THE DIGITAL STATUS CRISIS

the 3 million

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About the3million

the3million represents EU citizens and their family members who made the UK their home before Brexit.

In 2018, this cohort - of several million citizens - was the first to start receiving an immigration status which could only be proved by online access to a Home Office website. This is now known as an eVisa.

Over the past seven years, we have been engaging with the Home Office to address systemic failures.

Since December 2020, the3million has been collecting first hand experiences from those impacted by eVisas through our Report It! tool.

The current eVisa failures will be inherited by any new Digital ID scheme, and must be urgently addressed.

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When tech fails: the human cost of system failures

Imagine this: You stand at the self-checkout, the hum of automated machines around you, the bustle of the queue behind you. You scan your items, swipe your card, and wait. The beep of the register should signal the end of your transaction. Instead, you're met by a sharp, unforgiving flash of red. **Declined.**

The red light blinks harshly, staff are summoned, security hovers, and other shoppers glance over. What should have been a routine purchase becomes a public spectacle

You know you have the money. You know the card works. But technology, once your ally has turned on you. The powerlessness is humiliating, and you can't shake the feeling that everyone's watching.

Now, stretch this feeling further. Imagine the same sinking helplessness, but it's not just a checkout line.

Imagine standing at an airport check-in desk and being told that your passport has expired - whereas you checked just yesterday and you know for a fact it showed that it was still valid for 2 more years.

This is fiction of course - physical documents don't just magically change.

But eVisas can, and they do. Relying on an online-only status is a life-changing process: your ability to prove your right to travel, to work, to live in the country you call home.
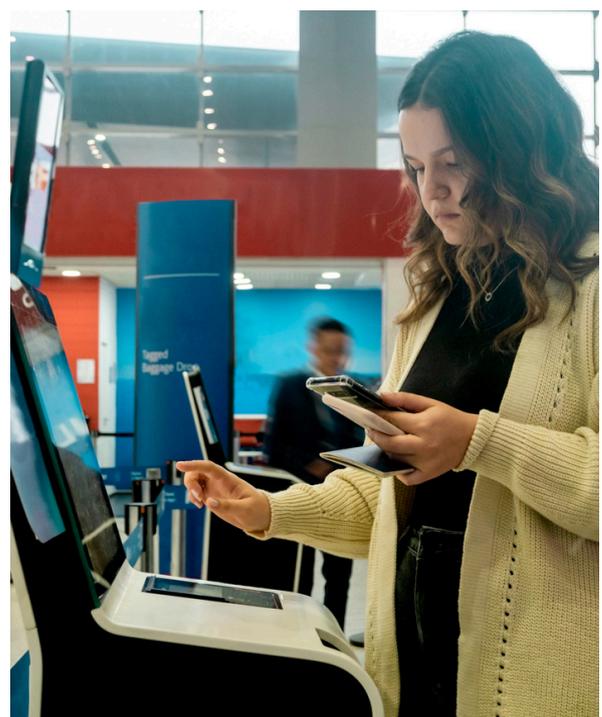
For migrants trying to navigate the eVisa system, failures aren't just inconvenient, they are devastating.

The system goes down.
Your details are wrong.
The screen flashes an error message:
"We cannot show proof of your status."

In an instant, everything you've worked for slips out of reach. This system, meant to help you access your rights, has turned its back on you.

It's the crushing realisation that technology, once thought infallible, isn't just imperfect, but is actively keeping you from proving your own existence. In that moment, the machinery of bureaucracy and technology feels less like a tool, and more like a wall closing in around you.
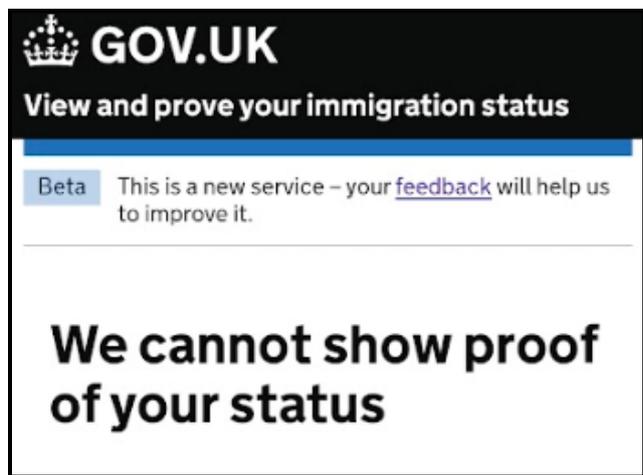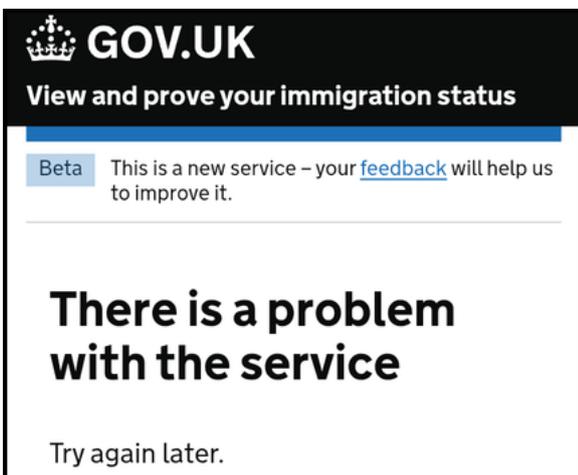
Executive Summary

This report exposes the critical failures of the UK's eVisa system, the mandatory digital status that approximately ten million visa holders rely on to prove their right to work, rent, travel, and access public services.

An eVisa is an online record of immigration status accessed through a Home Office website.

Drawing on evidence from eVisa holders, the report challenges Home Office claims about the system's security and reliability, revealing **a Digital Status Crisis**: a systemic failure in which people with lawful rights cannot reliably prove those rights, echoing the injustices of the Windrush Scandal.

The Home Office insists eVisas are more secure than physical documents, yet evidence shows otherwise. People have found their eVisa showing incorrect data, discovered their details were shared without consent, or lost access to their status entirely. Many are unable to link their identity documents to their eVisas as instructed, now essential for travel.

Despite these failures, the Government plans to expand digital ID as mandatory for **all** to prove the right to work by the end of this Parliament. For ten million migrants, this new digital ID will be built on top of the flawed eVisa infrastructure.

This report debunks several myths perpetuated by the Home Office about the eVisa system. Successive governments' claims that greater digitalisation improves immigration compliance fail scrutiny.

The current online-only verification process, View and Prove, has prevented many eVisa holders from proving their right to work - and a multitude of other rights. Support options for people in critical situations remain inadequate, with a 24/7 travel helpline cancelled within months of operation, leaving people stranded abroad, denied boarding. The Resolution Centre cannot cope with the volume of errors reported, resulting in unfair loss of employment, refusals of housing and benefits, and terrifying bills for NHS treatment.

The belief that digitalisation will prevent another Windrush Scandal is demonstrably false. Multiple technical failures have led to inaccessible statuses, wrongful data displayed, and personal information breaches.

