
UK public EV charging apps

State of UX 2025

BY ED ROBERTS

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Introduction

When we published our first review of UK EV charging app UX in 2023, the picture was mixed at best. Average ratings across the major networks sat at 2.6 out of 5.

The most common complaints were depressingly predictable (broken payment flows, no customer service, chargers shown as available that weren't), and we concluded that the link between digital experience and EV adoption was being systematically underestimated by the industry.

Two years on, we've returned to the data. The UK's public charging network has grown significantly in that time. The driver population has broadened well beyond early adopters. A meaningful regulatory framework has come into force. There is, in other words, plenty of reason to expect progress.

We analysed close to 8,000 reviews across 15 charge point operators covering both Android and iOS. What we found was not what we hoped to find, but did also surface some very interesting trends and insights for the industry.

Approach and scope

Our methodology mirrors the 2023 study: app store reviews as a structured proxy for driver sentiment, with thematic analysis to surface the jobs users are trying to get done and how well the industry is serving them.

The scope has expanded slightly. This edition covers the top 15 charge point operators (CPOs) by coverage, up from 14, across both Android and iOS, giving us 7,967 reviews in total. One network required additional filtering: its app covers multiple product lines beyond public charging, so we applied keyword filtering to retain only reviews relevant to public charge point use.

As in 2023, this was an AI-enabled study; the analysis was assisted by Anthropic's Claude Opus 4.6 model, with multi-layered QA to guard against mistakes and hallucinations. As with all our industry reviews, our intention is not to single out any one provider, but to focus on the experience of the "median driver". All data is anonymised.

A final note on year-on-year comparability. The 2023 report used app store average ratings directly; this study calculates ratings from the individual reviews we downloaded. The two approaches can produce slightly different absolute numbers. With that caveat made, the direction of travel is consistent across both methods, and consistent across individual networks: driver sentiment remains largely negative.

THE COHORT

The 15 charge point operators in this review

The UK's largest public charging networks by coverage, reviewed across Android and iOS — 7,967 reviews in total.

- | | |
|----|-------------------------------|
| 1 | Shell Recharge |
| 2 | Connected Kerb |
| 3 | Pod |
| 4 | Char.gy |
| 5 | BP Pulse |
| 6 | TotalEnergies (Source London) |
| 7 | Surecharge |
| 8 | Zest |
| 9 | Blink |
| 10 | ChargePlace Scotland |
| 11 | InstaVolt |
| 12 | Tesla Supercharger |
| 13 | Fuuse |
| 14 | Evolt Network |
| 15 | Clenergy EV |

Top 15 CPOs by coverage, data from Zapmap, correct as of 31 January 2026.

What does the average driver have to say?

App store ratings

The industry average across all 15 networks is 2.1 out of 5 on a simple average, or 2.4 if weighted by review volume. Both figures represent a decline from the 2.6 recorded in 2023. On a like-for-like basis (comparing only the networks present in both studies) the average has dropped to approximately 2.2 to 2.3.

The distribution is striking. One-star reviews now account for 52% of the entire dataset. Five-star reviews are the second most common at 25%. Three-star reviews, which you might expect to make up the bulk of a normal distribution, account for just 7%. The middle ground has essentially disappeared. Drivers are either happy or furious, with very little in between.

Average rating of sampled reviews by submission period



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The spread across networks is enormous, ranging from a high of 4.3 to lows of 1.1. The networks with the most reviews, and therefore the most drivers, cluster around 2.1, an essentially identical score despite different ownership, infrastructure, and product teams. That convergence on a poor result is one of the most telling findings in the data: this is a systemic problem, not a few outliers dragging down an otherwise healthy market.

