



Oil Leak — Where It Usually Comes From, and What It Costs

How real visits for an oil leak ended at independent shops across the US — the part actually replaced, how often, and what it cost when it was the only fix.

Gasket / seal

The single most common outcome — nearly half of these visits when combined with the runner-up

Gasket / seal **\$65 – \$444**
Valve cover gasket **\$182 – \$481**

typical cost when it was the only fix
(parts + labor)

THE FIX INVOLVED	SHARE OF THESE VISITS*	TYPICAL COST†	MEDIAN
Gasket / seal	32.5%	\$65 – \$444	\$188
Valve cover gasket	18.7%	\$182 – \$481	\$299
Oil pan	11.2%	\$239 – \$592	\$388
Sensor	10.1%	\$180 – \$433	\$287
Timing components	6.8%	\$261 – \$587	\$390
Oil cooler / lines	3.6%	\$242 – \$582	\$376
PCV valve	3.2%	\$85 – \$268	\$152
Switch	2.1%	\$126 – \$344	\$216
Other, rarer causes	smaller shares — oil pressure sensors, rear main seals, timing covers, oil filter housings	varies	—

*Share of visits whose repair involved this part; combined repairs count toward each part, so shares overlap and don't add to 100%.

†Middle half of real invoices when this was the only fix — parts + labor, all vehicle types.

WHICH ONE IS YOURS? LISTEN FIRST

- **Burning smell after driving** — Oil seeping onto hot exhaust parts announces itself by smell before it ever leaves a spot on the driveway — the valve cover gasket is the classic source and the most common oil-leak outcome.
- **Spots on the driveway** — Fresh spots locate the leak: front of the engine suggests timing cover or crank seal, middle suggests oil pan, rear suggests the main seal.
- **Leak or just residue?** — A damp, dusty film on an older engine isn't always worth chasing — shops distinguish seepage (watch it) from dripping (fix it).

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THE SHOP

Expect the engine cleaned and dyed, then a re-check to find the true source — oil travels, and the lowest wet spot is rarely where it starts. Valve cover gaskets and oil pans are the common answers; a rear main seal or timing cover is the labor-heavy tail. Ask whether the leak is a drip or a seep; small seeps are often monitored, not fixed.

ABOUT THIS DATA · HOW TO USE THIS BRIEF

Vehicles **all makes and models, US fleet**

Data confidence **High** — *large sample, stable shares*

Records through **July 2026**, refreshed continuously

Source **paid invoices from independent US repair shops**

Take it to the shop. It tells you what the likely answers are and what each one should cost — so when the diagnosis comes back, you already know whether the number fits. Vehicle-specific price reports for the common fixes are on fixdozer.com.

NOT A DIAGNOSIS This brief describes how other owners' visits for an oil leak ended. Your vehicle, its history and the shop's testing decide yours. FixDozer does not perform repairs and receives nothing from shops.