



**Trafi**

Finnish Transport Safety Agency

## **Safe & Sober – Alcohol interlocks and the fight against drink-driving**

### **Alcohol interlocks in Finland**

**30 January 2015, Vienna**

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*Responsible traffic.  
A joint effort.*

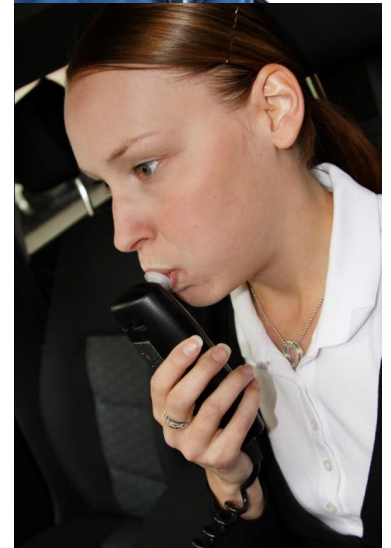
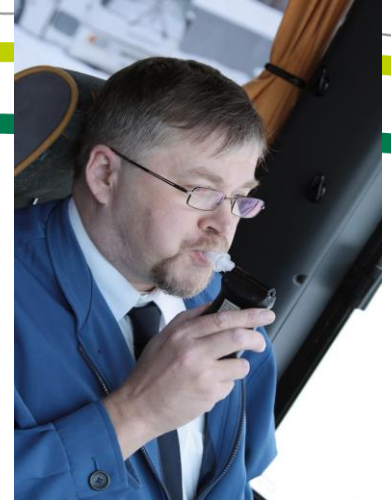
## Rehabilitation programme for DUI\* offenders

1. The facts
2. The steps
3. The evaluation study

## Doctors prescribing alcohol interlocks

Alcohol interlock as a preventive measure for drivers having a drinking problem

\* **D**riving **U**nder the **I**nfluence of alcohol



# Finland

**5,4** million inhabitants

**3,6** million driving licences

**5,0** million vehicles

Area 338 432 m<sup>2</sup> (10 % lakes)

BAC-limit: **0,5 %**

Drink-drivers caught by the police: **17 500** in 2014

Road traffic accidents:

~ **20 %** of deaths and

~ **10 %** of injuries related to DUI



# Rehabilitation program with alcohol interlocks – the facts

- A trial July 2005 – June 2008
- Permanent **since July 2008**
- **Voluntary** for DUI offenders (the offender may choose the interlock program instead of being banned from driving)
- 17 500 DUI cases in 2014 (incl. recidivists)
- Approx. **500 new participants each year**
- Program length 1–3 years (court decides)
- Costs for the participant ~ 150€/month
- Brochure in English:  
[http://www.poliisi.fi/poliisi/home.nsf/files/9B780854655E6CAFC2257CB7003F8136/\\$file/alkolukkoesite\\_suomi\\_muokattu2\\_EN.pdf](http://www.poliisi.fi/poliisi/home.nsf/files/9B780854655E6CAFC2257CB7003F8136/$file/alkolukkoesite_suomi_muokattu2_EN.pdf)

# Rehabilitation program with alcohol interlocks – the steps

- DUI offender is caught by the police
  - The police informs the offender about the interlock possibility

## **The offender**

- gets the interlock installed and the vehicle inspected
- visits a doctor or a another health care professional
- submits the driving licence application to the police
- receives a driving licence with national code 111 (interlock)
- takes the interlock to data-read-out every 60 days
- after the mandatory period may get the interlock removed from the vehicle, or instead, may leave the device in the vehicle

# The evaluation study published in February 2013

- Trafi Publications 6/2013 (in English): “Effectiveness and impact of alcohol interlock-controlled driving rights”
- [http://www.trafi.fi/palvelut/julkaisut/2013\\_julkaisut/effectiveness\\_and\\_impact\\_of\\_alcohol\\_interlock-controlled\\_driving\\_rights](http://www.trafi.fi/palvelut/julkaisut/2013_julkaisut/effectiveness_and_impact_of_alcohol_interlock-controlled_driving_rights)