TAKEAWAYS

- The industry average has declined from 2.6 to 2.1 since 2023
- The ratings distribution is bimodal: over half of all reviews are one star, and the middle ground has nearly vanished
- The largest networks by coverage converge on the same poor average, suggesting common root causes rather than isolated failures

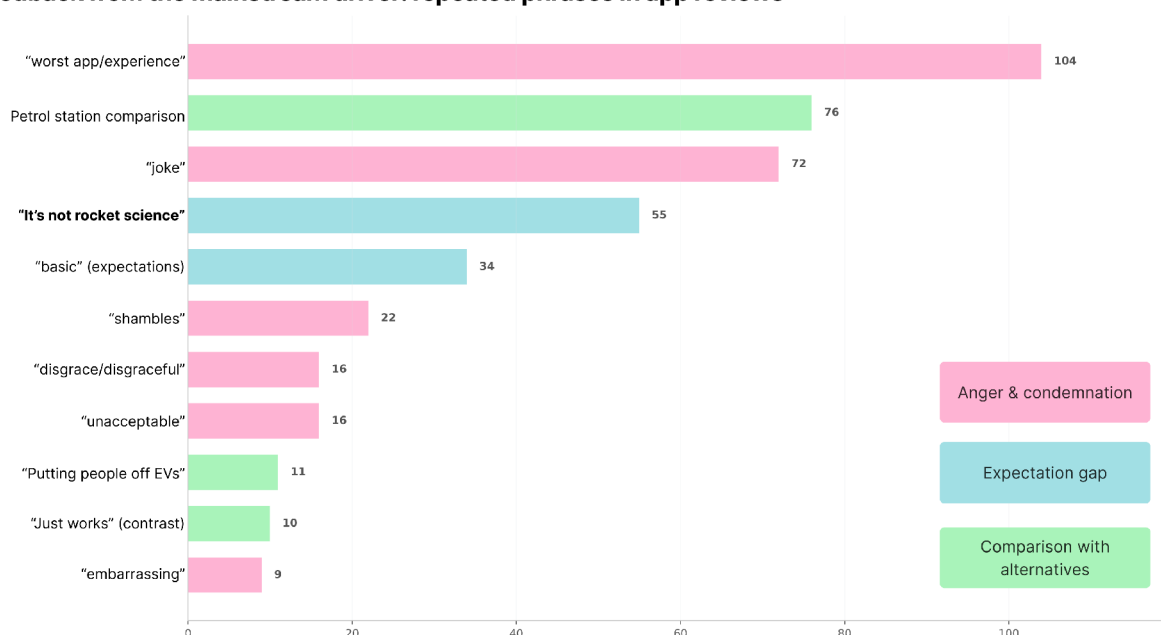
What the numbers don't tell you

The ratings decline is important, but the most significant shift since 2023 isn't captured in a star rating. It's in the tone of the reviews themselves.

The 2023 dataset reads like frustrated early adopters. People who had chosen to buy an electric car, accepted that public charging was still a developing experience, and were reporting friction they hoped would eventually be resolved. The language was comparative ("this used to work", "other apps manage it"), occasionally patient, occasionally despairing.

The 2025 dataset reads differently. The phrases that recur throughout are things like "it's 2025", "how hard can it be", "I just want to charge my car", and "this should just work". The tone has shifted from disappointed to angry, and from personal to principled.

Feedback from the mainstream driver: repeated phrases in app reviews



Consider this review:

"When you go to a petrol station, do you have to register your personal details at each one using an online form on the fiddly keyboard on your phone while you stand in the rain?"

— Google Play review, 1★

This isn't the language of an early adopter encountering a rough edge. It's the language of a mainstream consumer applying the same standard they'd apply to any other transaction, and finding it doesn't come close.

The EV market has crossed from enthusiast to mainstream. The people now leaving reviews at charge points are not, for the most part, technology-forward early adopters. They're ordinary drivers who switched to electric, often because they had to or because the economics made sense, and who bring the same expectations to a charge point app as they bring to online banking or a supermarket delivery service. The apps, largely, haven't moved with them.

