

Modern car headlights are blinding Britain's drivers

The death of broadcaster Jenni Murray after a crash involving dazzling lights confirms what drivers have long experienced

By Jame Foxhall Updated 28 August 2026 Published 10 February 2026



Motorists across the UK say dazzling oncoming beams are making night journeys increasingly difficult Credit: Transport Picture Library/Paul Ridsdale /Alamy Stock Photo

Anyone who drives after dark finds the dazzle of LED headlights a distraction at best. At worst, a temporarily blinded driver can be in serious trouble, as happened to [popular *Women's Hour* host Dame Jenni Murray](#) in March.

A statement read out at the inquest into her death at Barnet Coroner's Court said: "Jennifer had been driving when she became dazzled by vehicle lights and collided with two stationary vehicles." Although she emerged from the vehicle independently, Murray suffered fractures to her rib and sternum in the collision which contributed to her death from bronchopneumonia.

The problem of dazzling headlights has worsened over the past year, according to 57 per cent of drivers surveyed by the RAC. Of the 1,745 UK drivers interviewed, 63 per cent say they are subjected to dazzle from vehicles behind that they can't avoid.

A quarter of the respondents who find headlights too bright say they either drive less or have given up driving at night, with an increasing number of drivers under the age of 35 saying they are affected. Almost half (45 per cent) of respondents now drive less after dark because it makes them feel unsafe. A Government-commissioned report last November found what almost every driver already knows: in their efforts to make cars safer and improve visibility at night for drivers, car manufacturers have inadvertently gone too far and made driving after dark unpleasant, if not downright unsafe.

One of the report's most eye-catching conclusions is that [car lighting](#) regulations, primarily dating from 1989, need to be brought into the 21st century and adapted to be more applicable to modern lighting technology.

But how soon will we see any results?

Are car headlights too bright?

- | | |
|--|-----|
| ☒ Yes – I often feel dazzled by oncoming lights | 89% |
| ☐ No – I think the brightness improves safety | 8% |
| ☐ I don't drive at night | 3% |

Tell us why

Total votes: 18,924

This article by James Foxhall accurately sums up all the problems blinding headlights cause, he has also warned about the dangers of in car screens distracting drivers.

Since blinding HID and now LED lights and touchscreens were introduced in 2010/2011 accidents across the UK and Europe have ceased to fall despite cars getting safer and the efforts of 1,000's of local authority and police road safety officers.

According to DfT accident stats there are around 15,000 extra killed and seriously injured per year. The DfT and transport minister Heidi Alexander deny that lights and touch screens are the cause BUT when asked what is the cause of the deviation they have no answer.

See the charts and letters to and from the DfT at Welcome to Lightmare.org

Roy Milnes

What causes glare and is it getting worse?

The latest study from respected [transport](#) think tank TRL found: "Drivers aren't imagining it. There is evidence that modern lights are brighter. At the same time, individual factors such as increasing age of drivers and diseases of the eye do make people more sensitive, so it's likely a combination of both."



The report also found that higher vehicles, such as some [SUVs](#) and [lorries](#), are more likely to dazzle drivers in "low" or "normal" cars. And no surprises: whiter lights, often from cars fitted with LED units, caused more glare to drivers than the warmer tones of older lights. Prolonged exposure to [blue-white LED light](#) can trigger [headaches](#) and even [migraines](#) in some drivers, too.

The recent report from the TRL concluded: 'Drivers aren't imagining it. There is evidence that modern lights are brighter'
Credit: Moment RF

As well as surveying drivers, TRL fitted a left-hand drive car with specialist equipment in its front passenger seat to measure the glare drivers experience from oncoming vehicles. The report said: "We found that as brightness in the screen increased, glare was more likely. It was also more likely if the camera car was going uphill, or around a right-hand bend."

“I dread driving in the dark”



Arati Nar 56 says she dreads driving after dark and constantly feels afraid behind the wheel

Company director Arati Nar from west London finds driving in the dark increasingly problematic.

The 52-year-old said: “I [dread driving](#) in the dark. I’m constantly scared to drive. I find the contrast between other cars’ bright lights and [dim streetlights](#) very difficult. And I hate driving anywhere that isn’t well lit.

“Even when a car has passed, your eyes take time to [recover from the glare](#). You’re then worried about what you can and can’t see.

