



A Survey

of King County TNC Drivers

Access and Demand for Covid Support
and Public Services

Prepared by Drivers Union



Introduction

While unprecedented state and federal funding for covid support programs was deployed in response to the severe economic shocks brought on by the pandemic, traditionally underserved populations often struggled to access that support. The consequences of policy failures to reach these populations is augmented by disparate outcomes in the face of covid infection; according to the CDC, a Black individual who contracts covid is 2.3 times more likely to require hospitalization than a covid positive White individual.

This disparity is often compounded in the case of refugees and immigrants, many of whom lack comfort or familiarity with public institutions, social networks that facilitate connections to public services, or a native understanding of the English language. Furthermore, these institutions can present a hostile environment to those who have reason to fear language, race, or religious based discrimination.

Drivers Union serves thousands of TNC drivers in the greater Seattle metropolitan area. The vast majority of these drivers come from immigrant and refugee communities. We believe that effective outreach leverages homophily - the tendency to feel comfort around those with reduced social distance - and have built a team to reflect that belief. The overwhelming majority of our field team are first generation immigrants or refugees who reflect the demographics of the TNC driver community. Our staff speaks a collective 14 of the languages most common among TNC drivers. And in the case of this survey, responses were collected by active TNC drivers trained in survey administration.

To effectively serve hard to reach populations, we must know who they are, what they need, the services they value, and if and how they're able to access them. This survey was conducted to understand:

- ▶ The demographic makeup of King County's TNC driver population
- ▶ If and how surveyed drivers accessed covid supports, linked services, and public benefits
- ▶ The degree of value drivers place on an array of services and public benefits
- ▶ Covid related conflict with passengers and driver concerns about conflict

Methodology

Data was collected from June 13 to June 28, 2022 via mediated in-person interviews in which trained rideshare drivers read questions to respondents and then recorded their responses in an online survey instrument accessed through handheld tablets. Respondents were recruited in places rideshare drivers are known to gather, such as the waiting lot at the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport and at places of worship and community meetings. 278 surveys were

completed. Data was checked for errors and duplication and cleaned. Post-hoc analysis was limited to descriptive statistics – no claims regarding relationships or significance are made.

We note that this sampling protocol likely contributes to a degree of sampling bias. Specifically, we believe the TNC driver congregation points from which our sample was drawn are most often frequented by full time TNC drivers, who often have longer tenures driving for TNCs than their part time counterparts. We further believe that immigrant, refugee, and BIPOC drivers are overrepresented among the full-time drivers who typically congregate at these locations. These beliefs are outside of the scope of our survey and have not been empirically validated. Rather, they are based on Drivers Union's institutional knowledge of drivers grounded in thousands of contacts with King County TNC drivers. Both the scope of this project and Drivers Union's outreach goals are targeted towards serving BIPOC communities. Therefore, to the extent that this sampling protocol has biased our sample in favor of the overrepresentation of BIPOC TNC drivers, we view this as enhancing rather than diminishing the utility of survey results.

Key Findings

Demographics

Drivers surveyed represent a diverse group, speaking 16 languages in the home. Somali is the most commonly spoken language among survey participants, with 98 Somali speakers surveyed. Amharic (80), English, (24), Chinese (23), and Oromo (20) follow among the most represented languages among the cohort (*Chart One*).

77% of drivers surveyed identify as Black, 15% as Asian, 6% as other race(s), and 2% as White. TNC driving being a highly gendered occupation, 97% of those surveyed identify as male and 3% as female. 75% of respondents drive on both UberX and Lyft platforms, with 14% driving exclusively for Uber and 9% driving exclusively for Lyft.