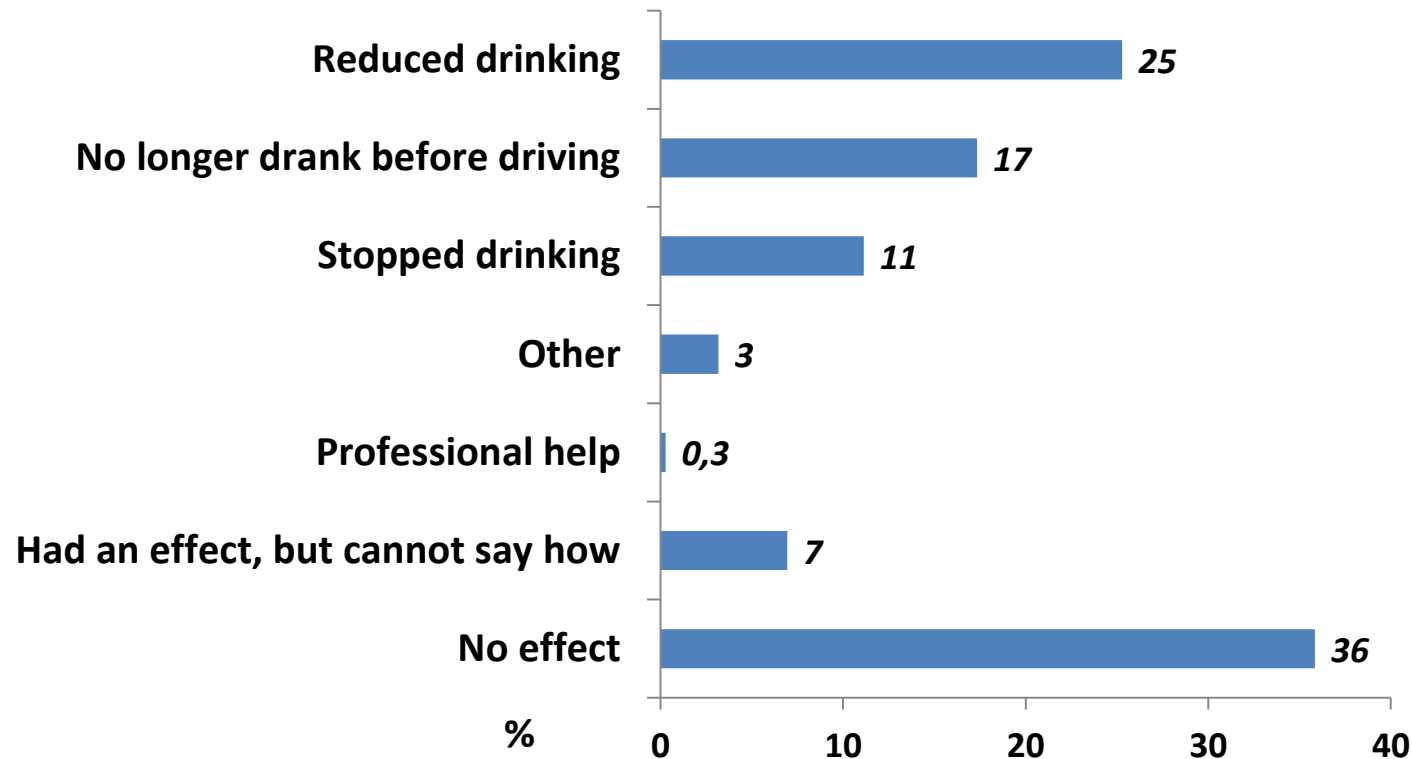
## The study included

- A survey (**questionnaire**) to all the drivers in the interlock program since July 2008 (N=1569; response rate 45 %)
- An analysis of the drink-driving **offences** before, during and after the interlock period
- An analysis of the interlock **log data**
- **Interviews** with the relevant authorities within the process

## Population

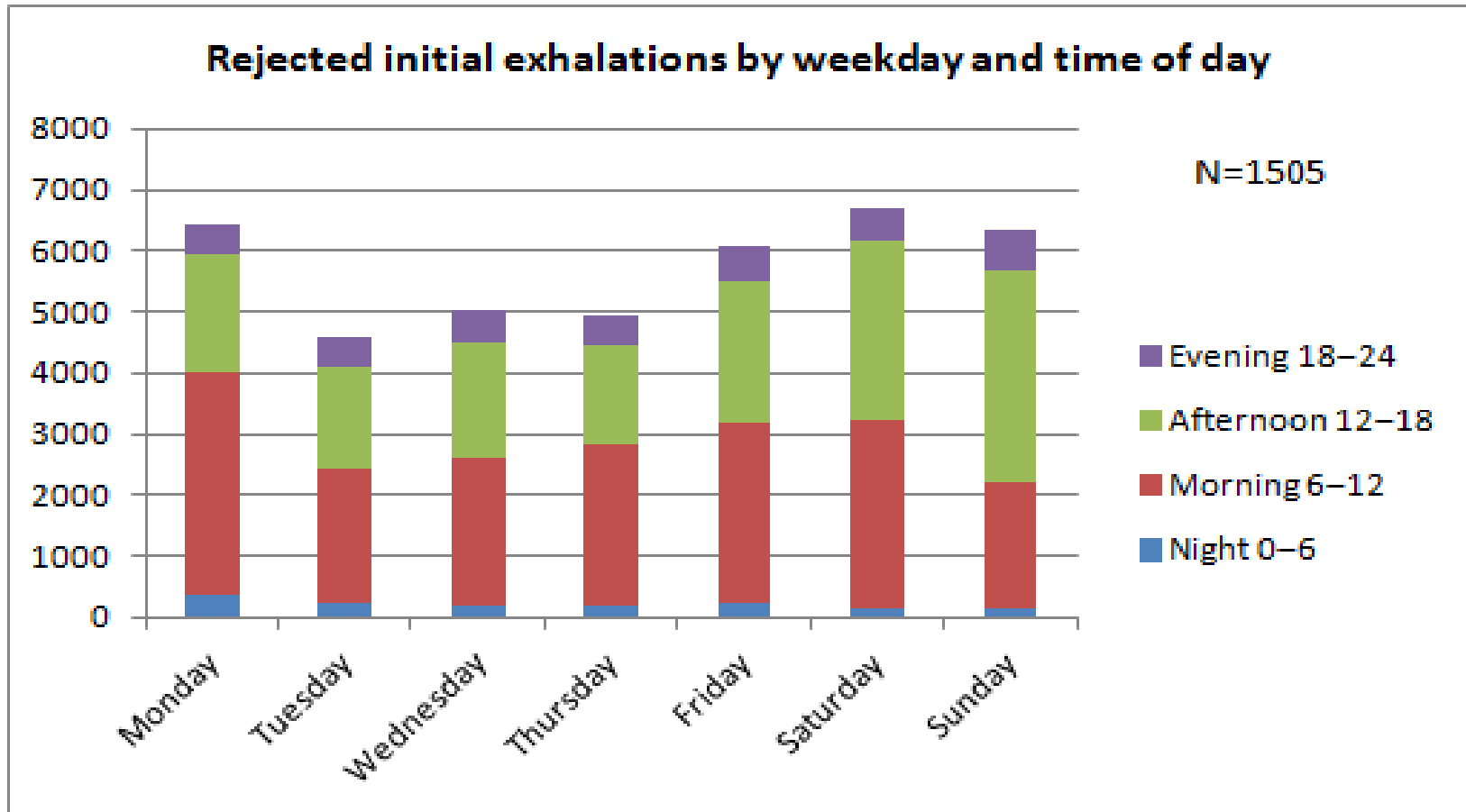
- The **average age** of the interlock driving licence holders was **51 years**. The youngest was 20 years old, the oldest 82.
- 84 % of the drivers were male.
- At least **one third** of the drivers leave **voluntarily** the alcohol interlock fitted in their vehicle after the mandatory period of 1–3 years!

