



Trafi

Finnish Transport Safety Agency

Safe and Sober Seminar
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EC Representation in Poland

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*Responsible traffic.
A joint effort.*

Update of the Finnish rehabilitation program

- A trial July 2005 – June 2008
- Permanent since July 2008
- Approx. 2500- 3000 participants since July 2008
- Currently approx. 500 new participants each year vs. 20 000 DUI cases/year
- Average length of the program is 506 days
- Average costs of the program are 2.200 €

An evaluation study published in February 2013

- Trafi Publications 6/2013: "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

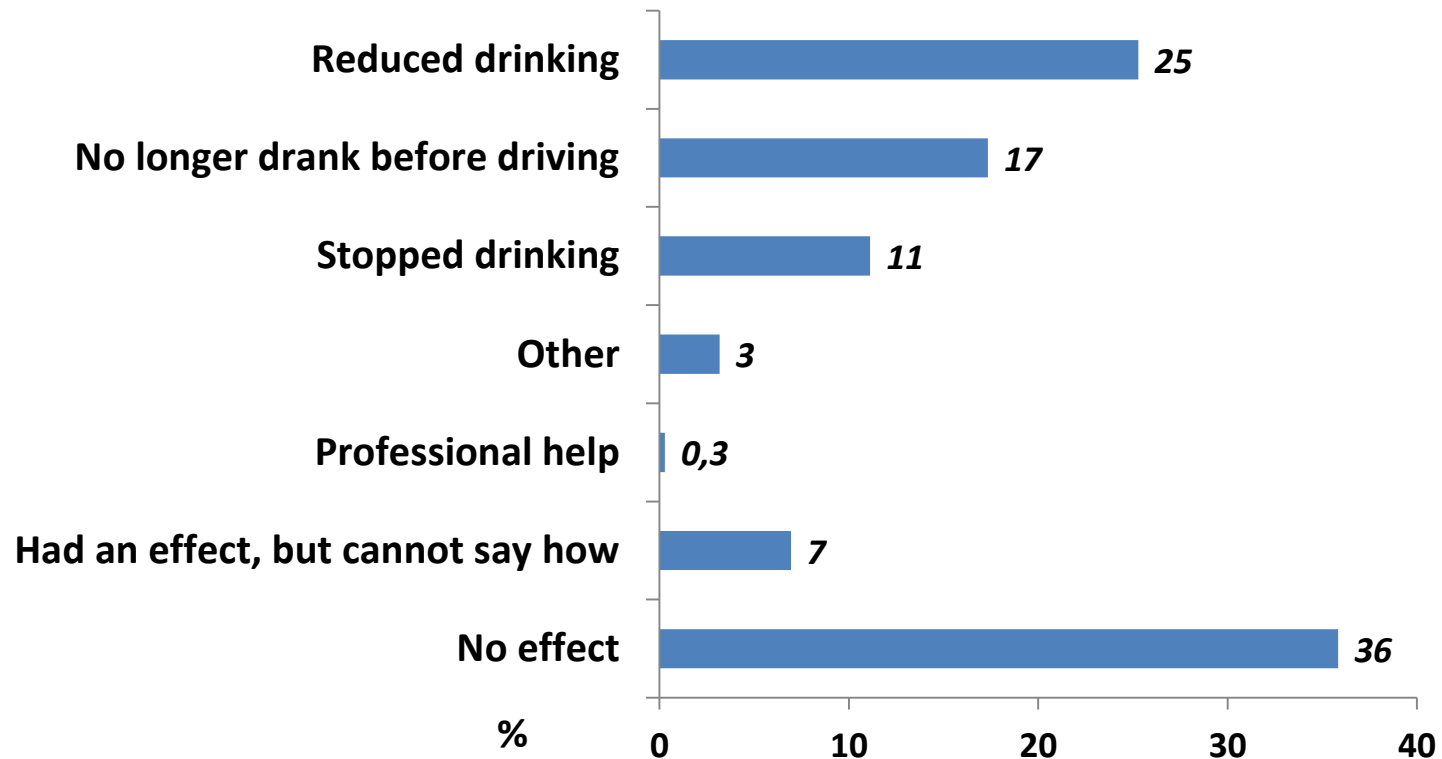
The study includes

- a survey (questionnaire) to 1569 drivers who have participated in the rehabilitation program during the period 1 July 2008 – 12 June 2012 (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.

