – bringing them into trouble in the courts and introducing safety problems for the community.

*The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Employment and Training Institute conducts cutting-edge research and provides technical assistance on employment, education and poverty issues facing Milwaukee workers and families. Institute research is posted at [www.eti.uwm.edu](http://www.eti.uwm.edu).*

## Driver's License Barriers for Milwaukee County Teens

Over 12,000 teens aged 16-17 living in the city of Milwaukee (and over 3,000 suburban teens) have not secured learning permits or probationary driver's licenses. The DOT data files indicate that many of these unlicensed teens will subsequently drive, with or without a valid license.

### Over 15,000 Milwaukee County Teens Ages 16-17 Lack a Driver's License or Learner's Permit (as of January 2012)



The patterns of access to driver's education and license preparation differ sharply by race/ethnicity and whether teens live in the city of Milwaukee or the suburbs.

- Far fewer African American youth have licenses or learning permits. As of January 2012, only 17% of African American male teens (ages 16-17) in the city of Milwaukee had a driver's license, including 9% with an instruction permit and 8% with a probationary license.
- By contrast 64% of white male teens (age 16-17) living in the suburbs of the county had a license, including 17% with a learner's permit and 47% who already had their probationary license.
- A similar, only slightly better, licensing situation was found for female African American teens. Among African American female 16-17 year olds in Milwaukee, 22% were licensed, including 10% with an instruction permit and 12% with their probationary license.

- The highest rate of licensing was noted for white females in the Milwaukee County suburbs where over two-thirds (70%) of the 16-17-year-olds were licensed, including 19% with an instruction permit and 51% with a probationary license.
- Both male and female Hispanic teens in Milwaukee had low licensing rates with only 17% of males and 19% of females licensed. The rates of licensing were higher for Hispanic teens living in the suburbs where 27% of the males and 35% of the females had an instruction permit or probationary license.

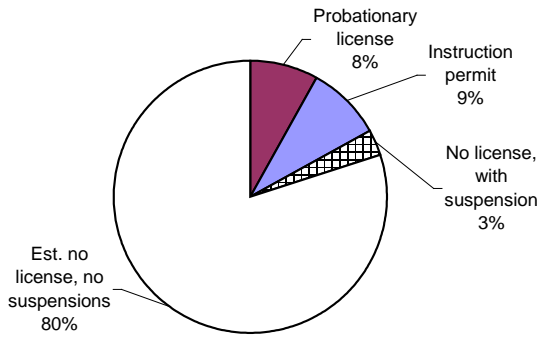
**Department of Transportation Data Records on Milwaukee County Teens, Ages 16-17  
(as of January 2012)**