It’s got to the point where she is reducing driving at night. Nar said: “If a friend suggests getting together, I always say: ‘Can we meet for lunch?’ And if I do have to go out at night, I’ll take a longer route if it’s better lit.

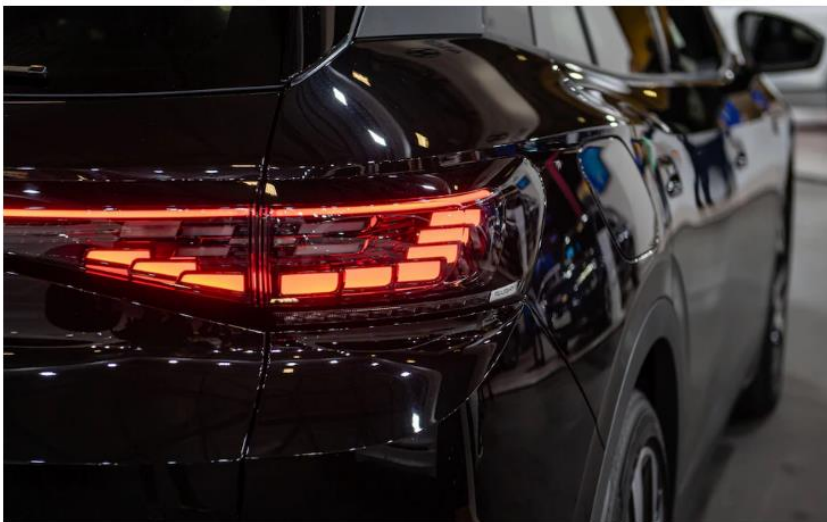
She also agrees that the higher a car is, the more it’s likely to dazzle. She explained: “I now drive a [Lexus](#) NX300.

My previous car was a [Land Rover](#) and I definitely feel like I get more glare now that I sit slightly lower. The higher an oncoming car is, the more it will dazzle me.”

Why is it worse for older drivers?

Dr Paramdeep Bilkhu, clinical adviser at the College of Optometrists, says: “Drivers are increasingly struggling with glare from modern headlights and many are now choosing to avoid driving in the evening and night altogether, so it’s resulting in people losing their independence.

“Glare is more common among older drivers as when we age, the natural lens in the eye gradually becomes cloudier. This can increase the effect of light scatter and make glare worse.



More modern cars are being fitted with LED lights but these are often brighter than older models Credit: Alamy