The regulatory picture

Since our 2023 report, the Public Charge Point Regulations 2023 have introduced a series of requirements that directly address the failures we and others identified. The data gives us a partial picture of how those mandates are landing. The key deadlines:

1. Mandatory contactless payment on new charge points 8kW and above and all existing 50kW+ rapids (November 2024)
2. 99% reliability target for rapid chargers and a requirement for 24/7 staffed helplines (November 2024)
3. A roaming requirement enabling drivers to charge across networks without a dedicated account (November 2025)

On contactless payment, the picture is complicated. The rate of reviews mentioning contactless or card-reader payment methods has declined from 4.6% during the transition period to 3.2% after the November 2024 deadline. In isolation, that looks like progress. But 85% of the post-deadline mentions are complaints, not praise. Contactless readers exist where they didn't before, but they fail often enough that drivers feel compelled to write about it. A contactless reader that rejects cards and sends drivers back to an app that also doesn't work is not an improvement on simply not having a reader at all.

The regulations define contactless specifically as payment by bank debit or credit card; an RFID card, by their explicit wording, does not qualify. Chargers relying on RFID-only payment within the scope of the mandate are non-compliant, and the review data contains enough post-deadline RFID complaints to suggest this is more than an isolated issue.

On support, the picture is similarly equivocal. The volume of support complaints has dropped slightly. The satisfaction rate for the "get support" job has also dropped, from 26% to 22%. The helpline requirement appears to have made support more visible without making it significantly more effective. The roaming deadline passed in November 2025, which is too recent for our dataset to fully reflect. But the demand is already the loudest signal in the data, which we'll return to below.

TAKEAWAYS

- The contactless mandate is having an effect on review volume but not on driver experience
- Post-deadline, 85% of contactless mentions are still complaints
- Support satisfaction has declined despite the helpline requirement
- Regulation has moved the industry in the right direction; it hasn't yet moved driver experience

Insights from user reviews

Five themes dominate the dataset by volume. **Payment** is the largest, appearing in 25% of all reviews. It covers card rejections, failed transactions, top-up wallet requirements, contactless failures, and pricing concerns. It's also the area showing the steepest deterioration since 2023: payment satisfaction has dropped 19 percentage points, from 54% to 35%. It was the one user need that was majority-satisfied in 2023. It no longer is. The pre-authorisation model, where a charge of £40 or more is held on a driver's card before a session begins, generates particular confusion among newer users who aren't expecting it:

"I am new to EV chargers... Many chargers listed are either broken or don't activate when using the app. When they do they put a £40 hold on your credit card each time. One week I have £360 held on my credit card. 9 x £40. My bank account is nearly empty."

— Google Play review, 1★

Support appears in 18% of reviews, with an average rating of 1.7. Only 22% of support-related reviews express satisfaction. Something goes wrong, the driver tries to reach someone, and either nobody answers or the person who does can't resolve the problem. Fifty-two reviews specifically mention refunds, typically for sessions that failed to deliver power but still charged the account.

"Zero communication from [the network], no response to support requests, and like others I was left unable to charge my car in our city where 99% of chargers are theirs."

— Google Play review, 1★

Session initiation accounts for 15% of reviews, with a 33% satisfaction ratio. This is the core transaction (arriving at a charger and starting a session) and it fails one in three times it's mentioned. QR codes that don't scan, sessions that time out, "could not start your charge" errors with no explanation or recourse:

"Drove to car park in Chichester, downloaded app, put cable in, didn't work. Phoned help number, on hold for several minutes, eventually told there was some error with a cable and it's unusable. Too predictable, happens too often."

— Google Play review, 1★

Charger status accuracy appears in 12% of reviews and has the lowest satisfaction ratio of any job in the dataset. Drivers arrive at chargers the app shows as available to find them broken, occupied, or sometimes simply not there, wasting time and energy before they've even opened the app:

"The map is basically useless because it shows 90% of the chargers as 'unavailable' with no indication of whether they'll ever be fixed."

— Google Play review, 1★

Finding chargers accounts for 10% of reviews (14% satisfaction). This job has increasingly migrated to aggregator apps and in-car navigation systems, so its weight in individual CPO reviews probably understates how much drivers engage with it.

TAKEAWAYS

- Payment is the biggest theme and the biggest deterioration since 2023
- Session initiation fails one in three times it's mentioned
- Charger status inaccuracy has the lowest satisfaction of any job, and it's worsening
- Support dissatisfaction persists despite regulatory requirements for staffed helplines

Top UX / UI design issues

Navigation and interface usability is, somewhat surprisingly, the most positively-skewed category in the dataset: 60% of reviews mentioning UI are positive, compared to 33% negative. Several major networks have visibly updated their apps since 2023, which is genuine progress. When an app gets the basics right, drivers notice and say so:

"Find your charger, plug in and start charging. it's as simple as that."