Until the eVisa system is fundamentally reformed to ensure security, transparency, and accessibility, we will continue to see people with lawful rights unable to prove those rights. The UK now faces **a Digital Status Crisis**, with the full scale of errors and consequences yet to unfold.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address the issues with the eVisa system, the government must:

1 Immediately and substantially **increase resources to fix the foundations of the current eVisa data** held by the Home Office on ten million people, before this data forms the basis of a new mandatory digital ID system. This includes:

- **helplines** that allow eVisa holders to speak directly with Home Office staff who can fix their problems on the spot, or otherwise within hours, rather than webchats or error forms that leave people in limbo for weeks or sometimes months.
- far greater efforts to **proactively address technical problems** and eVisa data inaccuracy.
- vastly **improved development processes** to avoid repeats of computer bugs, and insufficient testing of fixes for those bugs, that affect thousands of statuses.

2 Provide proof of digital immigration status that is inclusive and reliable:

- any form of digital status must be **stable, reliable and secure**.
- it must be possible to prove status even when **not connected to the internet.**
- it should be possible to **print it as a backup**, just like a boarding pass that can be scanned.
- the Government must provide it **in card form** to those who need it and are digitally excluded.

3 Conduct **a full independent review** into the eVisa system and increase transparency on the volume and range of errors reported to the Home Office.

4 Demonstrate that **the lessons of the critical failures of the eVisa system have been learned** before mandatory digital ID is further rolled out.

The Government must conduct meaningful engagement with relevant stakeholders, such as the people who are using and are impacted by the eVisa system.

What is an eVisa?

An eVisa

is an electronic record
of immigration status
accessed through
Home Office websites
using a
UKVI account.
(United Kingdom Visas and Immigration)

Setting up a UKVI account to access an eVisa

For most visa routes the Home Office no longer issues physical cards as proof of immigration status. Instead, the Home Office creates a digital-only version of their status, known as an eVisa, and people have to set up a UKVI account as part of their visa application, in order to access this eVisa.

The millions of individuals who already had immigration status, and were holding a physical proof of that status, such as a Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) or Biometric Residence Card (BRC), generally had an expiry date of 31 December 2024 on their cards even if they have permission in the UK beyond this date. They were therefore asked to set up a UKVI account to access their eVisa.

This process is complex, involving both browsers and smartphone apps, and many struggled despite some Government funding made available to help vulnerable people with the transition. Crucially though, this funding was for organisations to help people on a 'once-and-done' basis to create the UKVI account, and there is no funding to help people with ongoing access to their eVisa to prove their rights.
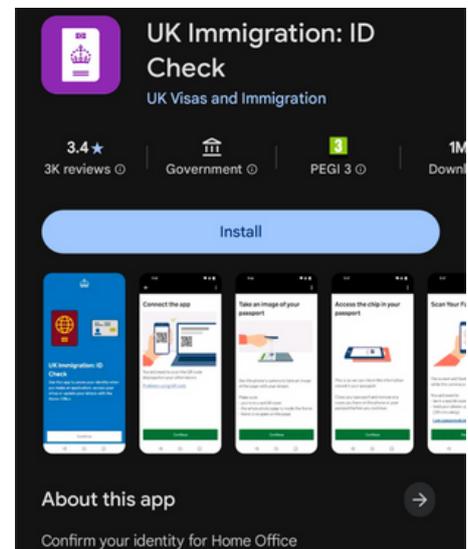
Proving rights with an eVisa

Whenever someone needs to prove their right to work, rent or something else (for example, open a bank account, start a course of study, travel or access public services) they have to produce a share code through the "View and Prove" service.

Share codes are a string of nine-digits that will then need to be passed to a third-party checker.

Details to give your employer

Share code

WZC 47J 6XF

This code is valid until 8 January 2026.

What to do next

1 Give the share code and your date of birth to the person you want to prove your right to work to.

2 To see your right to work, they must enter the share code and your date of birth at www.gov.uk/view-right-to-work.

3 Contact them to make sure they have all the information they need.

🖶 Print this page

Send code by email   Finish and leave service

Home Office

JOHN DOE

They have the right to work in the UK.

Conditions
They can work in any job. There is no limit on how long they can stay in the UK.

Legal basis of status
This leave is issued in accordance with the EU exit separation agreements:

- for EU citizens, and the family members of EU citizens, this is the Withdrawal Agreement
- for EEA European Free Trade Association (EFTA) citizens, and the family members of EEA EFTA citizens, this is the EEA EFTA Separation Agreement
- for Swiss citizens, and the family members of Swiss citizens, this is the Swiss Citizens' Rights Agreement

If you employ this person
To avoid a penalty, you must:

☐ check this looks like the person you meet face to face or by video call

☐ keep a secure copy of this online check (either electronically or in hard copy), for the duration of the employment and for 2 years after

You don't need to do the check again.

Read the employers' code of practice to find out more about right to work checks.

Details of check
Company name
COMPANY LTD
Date of check
01 JANUARY 2026
Reference number
AA-AA11A11-AA

Checking rights with an eVisa

For someone's immigration status to be verified, the third party checker must use another online service - using the "Check someone's Right to Work", "Check someone's Right to Rent" or "Check someone's immigration status" as appropriate.

Maintaining the UKVI account

People are now responsible for maintaining and updating their UKVI account - the most important example of this is after the renewal of a passport, which must then be linked to their eVisa before any travel to the UK.

Personal details

| Name | ██████████ | Change |
| Date of birth | ██████████ | Change |

Photo

This is the photo other people will see when you prove your immigration status.

Change (/status-photo-check)

Identity document

This identity document is linked to your immigration status. If you travel to the UK, you must make sure that it is in date and can be used to enter the UK. Check which documents you can use on GOV.UK (opens in a new tab) (https://www.gov.uk/uk-border-control/before-you-leave-for-the-uk).

How eVisas fail people

In practice, eVisas often fall short, with failures seriously impacting people's ability to live, work, study, access services, and travel. Below are the main ways the system lets people down.

Errors in eVisa information and linking ID documents

Common issues include:

- Incorrect information shown on eVisas (personal details, visa details, and the rights associated with the visa)
- Inability to link new ID documents (essential for travel), due to:
  - Technical failures in the linking functionality
  - The system wrongly rejecting updates, for example, mistakenly claiming that the person has changed their name

Can't use eVisa as proof

Even when the UKVI account and eVisa are set up correctly, problems persist:

- Third-party checkers (employers, landlords, airlines, banks) often refuse to accept eVisas as valid proof, due to unfamiliarity with digital visa systems
- People cannot prove their status on demand because:
  - They don't have internet access
  - They don't have smartphones
  - They face digital literacy challenges

Inability to access eVisa

Due to errors in the Home Office eVisa systems, many people are unable to:

- Create a UKVI account, or link it to their eVisa
- Access their immigration status through **View & Prove**
- Generate a share code to prove their status to others

Lack of support when things go wrong

When people encounter issues, help is often unavailable or inadequate:

- They are referred to automated webchats that rarely connect them to human operators
- The 24/7 travel helpline was shut down a few months after launch
- Automated responses cite significant delays due to "high enquiry volumes"
- The Home Office refuses to disclose the volume of errors despite Freedom of Information requests and Parliamentary Questions.

PEOPLE CAN'T LIVE, WORK, RENT, STUDY, ACCESS PUBLIC SERVICES, OR TRAVEL

The evidence base

Since December 2020, the3million has been collecting evidence of the problems people face with digital status, particularly those with EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) status. As digital status expanded to other immigration routes, we launched a second data collection form in partnership with ILPA in June 2024, open to all migrants experiencing issues with their eVisas.

