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23,639 Milwaukee County Residents with Driver's License Suspensions Solely for Failure to Pay Fines and Civil Forfeitures

John Pawasarat

University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee, pawasara@uwm.edu

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23,639 Milwaukee County Residents with Driver's License Suspensions Solely for Failure to Pay Fines and Civil Forfeitures

by John Pawasarat, Employment and Training Institute, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, July 2012

Thousands of adults in Milwaukee County have suspensions placed on their driver's licenses solely for not paying fines and civil forfeitures, and others including teens have been issued license suspensions for failure to pay fines and civil forfeitures even though they have never had a driver's license. Many teens and adults with suspensions continue to drive with or without a valid license.

For this report the driver license status of all Milwaukee County residents was reviewed using state Department of Transportation (DOT) records on driver's license status, licenses suspension and revocation records for 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011 in order to assess the driver status facing workers seeking employment or attempting to retain employment. The focus of this analysis is the policy of suspending licenses for non-payment of fines and civil forfeitures for individuals who otherwise have no unsafe driving suspensions or in some cases are yet to obtain a license.

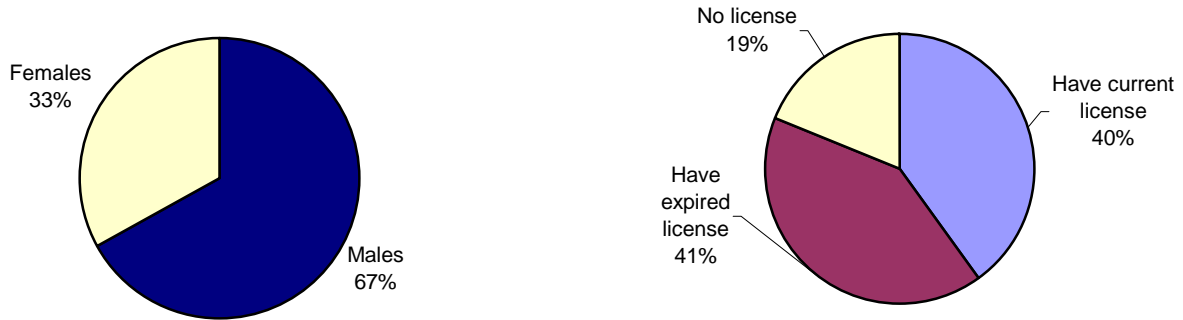
Highlights

1. 23,639 Milwaukee County residents had DOT suspensions solely for non-payment of fines and forfeitures in 2008-2011. *Note: This does not include persons with other suspensions for driving offenses or with revocations for any reason.*
2. Two-thirds of those receiving suspensions solely for non-payment of fines and forfeitures were males.
3. Most (82%) of those receiving these suspensions were minorities and 65% were African Americans.
4. Of the 23,639 residents issued Failure to Pay Forfeiture (FPF) suspensions only, 9,422 (40%) had a current driver's license (as of January 1, 2012); 9,624 (41%) had an expired license; and 4,573 (19%) had no license. *Note: The non-licensed individuals include some persons with license suspensions issued for failure to pay civil forfeitures unrelated to driving.*
5. Residents with FTF suspensions are heavily concentrated in Milwaukee's poorest neighborhoods while residents receiving unsafe driving-related suspensions such as OWI (operating while intoxicated) show more even distributions across middle income neighborhoods.
6. The FPF suspensions dominate the DOT activity in Milwaukee County. Two-thirds of all suspensions issued to residents in 2008-2011 were for failure to pay forfeitures. In 2011 97,036 FPF suspensions were issued, with some drivers receiving multiple FPF suspensions.
7. Statewide, increases have been seen in the numbers of FPF suspensions issued since the economic recession hit in 2008. Prior to that time, the number of FPF suspensions had been on the decline.

License Status and Gender of County Residents Receiving Suspensions Solely for Non-Payment of Forfeitures

- Two-thirds of the Milwaukee County residents receiving suspensions solely for non-payment of forfeitures are males.