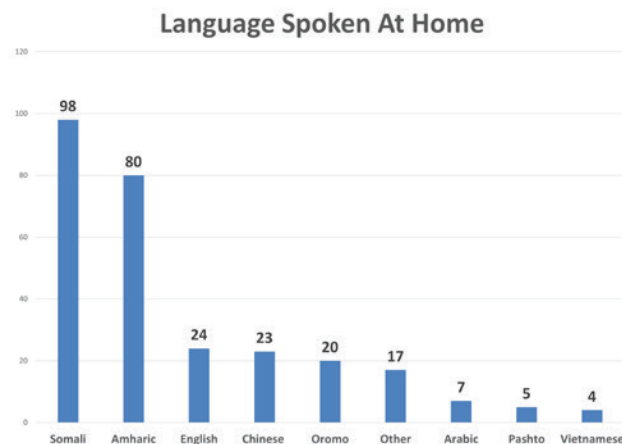


Chart 1: Languages Spoke at Home

Services and Access

At the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, drivers surveyed accessed a wide range of supportive services including unemployment insurance, PPE provision, vaccination clinics, paid sick leave, medicare and medicaid, SNAP benefits, rental assistance, and food banks.

We found that unemployment insurance, PPE, vaccination clinics, and paid sick leave were by far the most commonly accessed services, with each of these categories being accessed by about two-thirds of respondents (*Chart Two*). Other services included in the survey were each accessed by less than a third of respondents; this result was anticipated, as services such as SNAP and Medicaid have strict eligibility thresholds and high administrative barriers to enrollment.

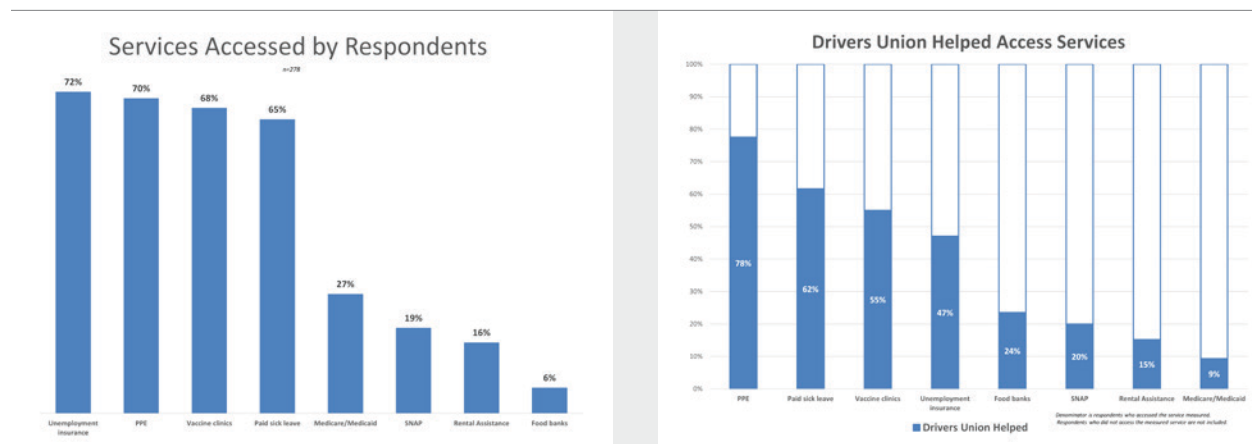


Chart 2: Services Accessed by Respondents

Chart 3: Drivers Union Helped Access Services

We note food banks, which were only accessed by 6% of respondents, do not typically present significant barriers to access. This suggests that efforts by public and civil society organizations to facilitate foodbank access for TNC drivers may provide an effective and low-cost path to improved service delivery to the community. This finding is further buoyed by responses indicating that in a majority (52%) of cases where drivers accessed surveyed services, their access was facilitated by Drivers Union field staff. For some services, such as PPE provision, a full 78% of respondents relied on Drivers Union to facilitate access (*Chart Three*). This points to the potential for an increased role for civil society organizations in creating links between hard to reach populations and public services and benefits for which they are eligible.

