

Second Thoughts

When a parking ticket is challenged, how often does the company defend it?

Published by Untap · July 2026 · 107,202 appeals · 15.9 million keeper enquiries

ABOUT THIS STUDY

Every figure in this report comes from two public sources: the annual report of the independent appeals service used by the larger of the two parking trade bodies, and the vehicle keeper enquiry volumes the driver licensing agency publishes each quarter. We joined them on a hand-built list of operator names. Nothing here is modelled, surveyed or estimated. Where the published data cannot answer a question, the report says so rather than filling the gap.

☰ AT A GLANCE

- 01 Of 107,202 parking appeals completed in the year to September 2025, 34,502 were dropped by the parking company before anyone ruled on them.
- 02 Across the operators we could match, the share of appeals ending with the ticket cancelled runs from under 30 per cent to over 90 per cent, a spread of more than three times.
- 03 10.4 per cent of keeper enquiries belong to operators on the other trade body's scheme, which publishes no appeal outcomes at all.

A private parking ticket is not a fine. It is an invoice from a company, and like any invoice it can be disputed. Most people never do. Of the just under sixteen million times a parking company asked the driver licensing agency who owned a vehicle in the year to September 2025, only about a hundred thousand disputes reached an independent appeal. That is well under one in a hundred.

This report is about what happened to that small, self-selected hundred thousand. The headline finding is not how often motorists won. It is how often the parking company decided, once a neutral adjudicator was actually going to look at the file, that it would rather not find out.

They knew we would allow the appeals.

POPLA Annual Report 2025, reporting what operators told it about the Appeals Charter

WHY OPERATORS SAY THEY WITHDRAW

The appeals service gives two reasons of its own for an operator not contesting: that the motorist has provided compelling evidence, or that the landowner has asked the operator to withdraw. Neither is an admission that the ticket was wrong, and the second has nothing to do with the merits at all. The quotation above is the service reporting what operators themselves said about cases they dropped, not a definition. Read the withdrawal rate as a measure of how often a company decides a case is not worth defending, which is not the same as how often it was wrong.

00 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Five things this report found

- 01 **A third of all appeals were abandoned by the company that issued the ticket**

34,502 of 107,202 completed appeals

Not lost. **Dropped.** The operator declined to contest, so the appeal service never ruled. The service gives two reasons: the motorist produced compelling evidence, or the landowner asked the operator to withdraw.

Source: POPLA Annual Report 2025.

- 02 **One large operator walked away from four appeals in every five**

82.6% of completed appeals dropped, one national operator

Across operators with meaningful volume the withdrawal rate runs from about **18 per cent to 83 per cent**. Two companies facing the same rules behave in opposite ways.

Source: POPLA Annual Report 2025 Appendix; Untap analysis.

03 **Whether a challenge succeeds depends more on who issued the ticket than on the facts**

7.5% to 43.4% share of ruled appeals won by the motorist

Among operators with at least a thousand completed appeals, the motorist's odds of winning a ruling vary by nearly **six times** depending on the company name at the top of the notice.

Source: POPLA Annual Report 2025 Appendix; Untap analysis.

04 **For a tenth of the market, no outcome data exists at all**

10.4% of keeper enquiries, on a scheme that publishes no outcomes

Operators signed to the smaller trade body appeal to a different service, which publishes **no allowed or refused figures whatsoever**. Its report has a section headed with the word outcomes that ends without a single number.

Source: DVLA KADOE volumes; The Independent Appeals Service Annual Report 2024–25.

05 **Keeper lookups are running at a record, and the last quarter has gone unreported**

+19.3% April to December 2025 against the same months in 2024

Parking companies made **13,098,550** keeper enquiries between April and December 2025, against 10,976,495 in the same months a year earlier. If the rate holds, the full year lands near 17.2 million, comfortably the highest on record. The data behind this only became available in April 2026 and we have found no published analysis of it.

Source: DVLA, Who DVLA shares data with, KADOE volumes; Untap analysis.

A third of parking appeals end because the company gives up

☰ AT A GLANCE

- 01 34,502 appeals were dropped by the operator and 5,020 by the motorist, out of 107,202 completed.
- 02 Counting only outcomes where the motorist kept their money, the true success rate is 45.8 per cent, not the 50.5 per cent headline.
- 03 The gap between those two numbers is the appeals the motorist abandoned, which the service notes are usually people who had already paid.