Milwaukee County Residents with Suspensions Solely for Non-Payment: 2008-2011

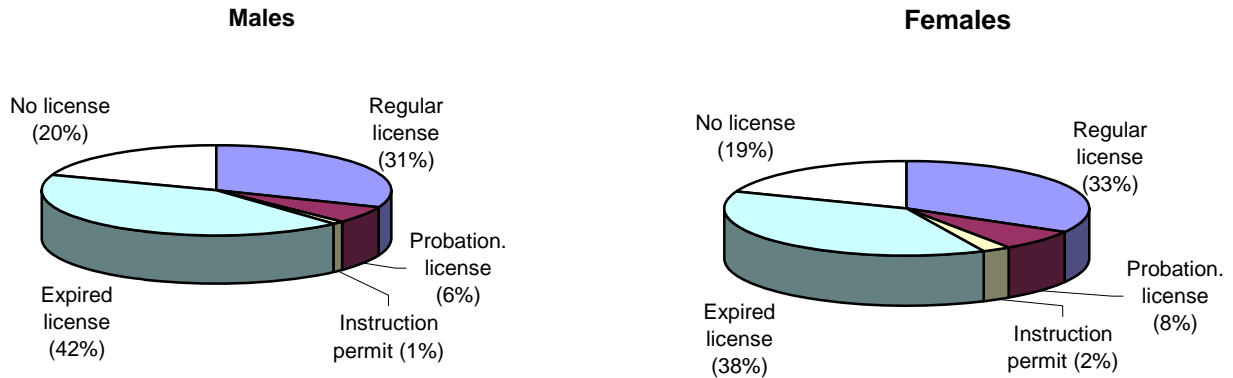


- Overall, 40% of residents with a suspension solely for non-payment of forfeitures have a current driver’s license (most with a regular license and fewer numbers with probationary licenses or instruction permits).
- The majority (60%) of those with suspensions solely for non-payment of forfeitures either have an expired license or had no record of a license in the DOT file. The non-licensed individuals include persons with license suspensions issued for failure to pay civil forfeitures unrelated to driving.

Milwaukee County Population of Residents with Suspensions Solely for Non-Payment: 2008-2011

License Status (as of 1/1/2012)	MALES		FEMALES		ALL	
	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total
With a current license						
Regular license	4,909	31%	2,620	33%	7,529	32%
Probationary license	946	6%	582	8%	1,528	6%
Instruction permit	196	1%	189	2%	385	2%
(Subtotal)	6,051	38%	3,391	43%	9,442	40%
With an expired license	6,654	42%	2,970	38%	9,624	41%
Without a license	3,059	20%	1,514	19%	4,573	19%
Total with suspensions solely for non-payment	15,764	100%	7,875	100%	23,639	100%

License Status of Milwaukee County Residents with Suspensions Solely for Non-Payment



Race/Ethnicity of County Residents Receiving Suspensions Solely for Non-Payment of Forfeitures

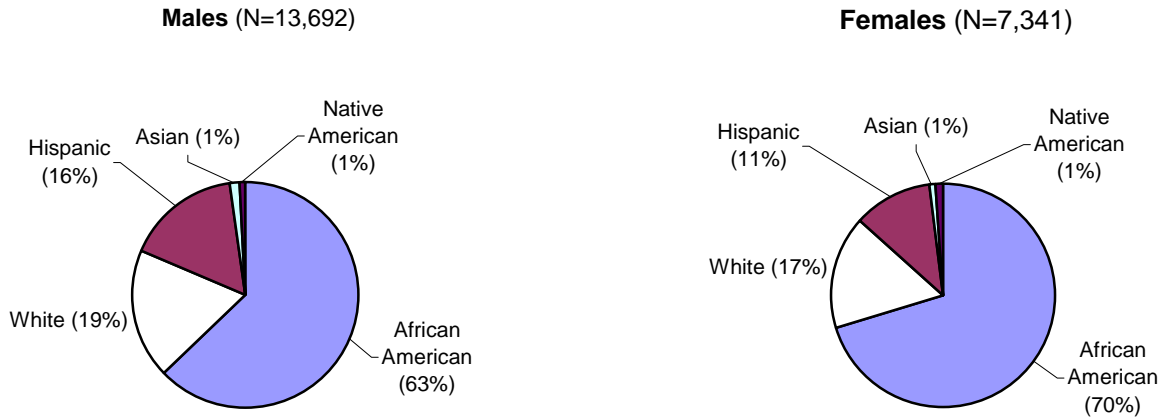
- 63% of the males with suspensions solely for failure to pay fines/forfeitures and 70% of the females with these suspensions are African Americans.
- 81% of the males with suspensions solely for failure to pay fines/forfeitures and 84% of the females with these suspensions are minorities (i.e., African American, Hispanic, Asian, or Native American).

Race/Ethnicity of Milwaukee County Residents with Suspensions Solely for Non-Payment

Race/Ethnicity	Males	% by race	Females	% by race	Total	% by race
African American	8,605	63%	5,150	70%	13,755	65%
White	2,557	19%	1,206	17%	3,763	18%
Hispanic	2,233	16%	837	11%	3,070	15%
Asian	190	1%	63	1%	253	1%
Native American	107	1%	85	1%	192	1%
SubTotal	13,692	100%	7,341	100%	21,033	100%
[no race recorded]*	2,072		534		2,606	
Total	15,764		7,875		23,639	

*Over half of the residents with no recorded race/ethnicity data were teens under age 19.