This report draws on that evidence. Through **hundreds of detailed submissions**, we identify the key points of failure in the eVisa system: from initial account creation, to accessing and sharing status with third parties. Our data tracks the real-life consequences of these failures: missed job offers, lost education opportunities, disrupted travel, and blocked access to benefits.

These are not hypothetical risks. They are ongoing harms, being felt now, by people whose lives are already governed by a digital-only system.

> "I'm really scared. I can't sleep or eat. I've been in this country 12 years and I've been working in my current job for five. I'm paying a mortgage, I'm married to a British man and I have a 2 year old.
>
> I'm so scared they are going to deport me and I'll lose my whole life because of a technical issue."
>
> - Spanish woman whose Immigration status is wrongly showing as expired
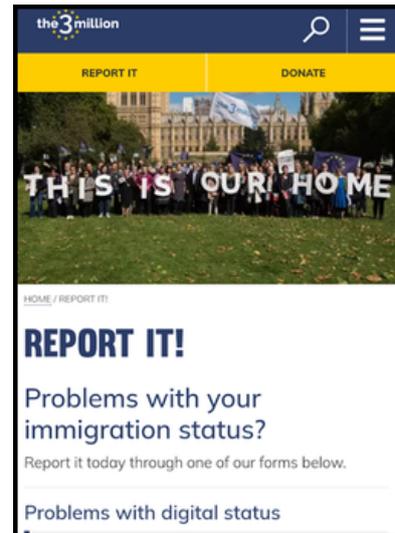
The proposed new mandatory digital ID system intends to build on the existing eVisa data and infrastructure. Before this is rolled out to everyone, existing systems must be fixed, and crucially, the voices and experiences of those already living under digital ID must be heard.

The scale of eVisa problems

People can report problems with their eVisa directly to the Home Office. To date, the government **has refused to disclose** the scale of these error reports - despite numerous Freedom of Information requests and Parliamentary questions.

As at 30 September 2025, the3million has received 1,877 reports of digital status problems through our Report It! forms. Our data has significant limitations:
- Forms are self-selecting - people need to know about the3million, be aware of our reporting platforms and be willing to share their data.
- Forms are unlikely to capture the experiences of the most vulnerable.
- Forms are digital - so digitally excluded people are under-represented in our data.

Given these limitations, we are aware we can only capture the tip of the iceberg of problems with eVisas.

To estimate the true scale of issues, we have analysed the only two major incidents where the Home Office has disclosed data on the number of errors. We compare their figures with the number of reports we received on each of these incidents, to make an informed guess at the percentage of problems that actually result in a report to the3million.

Known Error	Reports to the3million	Actual Reports	Proportion
The Guardian reported 76,000 records on the Home Office database contained mixed up data from more than one individual (entangled status). The Home Office claims the true figure was 48,000 *March 2024*	31	48,000	0.06%
Settled status reverts to pre-settled status in error. *August 2025*	5	4,000	0.13%

The scale of eVisa problems

From this available data, we can make a conservative estimate that **less than 0.2%** of actual problems are reported to the3million. If 1,877 reports to the3million represents 0.2% of the actual number of problems experienced by people, **this translates to nearly 940,000 people who could be impacted by eVisa issues** struggling to prove their rights in the UK.

0.2% reported to the3million

99.8% not reported

1,877 REPORTS

CAN INDICATE

940,000

PEOPLE AFFECTED
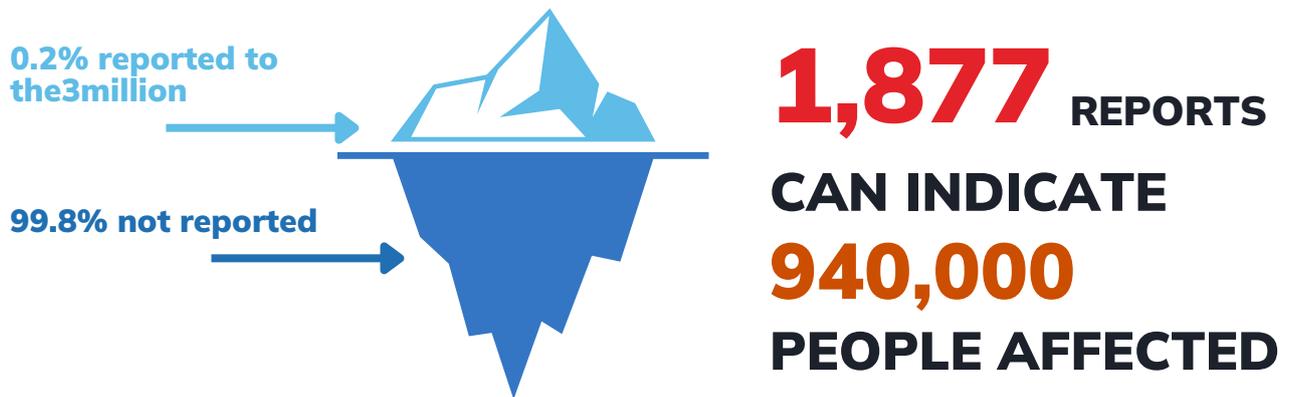
The research paper "Loss and Liability - Glitching immigration status as a feature of the British border after Brexit" reached a similar shocking estimate of scale using a different method of analysis.

The 'entangled status' problem is just one among many types of technical glitches reported to the3million. Reports to the3million on this particular issue constituted just 3.7% of all the Report It! submissions about eVisa glitches. If 3.7% of glitch reports related to a known cohort of 48,000 individuals, then there is reason to believe that overall eVisa glitches are affecting close to 1.3 million people.

48,000 ENTANGLED STATUSES

CAN INDICATE

1,300,000

TOTAL GLITCHES

We recognise these are estimates based on the only two Home Office data points we have available, however it is within the power of the Government to provide transparent insight into the scale of eVisa problems.

MYTH 1

eVisas cannot be lost, stolen or tampered with

"

Since 2019, successive Home Office ministers have repeated the slogan that eVisas: "unlike a physical document, cannot be lost, stolen or tampered with."

the3million says no - eVisas can indeed be lost, stolen or tampered with - **by the State.**

An eVisa is:

- **Lost** when when person loses the 'keys' required to access the eVisa
- **Stolen** when Home Office glitches deny access to the eVisa
- **Tampered with** when the Home Office changes or shares data without the holder's consent

Without a stable and secure token of immigration proof, people must rely on an insecure and fragile online system to verify their rights in the UK. **People need offline and reliable access to their immigration status** and for their records to be accurate, otherwise there is a major risk that their rights will be infringed upon.

A digital-only, online-only status is also supremely vulnerable to a large scale data hack. An increasing concern in today's world.

OUR VERDICT

False.

People experience situations where their immigration status is lost, inaccessible, or altered - often as a result of errors made by the Home Office.

LOST EVISAS

An eVisa that is inaccessible is like an eVisa that is lost.

The eVisa design requires that someone must log in to a Home Office website in order to see their eVisa and use it to create share codes. The log in process involves a temporary security code sent to an email address or phone number registered to the UKVI account.

How does this work for vulnerable citizens, people lacking digital literacy, children, children in care, people without capacity? In such cases, it is common for a friend, family member or helping organisation to set up the UKVI account for them. Often the helper uses their own email address and number to create the account.