— Google Play review, 5★

The caveat is that the positive signal is heavily concentrated in networks with high review volumes and strong overall ratings. Exclude those networks and the UI category average drops from 3.5 to approximately 2.5. Clear, simple app design is achievable, the leaders prove it. Most of the market just hasn't kept up.

Basic app build quality is a disappointingly persistent problem. App crashes and freezes appear in 12% of all reviews (805 of 914 crash-related reviews are one or two stars). Slow and laggy performance accounts for a further 6%, particularly problematic in an outdoor, time-pressured context.

Login and authentication barriers are cited in 6% of reviews, with drivers describing verification emails that don't arrive, two-factor authentication loops they can't exit, and being automatically logged out mid-session. Some apps require photo ID or vehicle details before allowing access to a basic charger map. The average rating of reviews mentioning login or account issues is 1.4, and 90% are negative.

"It took me 7 logins and 1 hour and 31 minutes to conclude one purchase... You are a new customer. You need to download the app. There is no signal/network. It is an underground."

— Google Play review, 1★

Several networks appear to have added security requirements without considering that their users are standing at a charger, often in poor weather, often with poor signal, trying to authenticate quickly. While security matters, it does feel that some CPOs are prioritising it to the detriment of basic usability.

TAKEAWAYS

- UI has improved in parts of the market, but the gains are uneven
- App crashes remain the most-cited technical problem, at 12% of reviews
- Login barriers score the worst of any category: 1.4 average, 90% negative
- Context of use matters: authentication designed for comfortable indoor use fails outdoors in poor conditions

Most requested features and what's new

The top feature request in 2025 is something that didn't register significantly in 2023: a single app that works across all networks, cited in 9% of all reviews, 707 mentions. The November 2025 roaming regulation, which requires CPOs to enable payment via at least one third-party provider, directly addresses this. The demand was already loud before the regulation had taken full effect, which suggests this is one intervention that is well-aligned with what drivers actually want. It will be worth revisiting this in 2026 to see whether it moves the needle.

The second and third most requested features, estimated time to charge (4.9% of reviews) and charging speed display in kW (3.3%), are both about in-session information. Drivers who have started a charge want to know how long it will take and what speed they're actually getting. Estimating time-to-charge is known to be difficult on AC chargers, which can't communicate directly with the car the way DC units can; but if that problem can be cracked, a CPO app would genuinely add value over a simple contactless tap-and-go. Where the data is available, drivers are grateful for it.

Since 2023, price comparison has grown 44% as a feature request, as drivers start choosing between networks on cost rather than just availability. CarPlay and Android Auto integration is up 61%: drivers increasingly want charging information in their car's interface, not on a separate phone. Overstay and congestion awareness has grown 48%, driven by chargers being busier than they were two years ago; drivers want to know whether they'll be queuing before they set off. Finally, accessibility mentions, though still small in absolute volume, have grown 133%. We expect this to continue, a reminder that as public charging becomes genuine infrastructure it has to work for everyone.

TAKEAWAYS

- A single cross-network app is now the most-requested feature by a wide margin
- In-session data (speed, time remaining) is where CPO apps might have the clearest opportunity for a unique value proposition
- Price comparison, in-car integration, and congestion awareness reflect a maturing market with maturing expectations
- Accessibility is a growing concern that is almost certainly understated in review data

Jobs-to-be-done: how well is the industry serving drivers?

The entire dataset points to a single job: "charge my car away from home." The satisfaction ratio for that overarching job, across all 7,967 reviews, is just 32%. Two thirds of drivers who leave a review describe an unsatisfactory experience.

Within this we've drilled down into nine smaller jobs to reflect what the 2025 data is showing. No job reaches a 50% satisfaction ratio. The closest (planning a journey) comes in at 49%, but it's also the least mentioned, suggesting it's a niche use case that a small number of drivers find roughly adequate.