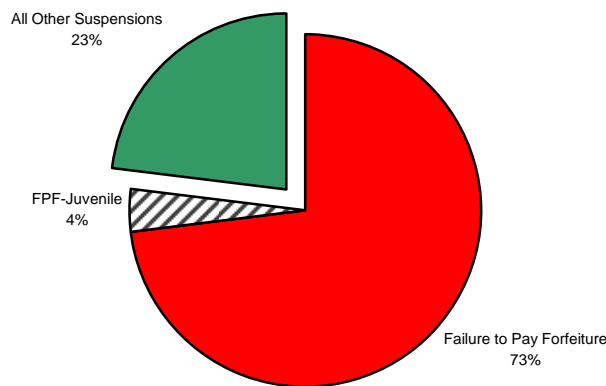
Race/Ethnicity of Milwaukee County Residents with Suspensions Solely for Non-Payment
 (Excludes suspended residents with no recorded race/ethnicity data)



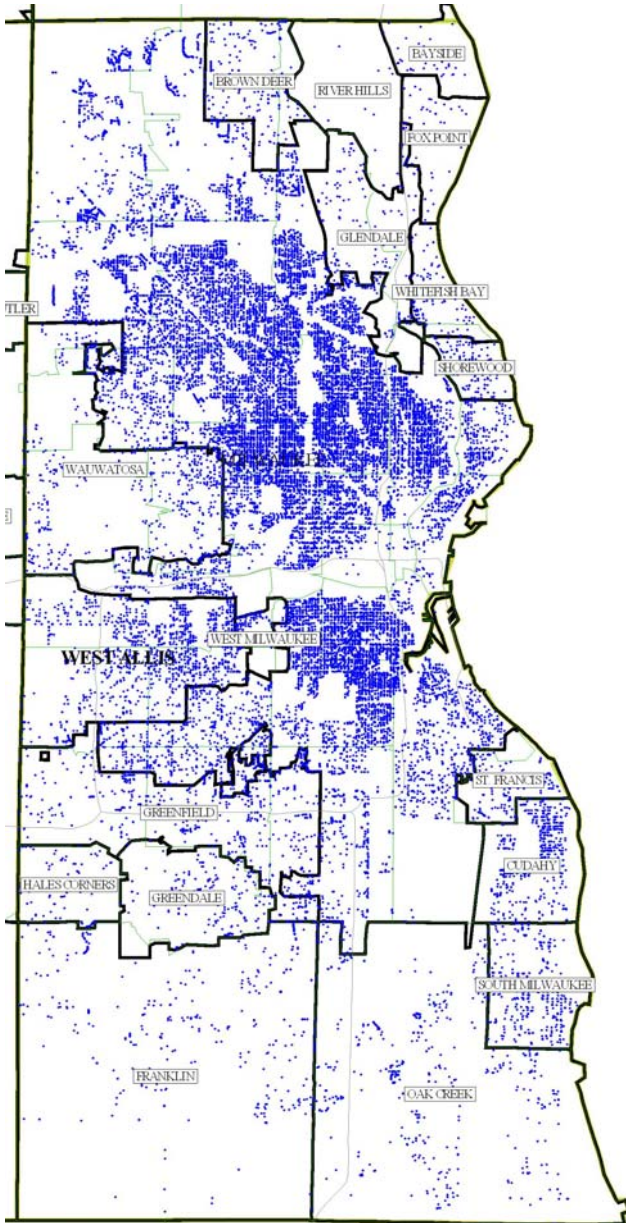
Suspensions for Failure to Pay Forfeiture Hit Inner City Hardest

- As seen in the map below, Milwaukee County residents with suspensions for failure to pay forfeitures (FPF) are heavily concentrated in the city’s poorest neighborhoods on the near northside and near southside of Milwaukee. By contrast, alcohol-related suspensions (i.e., operating while intoxicated and blood alcohol concentration) show more even patterns of violations across middle income neighborhoods.
- Most of the license suspensions issued to Milwaukee County residents in 2008-2011 were for failure to pay forfeitures rather than for unsafe driving suspensions.