What then happens when the individual needs to prove their status at an unknown future date? What if they can't remember who set up the account for them? What if they've lost contact with them? What if that organisation no longer exists?

The keys are lost.
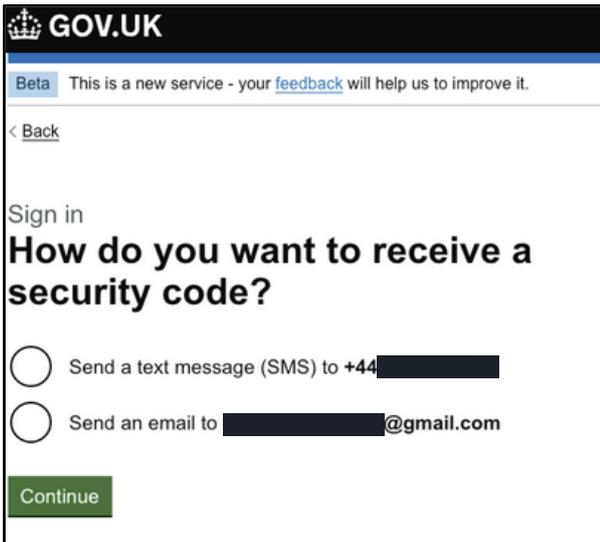
"How can someone who lacks capacity and can't even use a brick phone show their immigration status independently, in the long term?

This is not about the setup of the eVisa, but about how someone later proves their status when asked to do so by the authorities.

The Home Office says it's about training the authorities, but that's unrealistic.

It is just impossible to ensure that all the different authorities and organisations do what they are supposed to be doing.

Vulnerable individuals should have something they can use to advocate for themselves."

- Advisor working with people who lack capacity

"We are getting cases of children in local authority care, who already had eVisas. They were set up by the previous carer or parent they no longer live with, so they can't access it.

They didn't have the ID document, they didn't know any of the security questions, so there was no way for them to access it.

We were able to help them through setting up a video verification interview with the Home Office, but for anyone especially a child having that kind of contact with the Home Office is really scary.

It makes this whole process a lot worse than it needs to be."

- Citizens' Advice

GYROS is a charity that works with migrants working in local poultry and meat processing factories employed via an agency on zero-hour contracts:

"In terms of proving their right to work, 92% say they are unable to generate for themselves a digital share code necessary to give to an employer.

This leaves this group vulnerable to local 'advice sharks' looking to capitalise on individuals' inability to interact with their own immigration status. They keep all log in details for their 'clients' who then have to pay the shark to access their own details. The Resolution Centre's requirements play into the sharks' hands."

STOLEN EVISAS

Unlike a stable offline token, the current system is dependent on an online process - meaning people need access to the internet - and it relies on the Home Office website being functional at **every** exact moment someone needs to produce proof of their rights. When all these moving parts don't come together, the experience and impact is precisely the same as someone turning up at the airport check-in only to find their passport has been **stolen**.
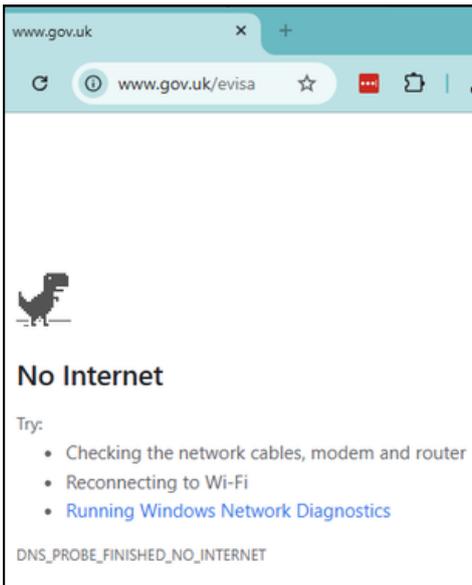

Internet unavailable

Many vulnerable people cannot afford mobile phones or data contracts. Even for those who can, there are still many broadband deserts in the UK.

Many encounter this problem while at a foreign airport, it can be difficult to get access to the internet while abroad.

There have been nationwide data outages - in 2018, 30 million customers of the O2 network were offline for a whole day.
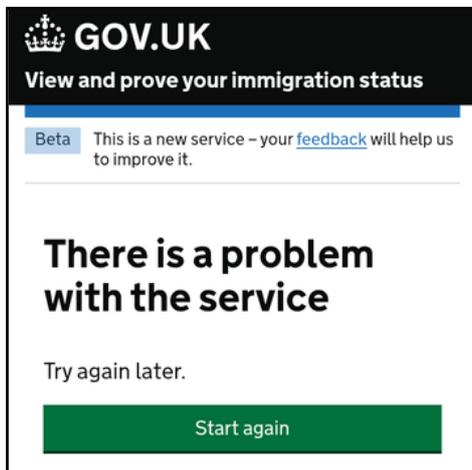
Home Office system down for all ten million eVisa holders

Home Office systems are contracted out to many external private sector organisations. A lot of data is hosted on external Cloud Services including Amazon Web Services (AWS).

There have been many occasions when the eVisa system is temporarily unavailable.

Even if this only lasts a few minutes, this can make all the difference to an individual in a time-sensitive situation - a denied boarding, a lost job opportunity in the gig economy, a missing out on a flat in a highly competitive rental market.

In late August 2023, there were sustained outages of the eVisa system, lasting multiple days. The Home Office told us this was not down to their digital status system, but caused by AWS failures. The visa holder is not comforted by that. The impact they face is the same regardless of where in the outsourcing chain the error occurred.

16

Individuals cut off from eVisa through errors

There are many different errors encountered by people who do hold an eVisa yet cannot access it.

The most common is the generic "We cannot show proof of your status", with the suggestion that the status is not "ready to view". This is frequently encountered despite the Home Office sending them an email telling them explicitly their eVisa is "ready to view".

We have also received many reports of people who had previously been able to access their eVisa and then unexpectedly faced this error at that moment when proof was demanded from them.

Others see "Details entered do not match our records", despite entering their details correctly. Another common error message is "You are already logged on" despite not being logged on.
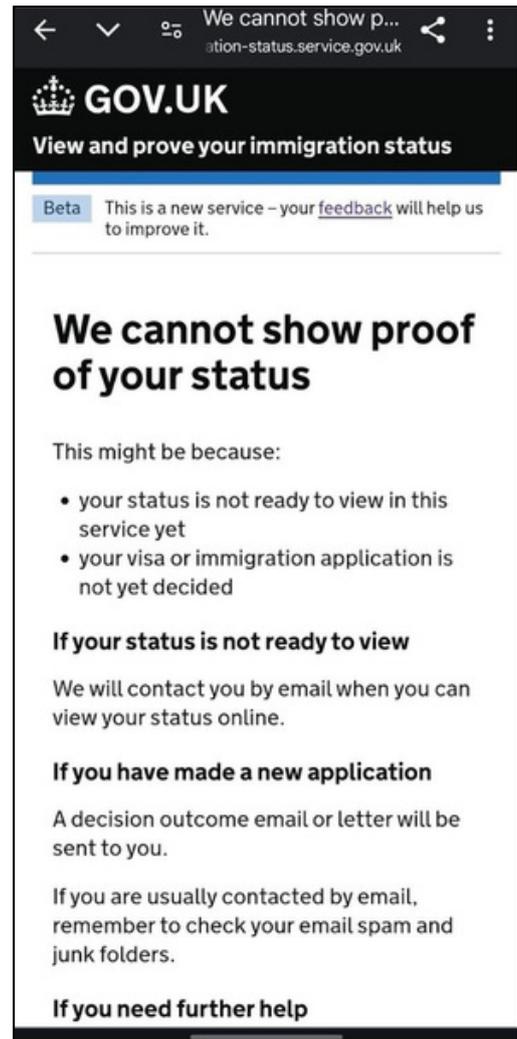
Zara has had indefinite leave to remain for many years, and last year followed Home Office instructions to transition to an eVisa. She got an email saying her eVisa was ready to view. When she tried to log in to get a share code for her employer, she was faced with the error **"We cannot show proof of your status"**. She told us:

"I reported the issue twice to the Home Office eVisa technical team but so far no success. Yesterday I started my new job with the same employer where I had previously worked for almost 15 years.