JTBD as derived from 2025 review data

Job	Mentions	Avg ★	Satisfaction	Verdict
Pay for my charging session	25%	1.9	25%	Underserved ↓
Get support when something goes wrong	18%	1.7	22%	Underserved
Initiate a charge	15%	1.8	33%	Underserved
Check charger status ahead of arrival	12%	2.1	12%	Underserved
Locate a charger on my route	10%	2.0	14%	Underserved
Monitor charge in progress	5%	2.3	42%	Underserved
View charging history and receipts	4%	2.0	24%	Underserved
Update account/payment details in the app	2%	1.6	6%	Underserved
Plan a journey with charging stops	1%	2.4	49%	Served right (just)

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The most underserved jobs are updating account or payment details (6% satisfaction), checking charger status (12%), and locating a charger (14%). There is essentially no improvement on these satisfaction ratings since our last study in 2023.

While still niche, fleet and business users are starting to come through in the data with the emergence of an "obtain receipts when charging away from home" job, which sits at only 10% satisfaction, markedly lower than the related "view history" job at 24%. For a driver expensing a charge or reconciling a fleet account, failures here are a real headache, and the data suggests the industry hasn't yet treated this as a serious use case.

The sole genuine improvement is information comprehensiveness, up from 30% to 38%, as more apps now display charging speeds, connector types and pricing than two years ago.

There is a related measure to how well the industry serves these jobs: how well it meets user needs, defined as the driver's expectation of how a job should be completed. On this measure too, payment has fallen furthest, from 54% to 35% — the steepest decline of any metric in the study.

Changes in user needs and satisfaction since 2023

User need	2023	2025	Change	Trend
Payment should be effortless	54%	35%	↓ 19pts	Declining
Support should be reliable	26%	22%	↓ 4pts	Declining
Charging should be seamless	44%	43%	↓ 1pt	Stable
Chargers should be found quickly	16%	18%	↑ 2pts	Stable
Information should be comprehensive	30%	38%	↑ 8pts	Improving

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TAKEAWAYS

- Only one in three drivers describes a satisfactory experience at the level of the overarching job
- No component job reaches 50% satisfaction
- Payment, the one need that was majority-satisfied in 2023, has fallen sharply by 19 points
- Business users are an emerging and significantly underserved population
- Information comprehensiveness is the only user need that has measurably improved



32% driver satisfaction with
the primary Job-to-be-Done
of charging away from home

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Conclusion

There is a structural problem at the heart of the UK's public charging app experience, and it isn't a design problem in the conventional sense. The industry has created a situation where, for most drivers in most situations, apps are a last resort rather than a first choice.

The most instructive pattern is at the top of the ratings chart. The network with the highest rating by some distance gets there not by having the most sophisticated app, but by making the app optional. Pay by contactless, walk away. If you want the app for session tracking or spending history, it's there. But the baseline transaction (arrive, plug in, charge, pay, leave) doesn't require it.

That distinction matters more than it might appear. When the app is optional, it only has to justify its existence to drivers who choose to open it. When the app is mandatory, every crash, every failed payment flow, every session that won't start becomes a total blocker. The driver has no fallback. Given that apps crash 12% of the time, payment flows fail 25% of the time, and status information is wrong often enough that only 12% of relevant reviews are positive, the cumulative probability of a friction-free experience on a mandatory-app network is uncomfortably low.

The top-performing network has, in effect, solved a different problem. It hasn't built a better app per se; it has built a service that works without one, then offered an app that adds value on top. Every other network is trying to make the app good enough to bear the weight of the entire transaction. The data suggests that weight is too much for any app to carry reliably.

Why this matters

"It's the same old flawed UX putting people off EVs."

— Google Play review, 1★

This isn't just a customer satisfaction problem. Poor digital experience has consequences that run directly to the commercial interests of every network operating in this market.

EV adoption depends on mainstream drivers having a mainstream experience, and mainstream drivers will remember a bad one. A driver who arrives at your charger, can't start a session and can't reach support doesn't quietly move on. They route around your network next time.