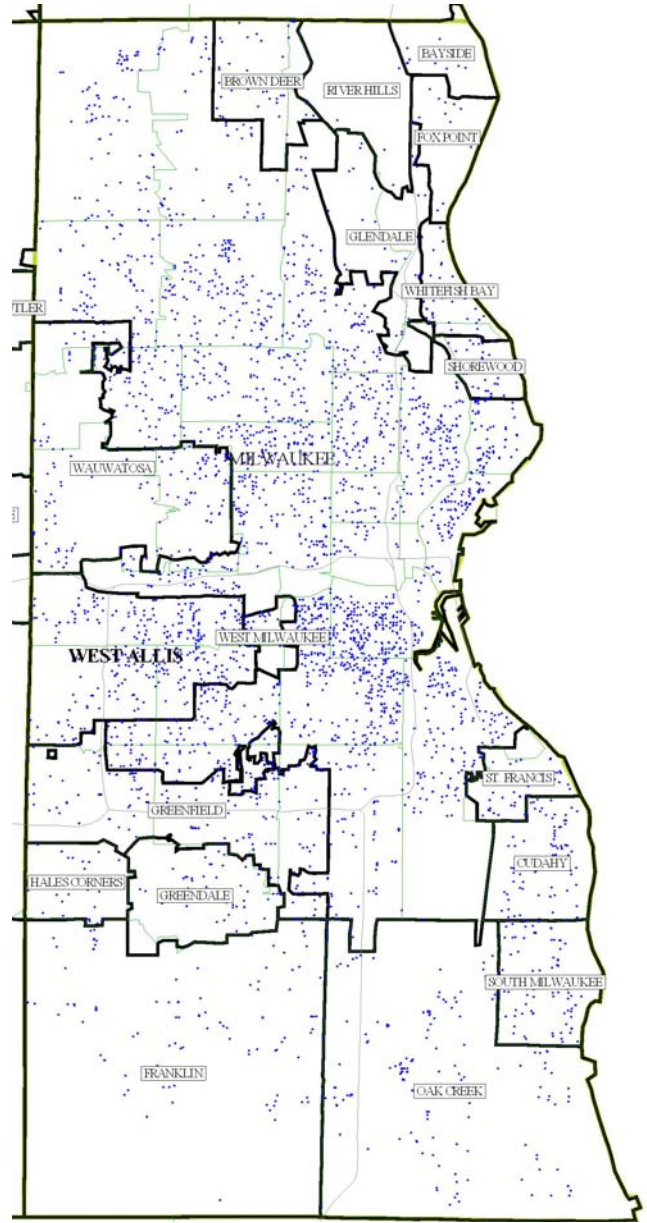
License Suspensions Issued to Milwaukee County Residents: 2008-2011



Residents Issued Suspensions for Failure to Pay Forfeitures: 2009-2011



Residents Issued Suspensions for Operating While Intoxicated: 2009-2011

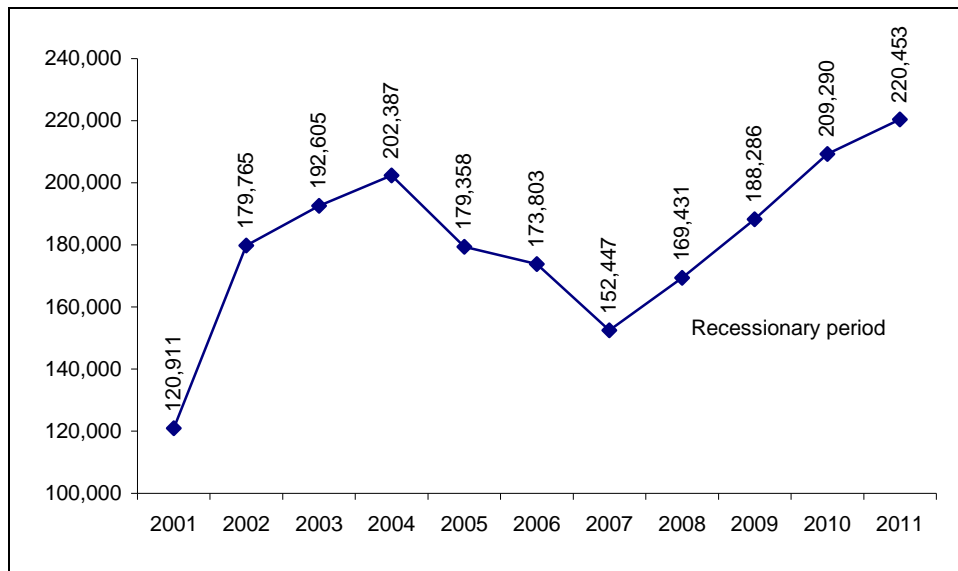


Statewide Increases in FTF Suspensions during the Recession

The impact of the economic recession can be seen statewide in 2008 and after in the growth of suspensions based on failure to pay financial penalties rather than for unsafe driving.

- Failure to pay forfeiture (FPF) suspensions had been on the decline in Wisconsin with a recent low point in Calendar Year 2007. However, with the economic recession in 2008 these suspensions reversed direction and have shown dramatic increases. The annual number of FPF suspensions issued in Wisconsin jumped by 68,000 from 2007 to 2011. *Note: Some drivers receive multiple charges.*

Failure to Pay Forfeiture Suspensions Issued in Wisconsin: 2001-2011



- In Milwaukee County the number of suspensions issued for failure to pay forfeitures increased each of the last three years and totaled 97,036 in 2011. *Note: Some drivers receive multiple charges.*