<b>City of Milwaukee</b>	<b>Black Males</b>	<b>Black Females</b>	<b>White Males</b>	<b>White Females</b>	<b>Hispanic Males</b>	<b>Hispanic Females</b>
Probationary license	383	514	582	566	178	136
Instruction permit	<u>452</u>	<u>573</u>	<u>312</u>	<u>269</u>	<u>145</u>	<u>192</u>
Subtotal with license	835	1,087	894	835	323	328
Expired license	70	112	2	32	13	23
No license, with suspension(s)	133	84	16	5	48	22
Est. number not in DOT file	<u>3,807</u>	<u>3,565</u>	<u>668</u>	<u>716</u>	<u>1,518</u>	<u>1,388</u>
Est. total WITH no license	4,010	3,761	686	753	1,579	1,433
<b>Est. total 16-17 Year Olds</b>	<b>4,845</b>	<b>4,848</b>	<b>1,580</b>	<b>1,588</b>	<b>1,902</b>	<b>1,761</b>
Probationary license	8%	10%	37%	36%	9%	8%
Instruction permit	<u>9%</u>	<u>12%</u>	<u>20%</u>	<u>17%</u>	<u>8%</u>	<u>11%</u>
Subtotal with license	17%	22%	57%	53%	17%	19%
Expired license	1%	2%	0%	2%	1%	1%
No license, with suspension(s)	3%	2%	1%	0%	3%	1%
Est. number not in DOT file	<u>79%</u>	<u>74%</u>	<u>42%</u>	<u>45%</u>	<u>80%</u>	<u>79%</u>
Est. total with no license	83%	78%	43%	47%	83%	81%
Est. total 16-17 Year olds	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
<b>Milwaukee County Suburbs</b>	<b>Black Males</b>	<b>Black Females</b>	<b>White Males</b>	<b>White Females</b>	<b>Hispanic Males</b>	<b>Hispanic Females</b>
Probationary license	64	61	1,594	1,642	62	73
Instruction permit	<u>41</u>	<u>39</u>	<u>563</u>	<u>602</u>	<u>49</u>	<u>63</u>
Subtotal with license	105	100	2,157	2,244	111	136
Expired license	7	3	14	3	4	5
No license, with suspension(s)	6	3	13	10	4	3
Est. number not in DOT file	<u>178</u>	<u>121</u>	<u>1,179</u>	<u>954</u>	<u>294</u>	<u>249</u>
Est. total WITH no license	191	127	1,206	967	302	257
<b>Est. total 16-17 Year Olds</b>	<b>296</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>3,363</b>	<b>3,211</b>	<b>413</b>	<b>393</b>
Probationary license	22%	27%	47%	51%	15%	19%
Instruction permit	<u>14%</u>	<u>17%</u>	<u>17%</u>	<u>19%</u>	<u>12%</u>	<u>16%</u>
Subtotal with license	35%	44%	64%	70%	27%	35%
Expired license	2%	1%	0%	0%	1%	1%
No license, with suspension(s)	2%	1%	0%	0%	1%	1%
Est. number not in DOT file	<u>60%</u>	<u>53%</u>	<u>35%</u>	<u>30%</u>	<u>71%</u>	<u>63%</u>
Est. total with no license	65%	56%	36%	30%	73%	65%
Est. total 16-17 Year olds	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

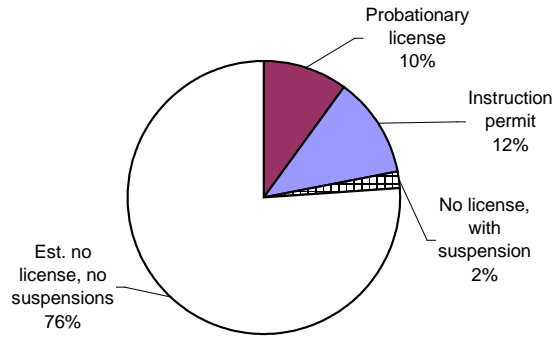
Note: Not included in this analysis are teens with other racial/ethnic identities, including Native Americans, Asian Americans, and those designated with more than one race.

