Ignition Interlock Device Compliance and Monitoring

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Legislative Auditor's conclusion

Half of the drivers required to install ignition interlock devices earn less than $28,000 per year. Installation rates increase with income. The state offers financial assistance, but its reach is limited.

Key points

- Drivers who are convicted of driving under the influence must install an ignition interlock device in any vehicle they drive.
- Overall, 41% of drivers who are required to install an ignition interlock device do so.
- The installation rate among the lowest earners was 30%; it was 74% among the highest.
- A device costs about $2,700 per year. Fines and insurance can increase the total to $5,000.
- The state's financial assistance program struggles with customer service, inefficiency, and lack of strategy.
- The Department of Licensing and Washington State Patrol can improve interagency coordination and advise the Legislature on ways to improve the installation rate.

Executive summary

The 2024 Legislature directed the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) staff to review compliance with device requirements and recommend ways to improve the installation rate (2024 transportation budget, ESHB 2134).

Ignition interlock devices required for drivers convicted of DUI

An ignition interlock device (device) is an alcohol monitoring system designed to prevent impaired driving. Drivers convicted of driving under the influence (DUI) or other impaired driving offenses must either:

- Install a device in any vehicle they drive for a set period, or

- Permanently avoid driving (the requirement does not expire).

State law specifies how long the requirement will be in place. The Department of Licensing (Licensing) and the Washington State Patrol (State Patrol) are responsible for program oversight.

- Licensing is responsible for maintaining driver records.
- State Patrol regulates the manufacturers and conducts investigations.
- Neither is responsible for tracking the installation rate or driver outreach.

41% of drivers installed a device

Licensing data shows that 65,782 drivers were required to install devices between January 2018 and June 2025. Of those:

- 41% either completed their requirement or have a device currently installed.
- 59% did not install a device as of June 2025.

The data does not indicate why drivers do not have a device. They may have chosen not to drive, may be unable to drive, or may be driving in violation of the law.

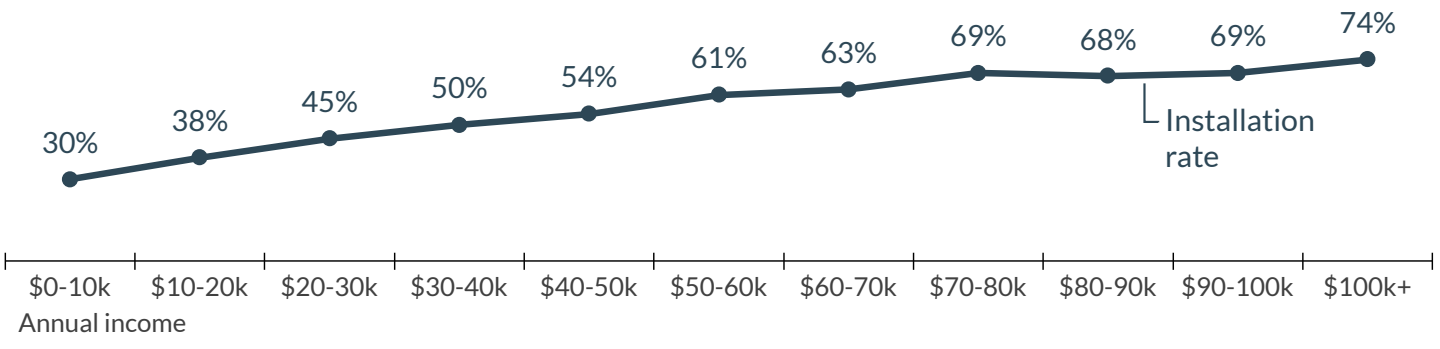
Installation rates increase with income

The data shows that installation rates increase as the driver's income rises. For example:

- About 45% of drivers earning $20,000 to $30,000 installed a device.
- About 69% of drivers earning $90,000 to $100,000 installed a device.

The median wage for people with requirements is $28,000. In contrast, records from the Employment Security Department (Employment Security) show that the 2024 statewide median wage for an individual was $56,000.

Figure 1: The installation rate increases with driver income



Notes: Annual income was calculated based on the quarter preceding conviction and three quarters post-conviction.
Source: JLARC staff analysis of Licensing and Employment Security data.

The annual cost for a device is about $2,700

Agency staff, judges, law enforcement, defense attorneys, and public safety advocates told JLARC staff that the cost was a barrier to increasing the installation rate. They stated that the cost of the devices is significant since the people required to install them tend to have lower income.

Financial assistance is available

Low-income drivers are eligible for financial assistance to cover some of the costs. Approved drivers receive reimbursement of about $1,400. The program is funded through a $21 per month fee paid by drivers who have a device installed in their vehicle.

Drivers who receive financial assistance account for about 11% of installations. JLARC staff estimate that more may be eligible.

Financial assistance program struggles with customer service, inefficiency, and lack of strategy

Licensing administers the financial assistance program. Multiple divisions and employees share program responsibility. Communication challenges and unclear roles have led to problems such as:

- Contradictory information provided to customers on the reimbursement process.
- Driver complaints incorrectly directed to State Patrol.
- Duplicated work, such as multiple staff working to correct the same vendor reporting issues.

Licensing also does not hold manufacturers accountable for submitting timely and accurate data. This means Licensing cannot ensure that a driver's record is accurate. Licensing has not developed strategic goals, performance metrics, or targets for the financial assistance program.

Agencies can improve interagency coordination

Licensing and State Patrol depend on each other to carry out their statutory responsibilities. Despite their shared responsibilities, the agencies lack formal processes for coordinating administration and oversight. Implementing leading practices, such as clear roles, common goals, and performance measures would support effective administration of the agencies' current responsibilities. This could include monitoring the installation rate using the method set by JLARC staff.

Agencies can advise the Legislature on improving the installation rate

The 2024 Legislature indicated that it wanted to improve installation rates. Neither Licensing nor State Patrol have statutory responsibility for installation rates or outreach. However, they are well positioned to advise the Legislature on actions, statutory changes, and resources needed to achieve this goal.

Legislative Auditor's recommendations

1. Licensing should establish clear objectives, responsibilities, and performance goals for the financial assistance program.

2. Licensing and State Patrol should create a formal agreement to jointly administer their ignition interlock responsibilities.
3. Licensing and State Patrol should develop a coordinated strategy to increase the installation rate and report back to the Legislature.

You can find additional information in the **Recommendations section**.