Due to the high proportion of drivers who identify as Black, both within the driver community at large and within our sample specifically, we are unable to consider any relationship between racial identity and drivers' ability to access services. Likewise, given our 97% male identified driver sample, we are unable to explore gendered access to public services among TNC drivers.

Drivers were surveyed on the importance they place on a variety of supports and benefits including those provided by state agencies, those provided by civil society organizations like Drivers Union, and those available through private markets (*Chart Four*).

While this question was selected to inform future priorities in service provision to TNC drivers, drivers surveyed overwhelmingly indicated that the services listed were somewhat or very important to them. This response points to the significant and ongoing needs of a population that often faces economic precarity. Thirteen of the fifteen services categories included were ranked somewhat or very important by more than 90% of survey respondents, with only one category - life insurance - selected as somewhat or very important by fewer than 85% of respondents. However, a majority of respondents - 65% - did consider life insurance to be somewhat or very important.

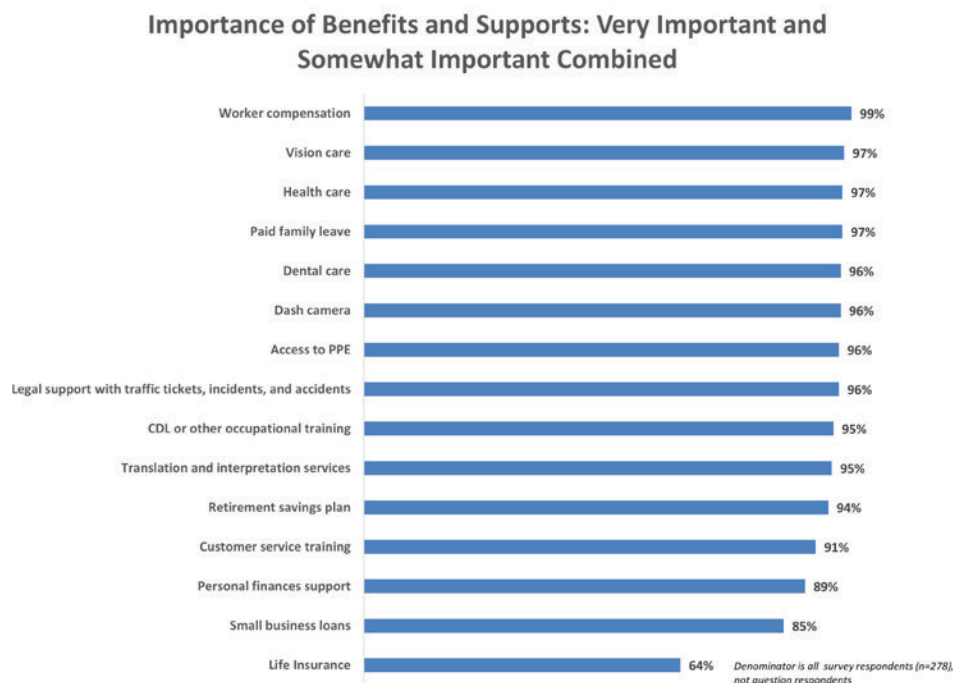


Chart 4: Importance of Benefits and Supports

Covid and Conflict

Roughly half of survey respondents reported experiencing conflict with TNC passengers over covid related protocols (*Chart Four*). While drivers were close to evenly divided on whether they had faced covid related conflict, their response to this question proved to be a strong indicator of their concerns about low ratings or complaints resulting from future covid related conflict (*Chart Five*).