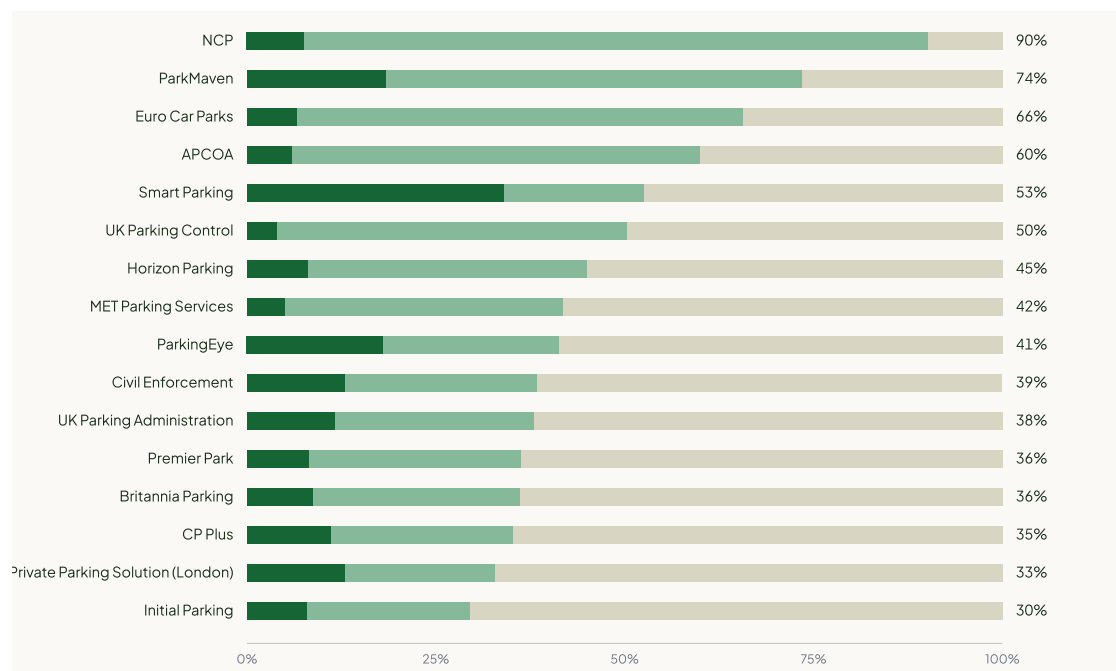
The appeals service reports that just over half of completed appeals ended with the ticket cancelled. (*Source: POPLA Annual Report 2025, appeals completed and cancelled.*) That figure is accurate but it flatters the process slightly, because it counts appeals the motorist withdrew, and the service's own definitions note those are typically people who had already paid the charge. Strip them out and the share of completed appeals where the motorist walked away owing nothing is **45.8 per cent**.

Either way, the interesting number is underneath. Of the 107,202 appeals completed in the year, only 67,680 were actually decided by an adjudicator. The other 39,522 were never contested. In 34,502 of those cases it was the parking company that dropped out.

FIG. 01 **At the top of this chart the ticket almost always went away, and mostly because the company stopped defending it**

Share of completed appeals by outcome, operators with at least 1,000 completed appeals, October 2024 to September 2025

● Allowed ● Operator dropped it ● Refused



Source: POPLA Annual Report 2025 Appendix; Untap analysis.

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Read the middle band. That is the share of appeals the operator abandoned once it knew someone independent was going to read the file. For one national car park operator it reaches **82.6 per cent**. For another large operator running retail and supermarket sites it is **59.1 per cent**. At the other end of the same chart, operators contest almost everything and win most of it.

🔗 CASE IN POINT · TWO OPERATORS, ONE RULEBOOK

One operator completed **16,146** appeals in the year and did not contest **9,544** of them, which is **59 per cent**. Another completed **5,181**, contested just over half, and won **92.5 per cent** of the rulings it stayed for.

Both are members of the same trade body, bound by the same code of practice, using the same appeals service. The difference is not the law. It is how confident each company is that its tickets would survive a look.