Today my employer has suspended me (after just 1 day) from my job on unpaid leave because I can't obtain and give them a share code for them to check my eVisa status. I don't know what to do."

➤ The impact in all cases is the same - no eVisa, no proof of rights.

TAMPERED WITH EVISAS

Reports of eVisas which were at first correct and then, without the person's knowledge or permission, started displaying incorrect information, are experienced as the Home Office tampering with people's eVisas.

For the person viewing their eVisa with an incorrect name or status, the feeling is like picking up your passport and overnight your nationality has changed. As though you have a passport that says you are not who you actually are.

Incorrect information on an eVisa renders someone's proof of immigration status void.
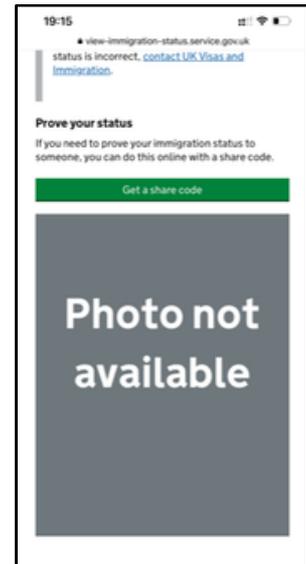
A selection of examples of tampered eVisa at a mass scale which we wrote to the Home Office about:

- Photographs suddenly no longer appeared on eVisas, rendering the eVisa unusable for proving rights.
- Incidents of entangled status - incorrect name, photographs, visa type nationality and visa expiry dates on people's accounts.
- Incorrect list of identity documents (wrong nationalities and document numbers) showing on UKVI accounts.
- People whose settled status started showing pre-settled instead.

In some cases, the Home Office claimed that only displayed information was temporarily incorrect, and that underlying eVisa data was not affected. This still has an impact. Issues with displayed data erodes trust in the accuracy and reliability of digital status.

In the Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) for the View and Prove system, the Home Office recognises that a possible risk is "inadvertent sharing" or "presenting inaccurate identity details" of visa holders.

The Home Office does not however accept liability for any loss or damage arising from use of the UKVI account.

Exclusion of liability

The Home Office is not liable for any loss or damage that arises from use of the UKVI account. This includes:

- any direct, indirect, or consequential loss
- any inability to use the UKVI account
- any disruption to access to the UKVI account
- any information that is lost or corrupted while data is being transmitted, processed or downloaded from the UKVI account.

Sekai's story - Photo disappearing

Sekai has lived in the UK for 15 years and has refugee status. She lost out on two job opportunities due to her status changing under her feet.

"I logged into my account and found my photo had been removed and there were three photos of another woman in its place. I thought my identity had been stolen.

I called the Home Office and they told me they couldn't see what I was seeing. I was made to feel as if I was imagining it. Each time I rang, they gave me a different explanation of what happened.

It reminds me of the Post Office scandal. We are being made to feel like failures although it's the system that has failed us."

Aisya's story - Entangled status

Aisya is a Vietnamese woman seeking asylum. She was wrongly informed she received refugee status. Her photo and records were merged with some else's.

Through the merging of these accounts, her own contact details were shared with an unknown person. She only found out about this when she got an angry phone call from this person, accusing her of fraudulently accessing her account. This had a huge impact on Aisya, especially considering she is a victim of domestic abuse.

Aisya made a Subject Access Request with the Home Office and received this other person's information and full immigration history. We consider this a significant data breach.

Petra's story - Settled status wrongly changed to pre-settled

An advice organisation helped a very vulnerable woman to upgrade her pre-settled status to settled status - which showed correctly in her eVisa. She then applied for universal credit. While waiting for a decision from DWP, she was shocked to discover that her eVisa had suddenly switched back to pre-settled status.

As pre-settled status holders don't automatically qualify for universal credit, DWP closed her application, and refused to re-open it despite hearing about the error. She had to rely on food banks and charity, facing the risk of being made street homeless.

MYTH 2

The introduction of digital ID will tackle irregular working.

OUR VERDICT

False.

There is <u>already</u> a digital system for all visa holders to prove their right to work.

The proposal for digital ID claims the introduction of mandatory digital ID for everyone to prove their right to work will stop people from accessing the 'shadow economy'.

Advertising and legitimising the rollout of a massive national ID programme through the criminalisation of migrants is a harmful and dangerous myth.

The existing digital right to work system shows that digital ID **does not**:

- Prevent people who do not hold permission to work from finding work
- Eradicate worker exploitation, where employers trap and mistreat workers
- Increase employers' compliance with immigration rules

*Instead, this system already creates harm for those who **do** have the right to work, but cannot prove it due to Home Office data failures, compounded by a lack of adequate support when errors occur.*

The Home Office continues to deny there are any problems with key parts of the system. In response to a parliamentary question about the reliability of share codes, a Home Office Minister claimed: "we (The Home Office) have not identified problems with the share code mechanism itself". Yet, in the same response, they admitted that producing a breakdown of reported eVisa issues would involve a disproportionate cost - effectively refusing to present the evidence.

This refusal stands in stark contrast to the reality documented by the3million, which has collected hundreds of examples of the failure of this scheme - preventing people from proving their rights and leading to job losses, travel disruption, or denial of services.

Tatiana's story – "I lost my dream job because of a Home Office glitch"

"I came to the UK in 2017 for university and built a life here. In 2024, I finally received Indefinite Leave to Remain. After years of visa restrictions, I was free to pursue new opportunities.

I went through round after round of interviews with the UK's largest company in my field, basically my dream job. They were eager to have me, and to finalise the offer, they asked for my share code to verify my right to work.

That's when everything fell apart.

When I tried to generate the share code, the system showed my husband's photo instead of mine. I contacted the Home Office immediately. They admitted the error and told the employer to use the Employer Checking Service. That takes days, and the company decided to keep interviewing other candidates.

I called the Home Office daily, but got conflicting answers. At one point, they even claimed my BRP belonged to my husband and refused to speak to me. I felt erased, like my identity had been replaced by a system error.

Eventually, the Home Office totally incorrectly told the company that I still needed sponsorship, even though I had ILR. By the time the error was fixed through legal pressure, it was too late. I'd lost the role.

That glitch cost me a life-changing opportunity. I felt invisible, powerless, and unsupported. No one should lose a job because of a government error, yet the digital-only eVisa system makes that risk real every day."

MYTH 3

There is support from the Home Office when something goes wrong with your eVisa.

OUR VERDICT

False.