The population

- The average age of the interlock driving licence holders was 51 years. The youngest driver was 20 years old, the oldest 82.
- 84% of the drivers were male.
- 1/3 of the drivers were workers on their employment status.
- 24 of the drivers had died since they were issued an interlock driving licence. Alcohol-related causes of death (37.5%) and suicides (16.7%) were much more prevalent among persons with interlock driving licence than in the general Finnish population (alcohol-related causes 3.7% and suicides 1.8%).

How did the alcohol interlock affect alcohol use?



N=692

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-exhaling*** while driving to be unpleasant, and many felt it to be a safety hazard**. The interval of randomly required re-exhalations 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.

* giving a breath sample to the interlock

** 6 min to give a breath sample

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

- The interlock log data was analysed out of 1505 interlocks used by the DUI offenders.
- Interlocks used in the DUI programme have prevented **at least 12 000 times** participants from driving while under the influence of alcohol (≥ 0.5 ‰; the legal limit) **since July 2008** in Finland.
- Overall the interlocks have prevented **over 40 000 times** a driver who had “had a few” (≥ 0.2 ‰) to start a vehicle (the number includes also the cases with ≥ 0.5 ‰).

- **More than half** of the drivers had been convicted of driving while under the influence of alcohol **several times before** applying for an alcohol interlock-controlled right to drive.
- Of all the drivers, 3.3% were caught driving while intoxicated **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 driving while intoxicated.
- Thus, a **total of 5.8% of the drivers were caught driving while intoxicated during and/or after** their period of alcohol interlock-controlled driving rights.
- The recidivism rate of alcohol interlock users seems to be significantly smaller than that of all persons convicted of driving while intoxicated, as **generally the recidivism rate in Finland is around 30%.**

The pros and cons from the perspective of the authorities

Pros

- Rehabilitation program is quite simple and the administrative burden is relatively small
- Rehabilitation program is widely accepted and extending the use of the alcohol interlocks is included in our government's future plans

Cons

- Number of participants is very low compared to the number of DUI cases
- Two main reasons are relatively short driving bans in Finland and the costs of the program
- Data is not used to the extent than it should and there are no medical check-ups after the program

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

- Ministry of Social Affairs and Health's enactment on health requirements for driving:
 - “The minimum health requirements for driving are not fulfilled if the person in question is a substance abuser such that his or her ability to drive is substantially weakened, or if, as a driver, he or she must, due to the continuous abuse of alcohol or another intoxicating substance, be regarded as a danger to other traffic.”
 - “The above notwithstanding, a doctor may regard the health requirement for driving as having been fulfilled (with respect to the abuse of alcohol), providing that the vehicle driven by the person in question has an **alcohol interlock** installed, which prevents drink driving.”
- The above mentioned applies for both rehabilitation program and alcohol interlock as a preventive measure
- Since **January 2013**, alcohol interlocks are provided for under Sections 12 and 16 of the Act on Driving Licences.
 - Marked under national code 113 in the driving licence.

Continues...

- The doctor may assess that the person in question is having a problem with alcohol
- Medical examination for driving licence or licence renewal
- Medical examination for some other reason (annual check etc.)
- If he/she is referred to the doctor by the police
- Under the act on driving licences doctors are obligated to inform the police if the person in question doesn't meet the health requirements for the driving licence
- In terms of alcohol they have two options;
 - Follow-up period of 3 – 12 months after which they will decide whether the person in question is still having a problem or not
 - They can decide that the person in question meets the health requirements only with the alcohol interlock (code 113)

Future ideas

- After the ban period the offender can continue driving with the code 113
- After the offender program the offender can continue driving with the code 113
- Doctors may have access to the log files in order to help them to assess whether there is a problem with alcohol or not (if code 113 is needed or not)

Thank you!

Questions?

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