🕒 WHAT THIS MEANS · DRIVERS

A parking ticket that looks unanswerable often is not. Across every operator in this report, an appeal that reached the independent service ended with the charge cancelled roughly 45.8 per cent of the time, and in most of those cases the company chose not to argue.

02 THE LEAGUE

Your odds depend on whose name is at the top of the notice

☰ AT A GLANCE

- 01 Among operators with at least 1,000 completed appeals, the share of rulings won by the motorist ranges from 7.5 per cent to 43.4 per cent.
- 02 The share of appeals ending with the ticket cancelled ranges from under 30 per cent to over 90 per cent.
- 03 The two measures do not move together: some operators rarely lose rulings because they rarely stay to have one.

The table below is the heart of the report. It is sorted by completed appeals, which is the only ordering that neither flatters nor punishes an operator for its size. Two columns matter most. **Allowed** is how often the motorist won when an adjudicator actually ruled. **Dropped** is how often the operator declined to find out.

THE TABLE · OCTOBER 2024 TO SEPTEMBER 2025

Every operator with at least 250 completed appeals

Operator	Keeper enquiries	Appeals completed	Allowed	Dropped	Ticket cancelled	Appeals per 1,000
ParkingEye	2,482,897	23,967	23.5%	23.3%	41.3%	9.7
Euro Car Parks	1,893,385	16,146	16.1%	59.1%	65.7%	8.5

Operator	Keeper enquiries	Appeals completed	Allowed	Dropped	Ticket cancelled	Appeals per 1,000
Smart Parking	780,593	7,788	41.8%	18.5%	52.6%	10.0
APCOA	1,884,333	7,455	13.0%	53.9%	59.9%	4.0
Civil Enforcement	677,048	6,713	17.4%	25.5%	38.5%	9.9
NCP	729,630	6,348	43.4%	82.6%	90.2%	8.7
UK Parking Control	558,669	5,181	7.5%	46.3%	50.3%	9.3
CP Plus	560,678	4,788	14.7%	24.0%	35.2%	8.5
Horizon Parking	950,360	4,227	12.9%	36.9%	45.0%	4.5
Premier Park	233,647	3,192	11.5%	28.0%	36.3%	13.7
MET Parking Services	187,329	2,767	8.1%	36.8%	41.9%	14.8
ParkMaven	466,549	1,989	41.1%	55.1%	73.5%	4.3
Britannia Parking	375,690	1,733	12.0%	27.5%	36.2%	4.6
Initial Parking	80,041	1,644	10.2%	21.6%	29.6%	20.5
UK Parking Administration	123,972	1,621	15.9%	26.3%	38.0%	13.1
Private Parking Solution (London)	82,705	1,089	16.2%	19.8%	32.8%	13.2
Minster Baywatch	85,539	901	14.0%	16.2%	28.0%	10.5
BaySentry Solutions	46,256	839	33.6%	24.1%	49.6%	18.1
Total Parking Solutions	108,943	681	12.1%	32.2%	40.4%	6.3

Operator	Keeper enquiries	Appeals completed	Allowed	Dropped	Ticket cancelled	Appeals per 1,000
First Parking	52,420	679	19.6%	18.7%	34.6%	12.9
Saba Park Solutions	53,586	509	12.6%	28.5%	37.5%	9.5
P4 Parking	29,577	443	22.2%	49.2%	60.5%	15.0
Eternity Fire and Security	25,330	433	24.1%	5.3%	28.2%	17.1
Close Unit Protection	31,053	389	36.1%	14.7%	45.5%	12.5
VARS Technology	33,012	342	11.5%	15.8%	25.4%	10.4
Secure Parking Solutions	25,480	326	21.1%	14.1%	32.2%	12.8
Parking Enforcement and Security Services	not matched	318	12.7%	55.3%	61.0%	n/a
Capital Car Park Control	17,848	297	39.4%	5.1%	42.4%	16.6
Highview Parking	38,191	296	14.4%	22.6%	33.8%	7.8
Parking Group	21,128	266	26.0%	13.2%	35.7%	12.6
Workflow Dynamics	19,708	263	49.4%	33.1%	66.2%	13.3

Allowed is the share of appeals the appeals service decided in the motorist's favour. **Dropped** is the share the operator chose not to contest, so nobody ruled. **Ticket cancelled** combines the two: the share of completed appeals after which the motorist owed nothing.