It is increasingly hard to get through to the Resolution Centre and get prompt resolutions of eVisa problems.

What are the options to get help when people have a problem with their eVisa?

The main eVisa page guides them towards filling **an error report form**.
- The automated email reply people receive once they fill in the form says "we are currently receiving a high volume of enquiries and as a result, we are not able to respond in our published time frames" This has been the case throughout 2025.

The Home Office claims to provide **24/7 support through the online webchat** with a digital assistant.
- People tell us they often find that the web-bot cannot answer their questions and leads them in circles.

There is **a UKVI telephone helpline**.
- The number is hidden, hard to find and even when used people tell us most of the call options lead to an automated message and termination of the call rather than the ability to speak to a human. In contrast, Denmark and Estonia - countries mentioned by the Government in their Mandatory Digital ID announcements - provide clear up-front telephone support numbers.

There is **Home Office funding** for digitally excluded, older applicants and vulnerable persons during the digital status rollout.
- The support has been limited, is ending soon, and only covers help with the initial setup of the eVisa. The "once-and-done" approach does not cover desperately needed support for ongoing use of the eVisa.

The Home Office promised **a 24/7 Passenger Support Helpline** dedicated to helping passengers who faced challenges using their eVisa whilst travelling.
- In fact, the helpline was insufficiently advertised and then closed down at the end of March 2025 after just three months of operation.

Sofia's story – Wrongly denied boarding

Sofia, a Portuguese citizen with settled status, was wrongly denied boarding to return to the UK, after airline staff did not accept her share code. She had nowhere to turn for support - the Passenger Support Helpline had been closed.

"I was trying to log in to UKVI, like airline staff wanted me to. At this point, I'd been in the airport for six hours, given them my share code but they didn't accept it. They wanted me to log in - but I had ran out of data and the airport wifi wasn't working. I have a panic disorder and I wasn't doing well. I was denied entry to my flight."

"The online bot just told me to contact the Resolution Centre. After three minutes on the phone, I just got sent a link to a video guide on how to use the system. This doesn't help at all, I followed it and still got the system error."

"I've been chasing this for eight weeks. I've informed them repeatedly this is also a personal data breach under the UK GDPR, but they only send automated emails saying that they are still working on it. When I last phoned, they said they can't guarantee re-entry to the UK if I travel, since my eVisa is incorrect."

"My UKVI account showed the wrong date of birth. After I reported it, the account stopped working altogether. I was told it's with the technical team. It's been three months, I've had to cancel my summer holidays and I didn't get to be there for my brother after my niece was born"

"I've had no help through the webchat, by email or by phone. Despite explaining that this is an urgent matter and affects my ability to rent accommodation and to travel, they still have not resolved the issue, which has been extremely frustrating and stressful for me."

MYTH 4

Digital IDs allow for more efficient use of public services

OUR VERDICT

Uncertain.

People who are struggling to rectify a technical error on their eVisa or are unable to set up a UKVI account can be wrongly denied access to public services.

On the eVisa Fact sheet the Home Office states those "who replace their legacy document with an eVisa will benefit from the automated access that public bodies, including the Department for Work and Pensions and the National Health Service in England and Wales, will securely have to their immigration status, which will streamline access to key services."

What people have reported to us is that when it goes wrong, they face an administratively burdensome and uncomfortable process, far from the promised ease and automated access to public services.

Rather than a seamless integration between the Home Office and other Government departments, we have received reports of:

- People moving from legacy documents to eVisas having their benefits terminated.
- DWP refusing to accept '3c leave' (continuation of all rights while people wait - sometimes for many months - on a visa renewal decision by the Home Office)
- Universal Credit recipients being asked to prove their immigration status on a monthly basis to continue accessing the support they need.
- People denied benefits because their eVisa wrongly stated that they could not access public funds, due to technical Home Office errors.
- People incorrectly charged for NHS treatment, because the data provided by the Home Office did not verify their immigration status.
- People unable to access their tax, national insurance or benefit records because of design flaws in the GOV.UK One Login app.

Soisic's story: "The NHS didn't believe I've lived here for nearly 50 years"

Soisic has Indefinite Leave to Remain and has lived in the UK for nearly 50 years. When attending an NHS appointment, she reported feeling singled out by healthcare staff who requested onerous amounts of evidence of her residency of the UK.

"I was taken into a corner and I was in pain and interrogated and told to shut up. The hospital worker didn't want the documents that I was giving her. It felt like she was determined to make me pay.

I've had endless sleepless nights. My blood pressure shot up. I felt like I wasn't wanted in England. I had three months of hell and I don't want anyone to go through the same."

Soisic showed the staff her eVisa, which was in perfect working order, along with multiple examples of her continual residency in the UK but was still issued a bill from the NHS.

Clara's story: "I am physically, mentally and emotionally exhausted"

The Home Office removed the "No Access to Public Funds" condition from my visa, but my digital status is still showing that I cannot access public funds. They said they will respond within 10 working days, but I have not received a reply.

I am a widow and a single mother living in private rental accommodation. I work as a healthcare assistant, so I don't earn much. I am currently trying my best to become a nurse, funding my own tuition fees.

To make ends meet, I have to work at least five 12-hour night shifts a week, sometimes six, on top of completing my assignments and managing childcare. I often don't have time to spend with my six-year-old, who has already lost his father.

I am physically, mentally, and emotionally exhausted. When Universal Credit rejected my application, I didn't just feel hopeless - my anxiety and emotional pain grew significantly.

"This has been an egregious nightmare for me trying to access my HMRC records using my passport, because HMRC won't recognise the standard passport format for my country. Therefore, I kept getting "unable to confirm your identity" whenever I tried to log in to HMRC.

I phoned HMRC helpdesk nine months ago, and the agent tried to help but couldn't. I simply can't get through the identity check.

Please help, I am so desperate at the moment."

"A month ago I received a letter saying my eVisas was ready. But each time I attempt to log in, I receive the message: "We cannot show your proof of status."

I contacted the Home Office and was advised to report the issue online, which I did. I've now received an email stating that there is no issue with my status. Despite this, I continue to receive the same error.

This situation is extremely distressing. **I am currently pregnant, and I urgently need to find accommodation, apply for benefits, and look for employment - all of which require proof of my immigration status.** Without access to my eVisa, I am completely unable to proceed with these essential steps."

"My elderly mother has tried to access her pension details using the online identification verification process on the HMRC website and because her maiden name is in her Italian passport and not her married name she has failed the online verification process.

She has tried to use the other methods to verify herself on the HMRC website and this also failed. We contacted the HMRC helpline on the phone and they were useless! Just told her to fill in a form online and the response she received from the online team was equally inadequate and no help at all.

She is 74 years of age and is very distressed that she has been locked out of the online verification and doesn't know how to resolve it. She has a national insurance number, she has paid national insurance contributions and taxes to the UK state, she has settled status."

The international context

The Labour Government has been in discussion with the designers of the Aadhaar system, a mandatory biometric enrollment programme, seeking advice from India officials on their deployment of digital ID. If the UK is drawing from international programmes they must learn from the deadly examples of harm arising from digital verification to access public services.

- Praise for the Aadhaar system celebrates the enrollment of 1.47 billion people, as of August 2025. Yet, many rural and marginalised people were excluded during its rollout, due to problems with the biometric process.
- When Aadhaar was launched, food subsidy programmes required an Aadhaar number to receive services. Due to implementation errors people in critical condition were refused food support which led to starvation in the community.