**Driver's License Status of Milwaukee Teens Ages 16-17, as of January 2012**

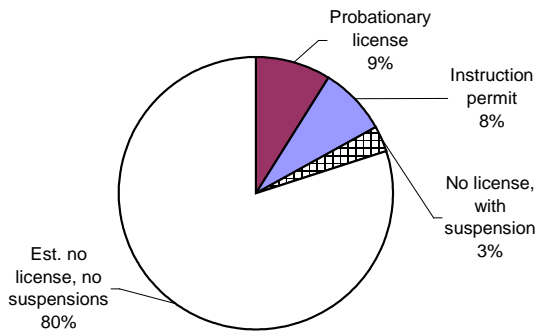
**African American Males**



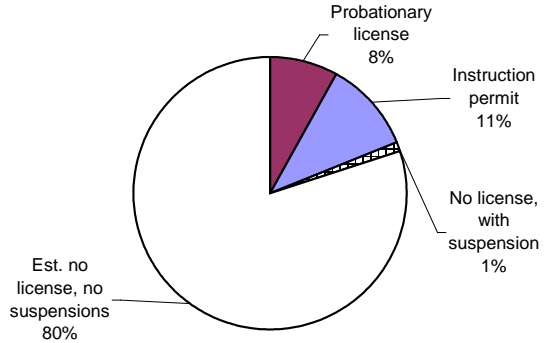
**African American Females**



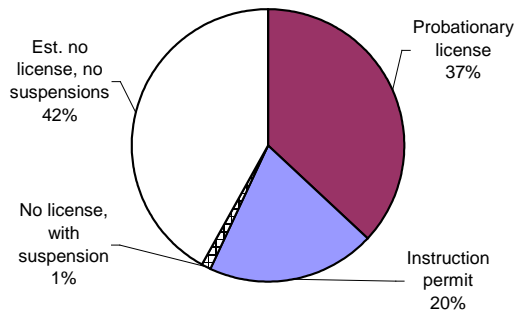
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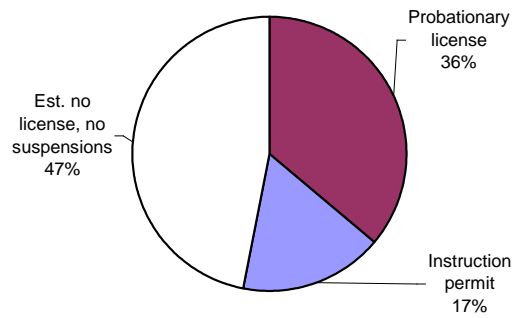
**Hispanic Females**