Keeper enquiries are not tickets issued. The agency's own notes say the volumes represent the number of enquiries made and not the number of times keeper information was released, and that they include details of the same vehicle being released more than once. An enquiry only arises once a ticket has gone unpaid. It is the closest public proxy for issuance and nothing more.

Sources: POPLA Annual Report 2025 Appendix; DVLA, Who DVLA shares data with, KADOE enquiry volumes, filtered to Car Parking Management and cut to October 2024 to September 2025; Untap analysis.

The two columns tell different stories and it is worth separating them. A low allowed rate can mean an operator's tickets are sound. It can also mean the operator withdraws from every case it would lose, leaving only its strongest files to be ruled on. The cancelled column, which combines both routes, is the one that answers the question a driver actually has: if I challenge this, what are the chances I end up owing nothing?

⌚ WHAT THIS MEANS · THE STANDARDS BOARD

Publishing an allowed rate on its own would let an operator look impressive by withdrawing strategically. Any future reporting requirement needs the withdrawal rate beside it, or it measures the wrong thing.

03 CHALLENGE RATES

Some operators are challenged five times more often than others

☰ AT A GLANCE

- 01 Appeals reaching the independent service per 1,000 keeper enquiries range from about 4 to about 20 across matched operators.
- 02 This is a measure of how often a ticket is contested, not of whether the contest succeeds.
- 03 Keeper enquiries are the only public proxy for issuance, and they are an imperfect one.

Volume and outcome are separate questions. An operator can issue enormous numbers of tickets and see very few challenged, or issue relatively few and see them contested constantly. Dividing completed appeals by keeper enquiries in the same twelve months gives a rough challenge rate.

Across matched operators that rate runs from roughly **4 per thousand** at the large airport and hospital operators to **20 per thousand** at some smaller firms. In other words, some companies' tickets are five times more likely to be taken all the way to an independent appeal.

WHY THIS NUMBER NEEDS CARE

A keeper enquiry is not a ticket. The agency's own notes say the volumes represent the number of enquiries made and not the number of times keeper information was released, and that they include details of the same vehicle being released more than once. An enquiry only happens once a ticket has gone unpaid, so tickets settled promptly never generate one. The ratio is therefore a proxy, and a noisy one. It is included because it is the only issuance measure that exists in public, not because it is precise.

🔗 WHAT THIS MEANS · LANDOWNERS

If you contract with a parking operator, the challenge rate is a reasonable proxy for how much friction its enforcement generates with the people using your site.

04 THE GAP

For a tenth of the market, nobody publishes anything at all

☰ AT A GLANCE

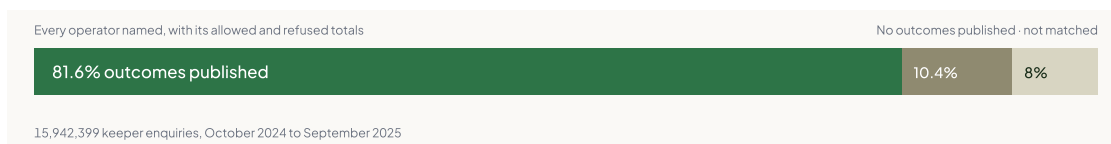
- 01 81.6 per cent of keeper enquiries belong to operators whose appeal outcomes appear in a published report.
- 02 A further 10.4 per cent belong to operators on a scheme whose appeals service publishes no allowed or refused figures at all.
- 03 That service did disclose that operators conceded 7,888 disputes, which is 22.9 per cent of everything it received.

Britain has two private parking trade bodies, and each runs its own appeals service. One publishes an appendix naming every operator with its allowed, refused and uncontested totals. That appendix is the basis of this report. The other publishes a ten page annual report containing a section headed with the word outcomes which discusses them in prose and then ends without a single figure. (*Source: The Independent Appeals Service Annual Report 2024 to 2025.*)

FIG.
02

One fifth of the market by volume has no published appeal outcomes

Keeper-data enquiries by whether the operator's appeal outcomes are published, October 2024 to September 2025



Source: DVLA KADOE volumes; POPLA Annual Report 2025 Appendix; The Independent Appeals Service Annual Report 2024-25; Untap analysis.

