

# Freedom to Move: Durham Driver's License Access and the DEAR Program

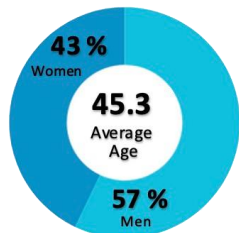
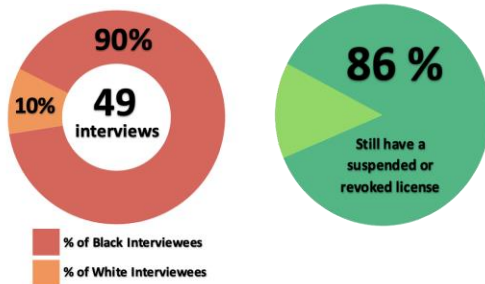
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## Introduction

- **46,000** Durham County residents have a suspended or revoked license
- Reasons for license suspension: **minor traffic violations** followed by a failure to appear to pay the fines and **fees** associated with tickets or failure to appear in court
- Median suspension length: **11.7 years**

## Data Collection Demographics

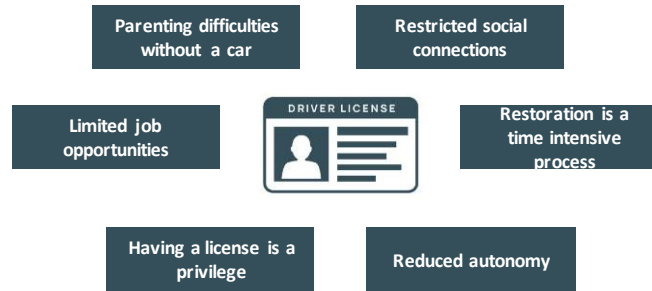
- Method: **Qualitative interviews** conducted with individuals eligible for the DEAR program, our community partner



## Research Question

*How does driver's license suspension and reinstatement affect life outcomes for Durham residents, and how do unlicensed drivers experience the license restoration process?*

## Themes that emerged from the interviews



## License Restoration's Meaning for Individuals

**"The world. The world. I'd tell a judge I get to go to the grocery store. I can go to church without going under a church van. I get to take my grandkids to school, pick them up, go on trips with them."**

**"Oh, wow... the number of doors that would open up... it could... help increase the amount of income that I'm making a lot of driving positions and things that I-I-I can put myself into, um, other shifts that I could work and not have to worry about coming home late nights."**

## Community Partner: DEAR



- DEAR aims to restore suspended licenses **by waiving unpaid traffic tickets and fines**
- Participant Reactions to the DEAR program:
  - Gratefulness
  - Some lost faith in the program after not hearing back after 2-3 months
- Still experienced red tape going through other systems with limited communication with DEAR (i.e., the courts and the DMV)
- Because of their positive view of the program, participants would like to see the program expand its reach.

## Looking Ahead: Policy Implications

- **Contacting and checking up frequently** with those eligible for DEAR and expanding the size of the DEAR communications team.
- Improve communication between the **DMV and the DEAR program**.
- **Streamline and simplify** the license restoration process, while adjusting fines for low-income individuals.