Human Rights Watch reports:

"Shops providing subsidized food grains as part of the government's public distribution system to people living in poverty have denied supplies to eligible families because they did not have an Aadhaar number, or because they had not linked it to their ration cards – which confirm their eligibility, or because the authentication of their biometrics such as fingerprints failed.

Local human rights groups and media have reported some cases in which people starved to death as a result. Poor internet connectivity, machine malfunction, and worn out fingerprints such as those of older people or manual laborers have further exacerbated the problem of biometric authentication."

MYTH 5

Adopting more digital tools will help the Home Office prevent another Windrush-like scandal.

OUR VERDICT

False.

We are already seeing echoes of a Windrush Scandal from the rollout of mandatory eVisas for migrants in the UK.

The Windrush Lessons Learned Review recommended "the Home Office should invest in improving data quality". In response, the Home Office replaced the old caseworking system Case Information Database (CID) with Atlas, promising improved data quality and a "person-centric" approach to track individuals throughout the system. These promises remain largely unrealised.

We have now been told that any new digital ID system would be built on top of existing Home Office eVisa databases, so any data inaccuracies are set to persist and continue causing severe impact to individuals, unless first addressed.

Current database systems are failing:

- **The Information Commissioner's Office** probed the Home Office over widely publicised data quality failures caused by the Person Centric Database Platform, a central technical system that directly feeds into the information displayed on an eVisa.

- **The Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration** criticised Atlas because it cannot accommodate caseworker notes, forcing staff to use other methods for recording data and to "summarise" their findings, which could lead to **"very dangerous"** omission of important information. One member of the Home Office asylum caseworking team noted there is a risk when **"technology dictates the process, rather than the process guiding the technology".**

- **The National Audit Organisation** expressed doubt over the accuracy of Atlas, stating "asylum caseworkers told us they had to use two systems to enter or update the same information. Weaknesses with the technology mean that the Home Office does not have all the data it requires to manage the [asylum transformation] Programme".

Poor data quality means immigration records are incorrect.
⟶ Inaccurate information means people are denied their rights.
⟶ No physical copy means "what the computer says goes."

The Home Office has not earned public trust

The proposed new mandatory digital ID suggests improved security, but data quality concerns remain. All data inaccuracies within the eVisa system will be inherited by the new digital ID system. the3million continuously receives reports from individuals impacted by being unable to prove their status. Even one hour without access to immigration status can cost someone a job, a flight, a rental opportunity or a mortgage.

The announcement of mandatory digital ID points to success and benefits that other countries, such as Estonia, have delivered through digital status.

Estonia is often referred to as the 'gold standard' of digital governance. Both the current and previous governments have consulted with Estonian officials, when considering introducing digital ID.

It is important to understand the historical context behind Estonia's digital governance development, and how it differs entirely from the UK's current emphasis on retrofitting digital ID primarily to 'stop the boats':

- Estonia has prioritised their digital infrastructure ever since their independence over 30 years ago, and has developed a series of legal and policy frameworks on cyber and data security for critical infrastructure.
- Only after decades of having a national ID programme did Estonia provide a digital format of the card. For Estonian citizens the digital format is optional, with a physical card provided.

If the UK wishes to replicate the digital ID programme they would need to provide an offline version of the card, and critically address the data and cybersecurity breaches of UK technical systems. Most importantly, the UK would need to incrementally roll out and develop public buy-in and support for such programmes.

What Estonia developed over thirty years the UK hopes to do in three.

The rushed rollout of digital-only status for immigration proof contributed to the scale of data errors and technical faults of the eVisa system.

Currently there are frameworks the UK government have committed to when designing and managing technical projects, that call for privacy, transparency, inclusivity, interoperability, proportionality, good governance and public trust. Part of building public trust in identity programmes is ensuring protections against over-reach of systems, so that digital IDs could not be repurposed for another reason in a future, potentially very different, political context.

Rather than eVisas and digital ID being designed to ensure lawful migrants can reliably and confidently prove their rights, the UK Government's emphasis is squarely on immigration enforcement.

The Home Office has not learned the lessons of Windrush and the risk of ever-expanding immigration enforcement.

The 2025 Immigration White Paper states "eVisas will make it much easier for Immigration Enforcement to identify those who try to stay and work in the UK illegally, to track them down and take action against them."

The rhetoric that villainises people who have made their home in the UK is dangerous.

- Runnymede Trust's research finds that making private citizens de facto immigration officers results in racial discrimination. Deputising ordinary citizens in immigration enforcement puts marginalised and vulnerable communities at risk to be criminalised and surveilled by their neighbours, leaving them with an unstable eVisa as their only proof of their rights.

- There are already reports of people with the right to live in the UK being wrongly detained by immigration authorities, just for being in the wrong place at the wrong time. For example, the Guardian reported on the case of a Portuguese man who was held in detention for 29 days after being arrested as part of an immigration raid. He had lived in the UK since he was 12 when he first moved with his family. Despite legal advisers explaining that he simply had not realised the need to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme after Brexit because he had lived in the UK for so long, including as a child, the Home Office still opposed bail, banned him from working and made it a requirement for him to report to an immigration centre every fortnight.

Word cloud of key words in sections referencing digital - Government Immigration Whitepaper (2025)

Liudmyla, a 78 year old Ukrainian grandma with refugee status in the UK, was denied boarding and got stuck in an airport in Poland due to eVisa issues.

"My mother was crying when they refused her boarding. She was at the check-in desk for four hours. She was worried sick about a place to stay. She'd been on a bus for 25 hours, to get to Poland from Ukraine, and she'd not slept the night before. The airline staff told her she'd be deported from the UK if they let her through.

This system doesn't work for old people. For my mum, it's hard to even login to the online account. You need to sign in with your email, get a code, and put that in - for old people, it's hard to do.

We had an email saying her rights aren't affected while we sort problems with her eVisa. But her right to travel to the UK was not respected."

"My client was granted pre-settled status in 2021. But on logging into view and prove it said that their application was refused.

We called the Resolution Centre, who were unable to resolve the issue. The error has been reported via the online form. The local authority refused to accept a homelessness application as (from what they could see) my client had no valid status in the UK.

My client is rough sleeping because of this."

My immigration status was extended, but my eVisa shows the wrong expiry date which is swiftly coming around. My landlord told me they have to evict me on this date, as I'll no longer have the right to rent and they'll get a big fine if they don't.

I called the Home Office and they confirmed that even if I give my landlord a new sharecode, they'll still see the wrong expiry date. I'm under extreme stress and I don't know what I'll do if my daughter and I are made homeless. How am I supposed to convince my landlord I actually have rights if my eVisa is clearly showing them I don't?

Conclusion

The myth of security

The most pervasive myth is that the eVisa system offers a more secure form of immigration proof for visa holders than a physical format. For some eVisa users, proof of their status has in essence been lost, stolen and tampered with when data errors alter biographical or immigration details.

Unlike a physical card the information on an eVisa can change, or disappear, overnight. A sense of security is stolen from eVisa users, because they cannot trust that the eVisa system will always work at the precise time they need it to prove their rights.

Even if the eVisa was hosted in a more stable and static secure format, as is being proposed with the rollout of mandatory digital ID, the continuous data quality issues that tamper with people's data must be addressed.