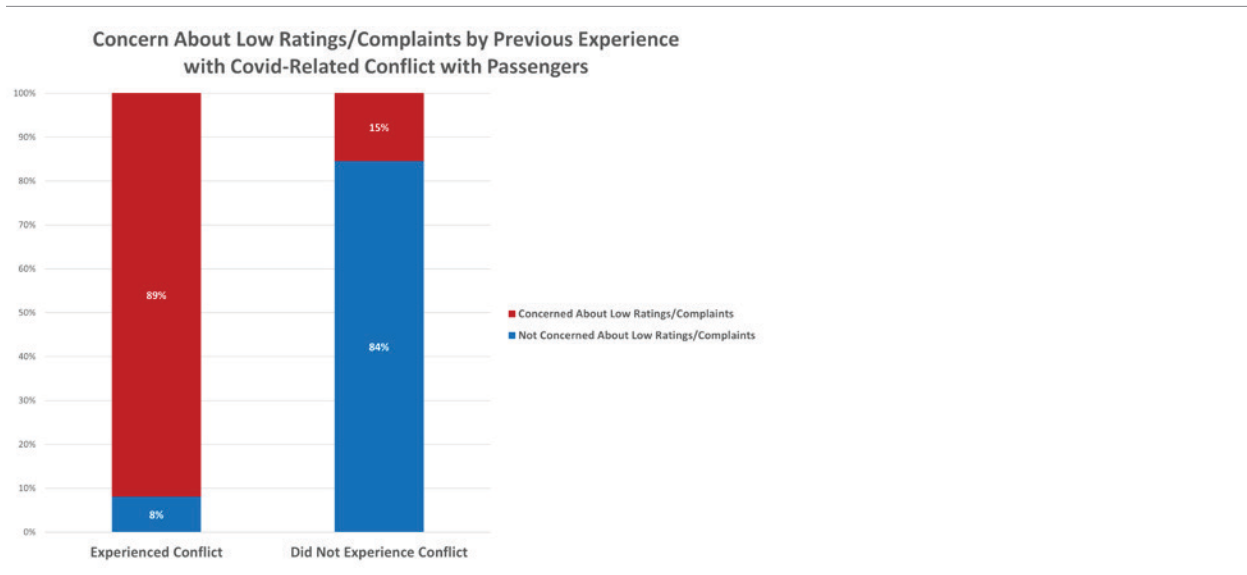


Chart 4: Importance of Benefits and Supports

Of those respondents who had experienced such conflict, 89% reported concern about complaints or low ratings resulting from future conflict. Only 15% of respondents who reported never experiencing such conflict expressed these concerns. Qualitative data collection about the nature of these conflicts and their consequences was outside the scope of this survey. However, our field experience suggests these results may be driven by a systematic effort by TNCs to place the burden of enforcing covid protocols on individual drivers while insufficiently supporting those drivers who face consequences from this policy.

Avenues For Further Study

Informed by the results of this survey, we will conduct a TNC driver focus group discussion to further our qualitative understanding of emerging themes. Topics for focus group discussion may include:

- ▶ Gaps in access to and awareness of available support services
- ▶ Potential avenues to channel TNC drivers towards available services and support enrollment
- ▶ Experiences of language, national origin, race, or religion based discrimination by TNCs drivers
- ▶ Non-TNC sources of driver income
- ▶ Other health, safety, and economic well-being challenges faced by TNC drivers

Focus group discussion results and analysis will be shared in the final project report.

Conclusions

Demographic results validated our expectations based on significant and ongoing engagement with King County's TNC driver population. Namely, that the driver population - particularly the largely long time, full time drivers who tend to congregate at our data collection sites - is overwhelmingly male, overwhelmingly BIPOC, predominantly Black, and predominantly from an East African immigrant or refugee community.

Survey responses indicated a high and only partially met demand for both covid linked support and broader access to public benefits. They further indicated that access to many of these services was facilitated by Drivers Union field representatives.

This highlights a basic challenge in reaching underserved populations; providing services is a necessary but insufficient condition for those services to translate to positive outcomes. To realize those outcomes, culturally competent outreach must meet the intended beneficiaries where they are. Civil society organizations like Drivers Union play a significant part in closing this gap today, but further public support for these organizations can act as a multiplier to ensure that services are delivered to the hardest to reach beneficiaries who often need them most.