Utilisation depends on repeat visits, and repeat visits depend on trust. And networks that cede the entire transaction to a contactless card or an aggregator app don't just lose the friction. They lose the relationship, the data, and the commercial opportunity that comes with it.

Recommendations

The answer isn't to abandon apps; it's to change their strategic purpose.

Given that contactless offers the more seamless user experience, where available, lean into this user preference. But if done right, drivers will choose to open an app despite having a contactless alternative because they want something that the app is offering on top of the baseline experience. Estimated charging time. Real-time speed. Session history. Price comparison. These are the features the review data tells us drivers actually value, and they're features that only an app can provide (if you want to be free to wander off during your charging session and take the data with you). A CPO that gets this right doesn't just reduce friction. It builds a reason for drivers to come back.

No software has ever been written that didn't contain some bugs, and CPOs are dealing with a more-complex-than-average technical stack. So failure is going to happen. The choice is how you manage this. Honest communication, escape routes from crashes and freezes and a clear handoff to support are the difference between a frustrated driver and a churned one.

On the subject of support, it should be treated as a product function, not a cost centre. The regulatory floor of a 24/7 helpline is not the same thing as actually resolving problems. This connects to the point about failing gracefully. There will always be a role for speaking to a human for the small number of edge cases and problem scenarios that can't be prevented. Lean into this as an opportunity to save or even deepen the customer relationship.

If you take away only one thing from this report, I'd want it to be a recognition that reviews and the voice of the customer generally is a vital source of UX intelligence. The patterns in this dataset were not hard to find. They have been saying the same things for two years.

The regulatory framework introduced since 2023 is pointing in the right direction. But compliance isn't experience, and the data shows the gap between the two is still wide. The drivers now leaving these reviews aren't early adopters grading on a curve. They're mainstream consumers who have stopped making allowances, and the industry needs to catch up.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Five priorities for charge point operators

1

Monitor and act on app-store reviews

Reviews are a vital, low-cost source of UX intelligence. The patterns in this dataset weren't hard to find. They've been saying the same things for two years.

2

Design for "failing gracefully"

On a complex technical stack, some failure is inevitable. Honest communication, escape routes from crashes and freezes, and a clear handoff to support are the difference between a frustrated driver and a churned one.

3

Make the app optional, but desirable

Lean into contactless for the baseline transaction, then give drivers a reason to open the app anyway: real-time speed, estimated charging time, session history and price comparison. The things only an app can provide.

4

Invest in support as a strategic function

Treat support as a product function, not a cost centre. The regulatory floor of a 24/7 helpline is not the same thing as actually resolving a driver's problem.

5

Invest in the customer relationship

Networks that cede the whole transaction to a contactless card or an aggregator app lose more than the friction. They lose the relationship, the data and the commercial opportunity that comes with it.

About the author



Ed Roberts

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Ed Roberts leads strategic direction at We Are Systematic across its work in regulated and operationally complex sectors. His focus is how design decisions carry commercial and increasingly legal consequences for the businesses that ship them. He writes regularly on the business of strategy and design in complex industries.

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About WAS

We Are Systematic is a UK-based strategic UX consultancy. We do strategy-first, evidence-based design work for organisations building safety-critical, regulated or operationally demanding products: automotive and mobility, IoT and AI products, financial systems and energy infrastructure. The throughline across our work is that the surface most users interact with is the smallest visible part of a much larger system, and the design decisions on that surface carry consequences far beyond aesthetics. Our job is to reduce the risk in those decisions: to help teams get the high-stakes ones right before they are expensive to change.

UK public EV charging apps: state of UX 2025 is our read on the digital experience underpinning the UK's public charging network. It updates our 2023 baseline study, and applies the same evidence-based discipline our team brings to regulated, operationally complex products to one of the fastest-growing consumer infrastructure categories in the country.

This report draws on large-scale qualitative analysis of public app store reviews — close to 8,000 across 15 charge point operators — supported by Anthropic's Claude Opus 4.6 language model with multi-layered human QA. All data is anonymised; any interpretive errors remain our own.

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