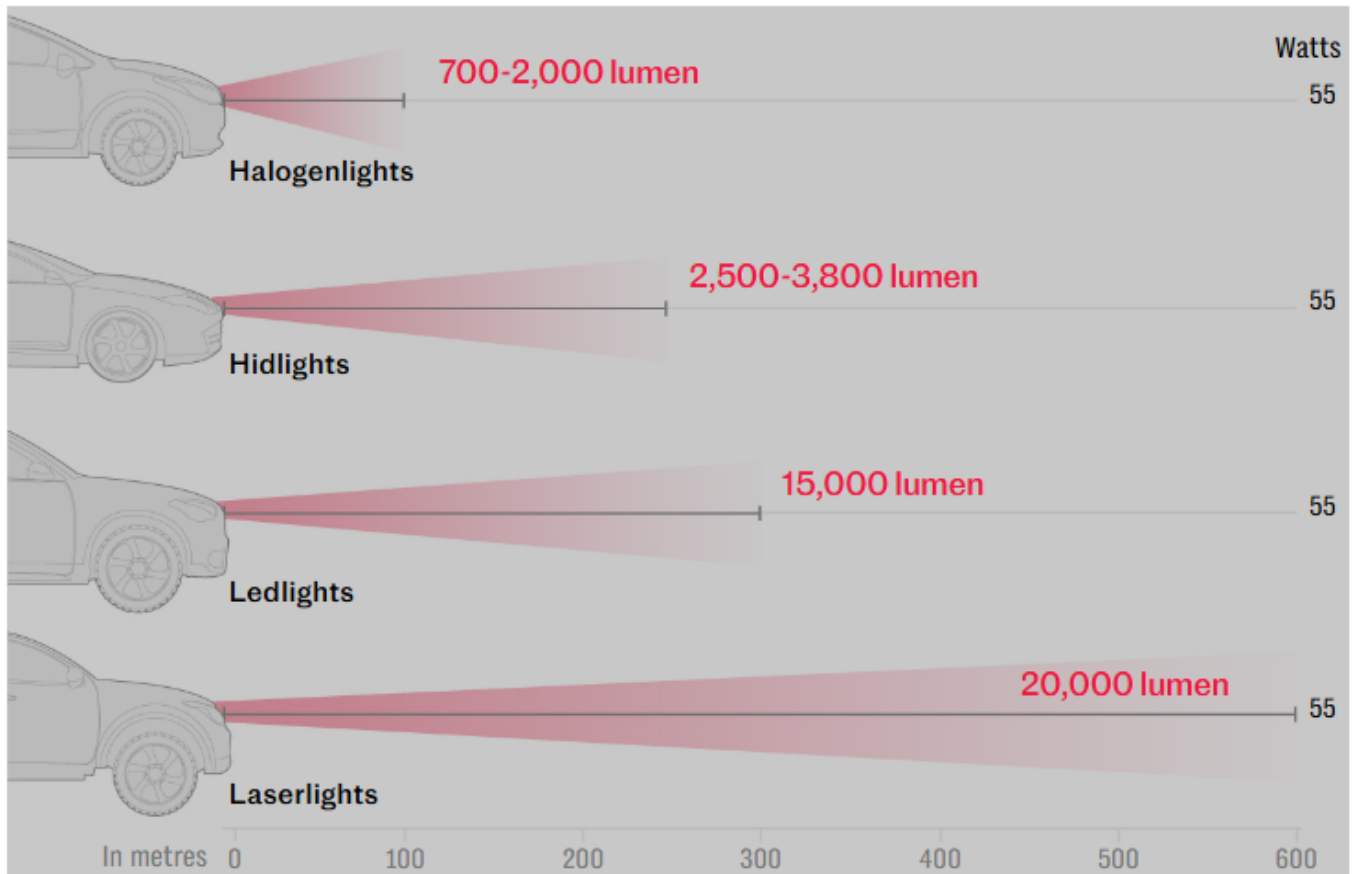
“For older people, recovery from being dazzled can take several seconds, by which time the distance covered in a moving car can be significant, meaning there is greater risk of a potential accident. There has been research showing that glare can impact hazard recognition while driving, including pedestrian visibility, so it poses a safety risk.”

How can drivers reduce headlight glare?

The director of policy and standards at IAM RoadSmart, Nicholas Lyes, says: “Drivers should keep their [headlights clean](#) and check their headlight settings to avoid giving others an uncomfortable evening journey.”

Drivers are also urged to focus on the left-hand side of the road so they’re not looking directly at the oncoming vehicle. And they should slow and stop when it’s safe to do so if they think their vision has been impaired by the glare of oncoming lights.

LED headlights are 20x more powerful than halogen



The TRL report adds: "Keep windscreens clean to reduce scatter." They also recommend regular eye tests are important and keeping spectacles clean, especially if glare seems to be getting worse."

The next steps

Frustratingly for every driver, this latest piece of research is like having a work meeting where the only real outcome is deciding to have another meeting: many of TRL's findings suggest more research and monitoring before anything concrete can be done.

But one quick win it does recommend is altering the car lighting regulations. These are currently based on testing headlight output rather than the brightness experienced by other drivers.

The report concludes: "A headlamp can pass the current tests but still dazzle drivers in some situations. This is why it might be more useful if regulations could reflect what people actually see on the road."



Many drivers find that the taller an oncoming vehicle is, the more dazzling its lights can be. Credit: Peter Cade/Photographer's Choice RF

The TRL recommends an annual glare survey to track the headlight issue over time.

And it is suggesting a possible advertising campaign to explain to drivers when they might experience and cause glare.

Sensibly, it also wants to use the annual [MOT](#) roadworthiness test to assess how misaligned headlights are contributing to the problem.

Going forwards, the report added: "This information could help with the design of roads in the future and we could perhaps warn drivers of the situations in which glare is more likely."

It's all worthwhile stuff and the UK is without doubt a leading light in bringing this issue to the fore. But we have a long way to go before car makers are forced to change their blinding headlights and driving in the dark gets easier – and safer.

Link to original Telegraph article [Modern car headlights are blinding Britain's drivers](#)