**White Males**

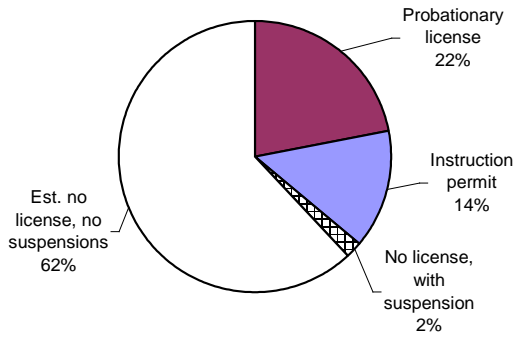


**White Females**

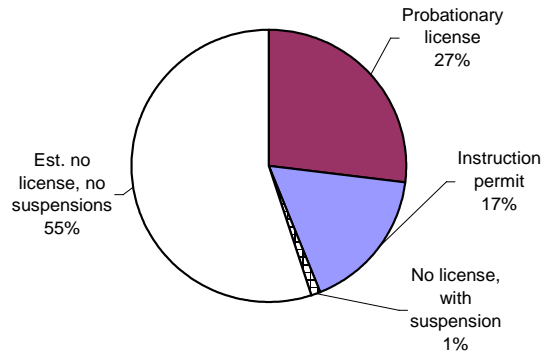


**Driver's License Status of Milwaukee County Suburban Teens Ages 16-17, as of January 2012**

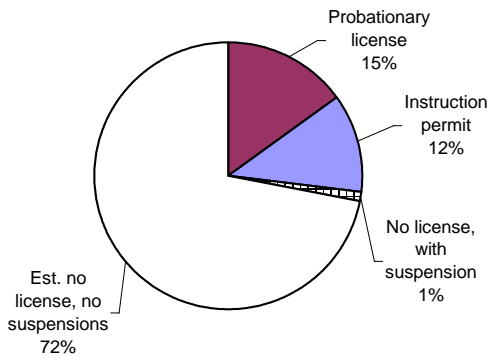
**African American Males**



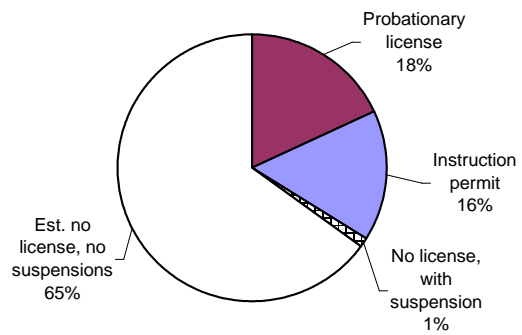
**African American Females**



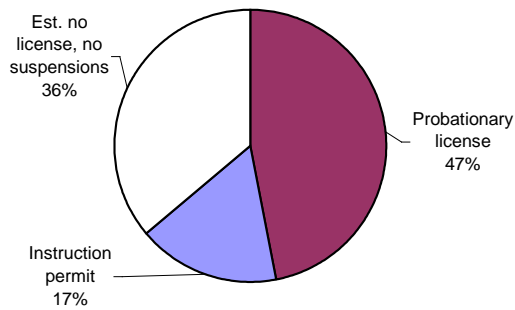
**Hispanic Males**



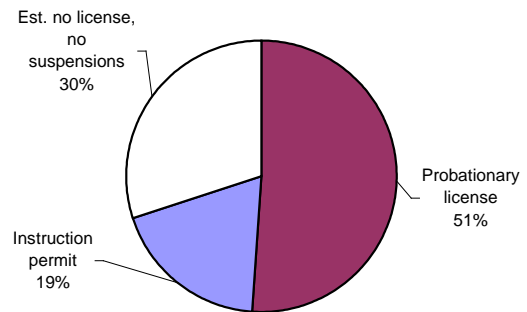
**Hispanic Females**



**White Males**



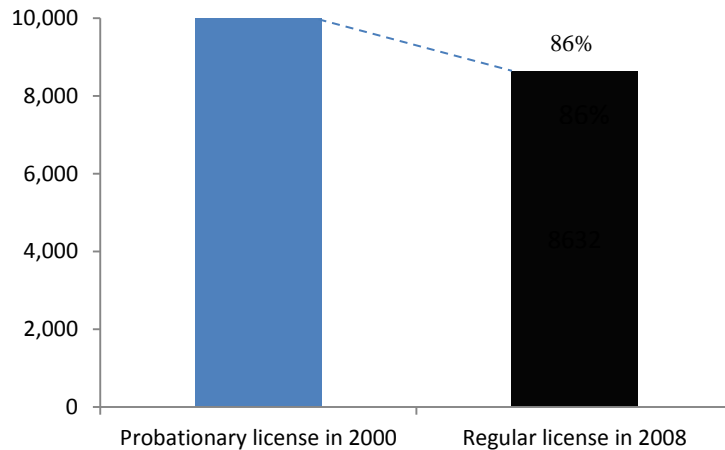
**White Females**



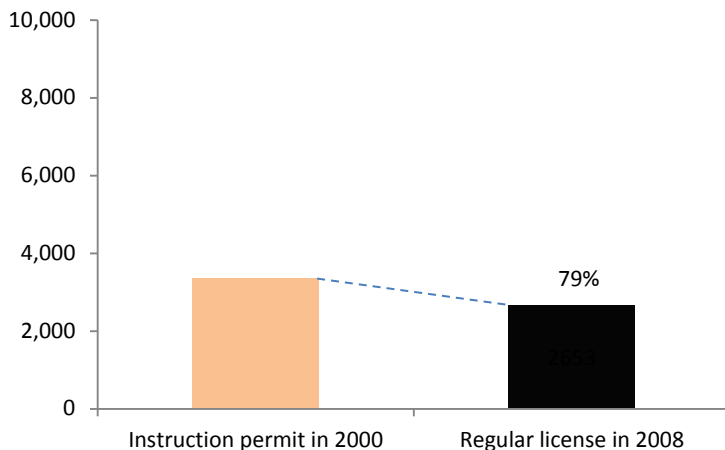
The long-term consequences of suspensions and revocations (many imposed for failure to pay municipal fines and forfeitures unrelated to driving) on teens who had not yet obtained a driver’s license can be seen in comparing Wisconsin Department of Transportation files for January 2000 and April 2008.

**Driver’s License Status of 15-17-Year-Old Milwaukee County Teens in 2000 and 8 Years Later**

Most Milwaukee County teens that had a **probationary license** in 2000 showed a regular license as of April 2008. In all, 10,037 youth ages 15 through 17 had a probationary license in January 2000, and 86% of these individuals had obtained their regular license by April 2008.



Most teens that had **instruction permits** in 2000 later obtained their licenses. A total of 3,358 Milwaukee County youth ages 15 through 17 had an instruction permit in January 2000, and 79% showed a regular or probationary license by April 2008.



Less than a fourth of young teens with **suspensions/revocations** placed on their driving record **before** they got a learning permit or probationary license ever got a regular license as of April 2008. A total of 9,061 Milwaukee County youth ages 15 through 17 had suspensions and revocations in the DOT file but no license (“NON” status) as of January 2000, and only 23% showed a regular or probationary license as of April 2008 (at ages 23 through 25).