## How did/does the alcohol interlock affect the use of alcohol for you?





# The evaluation study



## Best things about using an interlock

- Keeping one's driving rights was felt to be the largest benefit (95 % of all the respondents).
- More than half (58 %) of the drivers also appreciated the certainty that they would not accidentally set out intoxicated.
- One-third of the drivers kept their jobs thanks to the interlock.
- The emphasis on traffic safety was also valued (28 %).
- Free-form answers listed getting sober as a benefit, as well as the fact that the interlock “teaches one to think” and reminds of “the dangers of the drink”.
- Some drivers viewed the interlock as a friend and travel companion: “I drive a Renault and I've named the alcohol interlock Pierre. Pierre tells me when it's safe to drive. Above all, the alcohol interlock is a health instrument and a friend.”

## Worst things about using an interlock

- **Waiting time** for the device to **warm up** (59 % of all the respondents) and
- rather **high expenses** (57 %) were seen as the worst aspects of using an alcohol interlock.
- Almost half (54 %) of the respondents considered **re-tests** while driving to be unpleasant, and many felt them to be a safety hazard\*. The interval of randomly required re-tests was felt to be too frequent\*\*.
- Exhaling in public was felt to be **awkward** by 43 % of the respondents. Many also described the attitude of outsiders as suspicious or negative.

\*\* time period of 6 min to give a breath sample for a re-test

\*\*\* first re-sample required in 5–10 min, after that every 30–45 min

# The evaluation study: Recidivism

- More than half of the drivers had been convicted of DUI several times before applying for the alcohol interlock driving licence.
- 3.3 % of the drivers were caught for DUI during their period of alcohol interlock controlled driving rights (most likely with another vehicle, not fitted with an interlock).
- After the end of the interlock supervision period, 2.5 % of the drivers were caught for a DUI offence.
- The recidivism rate of alcohol interlock users seems to be significantly smaller than that of all DUI offenders, as generally the recidivism rate in Finland is more than 30 %.

# The pros and cons of the programme from the perspective of the authorities

## Pros

- The scheme of the rehabilitation program is rather simple and the administrative burden is relatively small.
- The program is effective and also widely accepted.

## Cons

- The number of participants is very low compared to the number of yearly DUI cases.
  - Two main reasons: Relatively short driving bans (for a DUI offence) in Finland and the costs of the program.
- The log-data is not used to the extent it could be used.
- There are no medical check-ups after the program.

## Doctors prescribing alcohol interlocks:

### Alcohol interlock as a preventive measure for drivers having a drinking problem

- The problematic use of alcohol may come up
  - at medical examination for a driving licence or for a licence renewal,
  - at medical examination for another reason (annual check etc.), or
  - when the driver is referred to the doctor by the police.
- The doctors are **obliged** to inform the police if the person does not meet the health requirements for a driving licence.
- In terms of alcohol use the doctors have two options;
  - Order a **follow-up period** of 3–12 months, after which a re-assessment whether the person is still having a drinking problem or not, or
  - Inform the police that the person meets the health requirements only with an **alcohol interlock** (code 113 for the driving licence).

**Thank you!**

**Questions?**

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