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What the second service does disclose is still useful. It received 34,383 disputes and recorded 8,907 discontinuations, of which 7,888 were conceded by the parking operator and 1,019 by the motorist. That gives an operator concession rate of **22.9 per cent** of disputes received, against **33.1 per cent** of appeals received on the other side. What it does not give, anywhere, is how often a motorist won.

Ⓢ WHAT THIS MEANS · THE DEPARTMENT

No statutory code of practice is in force. The 2022 one was withdrawn after a legal challenge, the replacement consultation closed in September 2025, and the government has committed to publishing a new code in autumn 2026. That consultation raises replacing both appeals services with a single one. On the evidence of these two reports, the strongest argument for it is not consistency of decisions. It is that one of the two current services can be audited from the outside and the other cannot.

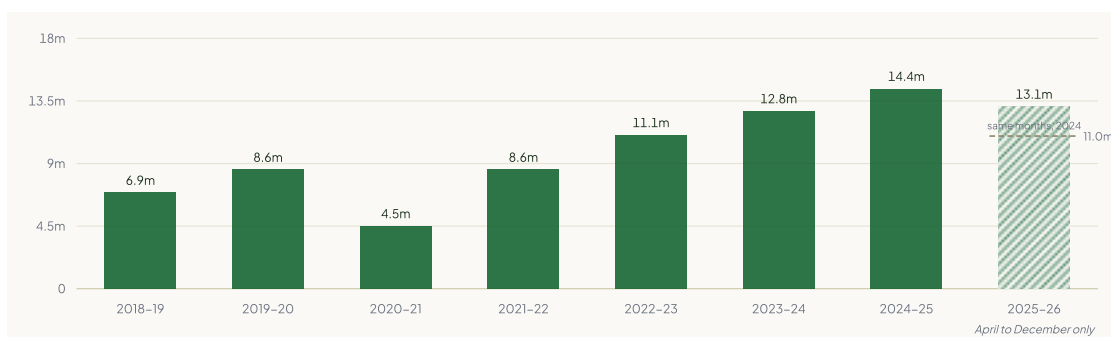
Keeper lookups are heading for their highest year on record

AT A GLANCE

- 01 Parking companies made 14,381,119 keeper enquiries in the 2024–25 financial year, up from under seven million six years earlier.
- 02 Between April and December 2025 they made 13,098,550, which is 19.3 per cent more than the same months a year before.
- 03 200 separate connections to the agency's data service were used in those nine months, against 186 across the previous full year. One firm can hold several.

FIG. 03 Keeper enquiries have more than doubled in six years, and 2025-26 is running ahead of every year before it

Keeper-data enquiries by parking companies, financial years 2018–19 to 2025–26



Source: DVLA, Who DVLA shares data with, KADOE enquiry volumes, filtered to Car Parking Management; Untap analysis. The final column covers April to December 2025 only.

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The shape is a steady climb, a collapse in the first pandemic year, and then a recovery that has overshot everything before it. The final column is nine months rather than twelve and is drawn hatched for that reason. On a like for like basis, April to December 2025 ran **19.3 per cent** ahead of the same nine months in 2024. Carried forward at the same rate the full year would land near **17.2 million**.

WHY THIS HAS NOT BEEN REPORTED

The quarter that produced these figures was added to the published file in April 2026. The annual analyses of this dataset are published on the full financial year, so the increase visible in the April to December window has not yet appeared anywhere. The projection above is ours, and it assumes the final quarter behaves like the first three. It should be read as an indication of direction, not a forecast.

06 THE CONTRAST

Councils publish everything private operators do not

☰ AT A GLANCE

- 01 London boroughs issued 5,171,275 parking tickets in 2024–25 and published the number, borough by borough.
- 02 Of 21,246 parking appeal decisions, 49.4 per cent went the motorist's way.
- 03 Outside London the tribunal decided 7,482 parking appeals and allowed 3,363, again published per authority.

A council parking ticket and a private parking ticket look almost identical through a windscreen. The public record behind them does not. For councils, both halves are published per authority: how many tickets were issued, and how many appeals were allowed, refused or conceded, each split by jurisdiction so parking can be read on its own. For private operators, only a proxy for issuance exists, and outcomes are published by one trade body and not the other.

The council figures also make a useful benchmark. In London, **49.4 per cent** of decided parking appeals went the motorist's way, on 24,899 appeals against 5,171,275 parking tickets issued.

(Source: London Councils, Annual Appeals Statistics 2024–25 and Annual PCN Statistics 2024–25, parking only.)

Outside London the tribunal allowed 3,363 of 7,482 decided parking appeals, which is **44.9 per cent**, of which 1,892 were not contested by the council. *(Source: Traffic Penalty Tribunal Annual Report 2024 to 2025, page 8, parking jurisdiction.)*

📍 WHAT THIS MEANS · THE DEPARTMENT

The reporting standard the new code needs already exists and is already working in the council sector. It is issuance and outcomes published together, per operator, on a fixed annual cycle.

Notes on the data, including what it cannot tell you

GLOSSARY

Completed appeal	An appeal that reached an end: either decided by an adjudicator, or closed because one side did not contest it.
Allowed	An appeal an adjudicator decided in the motorist's favour.
Not contested	An appeal one side abandoned before a ruling. Reported separately for operators and motorists.
Keeper enquiry	A request by a parking company to the driver licensing agency for the registered keeper of a vehicle. Not a ticket.

Periods do not naturally align. The appeals service reports October to September. The keeper enquiry file is published on an April to March year. Rather than compare mismatched windows, we rebuilt an October to September total from the monthly columns in the published file. Every keeper figure joined to an appeals figure in this report uses that custom window.

Operator names required a hand-built list. One company can hold several separate arrangements with the driver licensing agency, can rename itself mid-series, and can have a debt recovery firm making enquiries on its behalf. Meanwhile genuinely different companies have near-identical names. We matched every operator by hand and recorded the pairs that must never be merged. No fuzzy matching was used, because a first attempt at it silently combined three separate companies and overstated coverage by thirteen percentage points.

Appeals are a small, self-selected tail. Around a hundred thousand appeals sit against just under sixteen million keeper enquiries in the same window. The rates in this report describe appealed tickets, not all tickets. An operator with a high cancellation rate may simply be challenged by more determined motorists. Nothing here supports a claim about the validity of tickets that were never appealed.

The withdrawal figure is not an admission. An operator can drop an appeal for reasons other than expecting to lose, including cost, and the appeals service names two that have nothing to do with the merits: compelling evidence from the motorist, or the landowner asking for the charge to be dropped. We report it because it is published per operator and because the spread between operators is far too wide to be explained by either.

Coverage is 81.6 per cent, and the remainder is two different things. 10.4 per cent of keeper enquiries belong to operators we can confirm sit on the other trade body's scheme, which

publishes no outcomes. The remaining 8 per cent we simply could not match to an operator in the appeals appendix, and some of those firms do have published outcomes. Only the first group supports a claim that nothing is published, and the report keeps the two apart everywhere.

08 DATA AND SOURCES

Everything in this report, and where to check it

POPLA Annual Report 2025 and Appendix, operated by Trust Alliance Group, covering 1 October 2024 to 30 September 2025. Appeals decided by operator, and appeals not contested by operator. popla.co.uk/reports

DVLA, Who DVLA shares data with, KADOE enquiry volumes, quarterly, filtered to the Car Parking Management business classification. gov.uk

The Independent Appeals Service Annual Report 2024 to 2025, covering the same October to September period. theias.org

London Councils, parking enforcement and appeals statistics 2024–25, published 27 October 2025. londoncouncils.gov.uk

Traffic Penalty Tribunal Annual Report 2024 to 2025, England outside London and Wales. trafficpenaltytribunal.gov.uk

CORRECTIONS

Every figure here is reproducible from the sources above. If you find an error, write to contact@untap.money and we will correct the report and note the change.

Published by Untap, July 2026. All underlying data comes from the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, the two private parking appeals services, London Councils and the Traffic Penalty Tribunal. Untap is a free service that helps people in the UK find money they are already owed. We do not file claims and we do not take a share of any refund.