The Home Office must urgently pay attention to the 'Garbage in, Garbage Out' principle when building a new digital ID system on top of the existing eVisa data platforms.

Digital tools, real world harm

Dangerously, digital ID has become linked with the myth that it will solve the the perceived problem of irregular work. This entirely misses the point that there is already a digital-only option for visa holders to prove their right to work.

The fragility and instability of this digital proof has caused real harm to individuals with the right to work, by hindering their ability to prove that right. The Government should prioritise addressing the data issues, and robustly dealing with employment regulation and the exploitation of workers. In other words, it should put the needs and the rights of status holders first, rather than chasing dangerous enforcement rhetoric.

Broken promises: Support for eVisa holders

During the rollout of eVisa, the Home Office promised that there would be support for digitally excluded persons and all eVisa holders when they are travelling. From the experiences of eVisa holders experiencing critical issues with their digital status, it is clear that there are serious gaps in the current support. Particularly for eVisa holders who are attempting to travel and have issues proving their status to third-party checkers like airline personnel.

The myth of easier access to public services

The overall push for the government to adopt more digital tools is perpetuating the myth that with more technology people will have easier access to public services. We found that eVisa holders are experiencing friction when it comes to accessing healthcare and public benefits.

As for the promise that a new mandatory digital ID will prevent another Windrush Scandal, the reality is that this will be built on top of existing data platforms containing serious data inaccuracies. The Home Office rolled out Atlas to replace their previous main caseworking system, as that was blamed for the Home Office's poor data quality. However Atlas itself has been criticised by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration and independent other organisations for not being fit for purpose.

Repeating history: the risk of another Windrush scandal

This report calls for immediate action to rectify the current digital status crisis. We are seeing similar patterns that led to the stripping of the citizenship rights of tens of thousands people in the Windrush Scandal. People who have rights but do not have a stable and reliable way to prove those rights.

Annex – the3million Report It data

Charts in this annex are based on submissions from three reporting forms, launched at different times:

- Dec 2020: reporting form for digital status problems under the EUSS, www.the3million.org.uk
- June 2024: the3million/ILPA reporting form for any eVisa problems, www.evisa-problems.org.uk
- April 2025: reporting form dedicated to travel problems, hosted on both websites

All charts are based on the **1,877 reports** received from launch to 30 Sept 2025, except where stated otherwise.

Number of reports per quarter

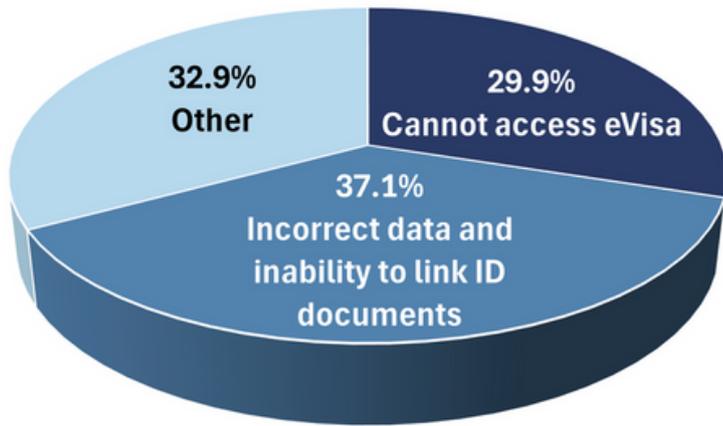|	Digital status problems under the EUSS	Travel problems	eVisa problems
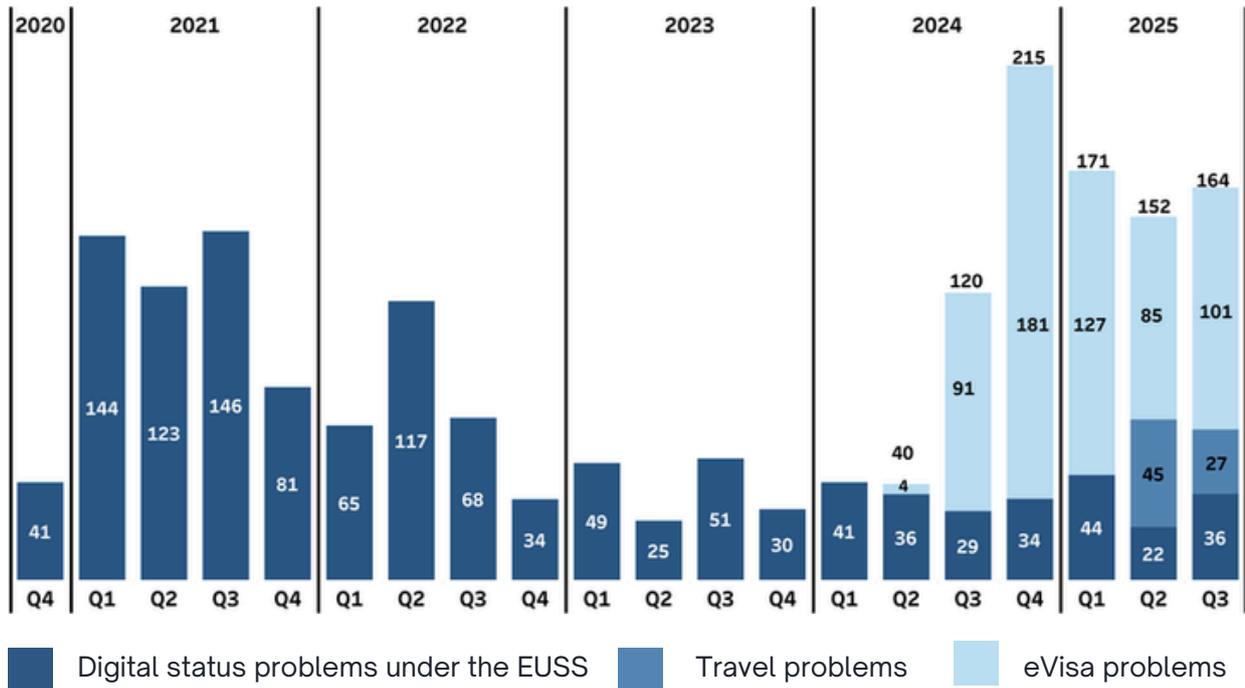
Reports by ethnicity compared to ONS benchmark

This chart displays the breakdown of our reports by ethnicity, where this was specified (a total of 1,139 records). The numbers are compared with a benchmark of the ethnicity of all non-UK passport holders resident in the UK, obtained from ONS Census 2021 data.

|		
Asian	ONS	10.1%
	Report It	20.2%
Black	ONS	4.9%
	Report It	9.7%
Mixed or Multiple	ONS	3.0%
	Report It	5.0%
Other	ONS	3.7%
	Report It	8.8%
White	ONS	78.3%
	Report It	56.3%

Breakdown of reports by issue category

## Average monthly reports by problem category

This chart shows the average number of reports per month, broken down between 'Cannot access eVisa', 'Incorrect data and inability to link ID documents' and 'Other'. When we first started receiving reports about EUSS digital status in December 2020, many problems were related to a lack of understanding both on the part of status holders and checkers. Although the volume of EUSS reports decreased over 2022 and 2023, we continued to receive regular reports of eVisa problems. From 2024, problems across all categories rose sharply with the rollout of eVisas to all migrants.
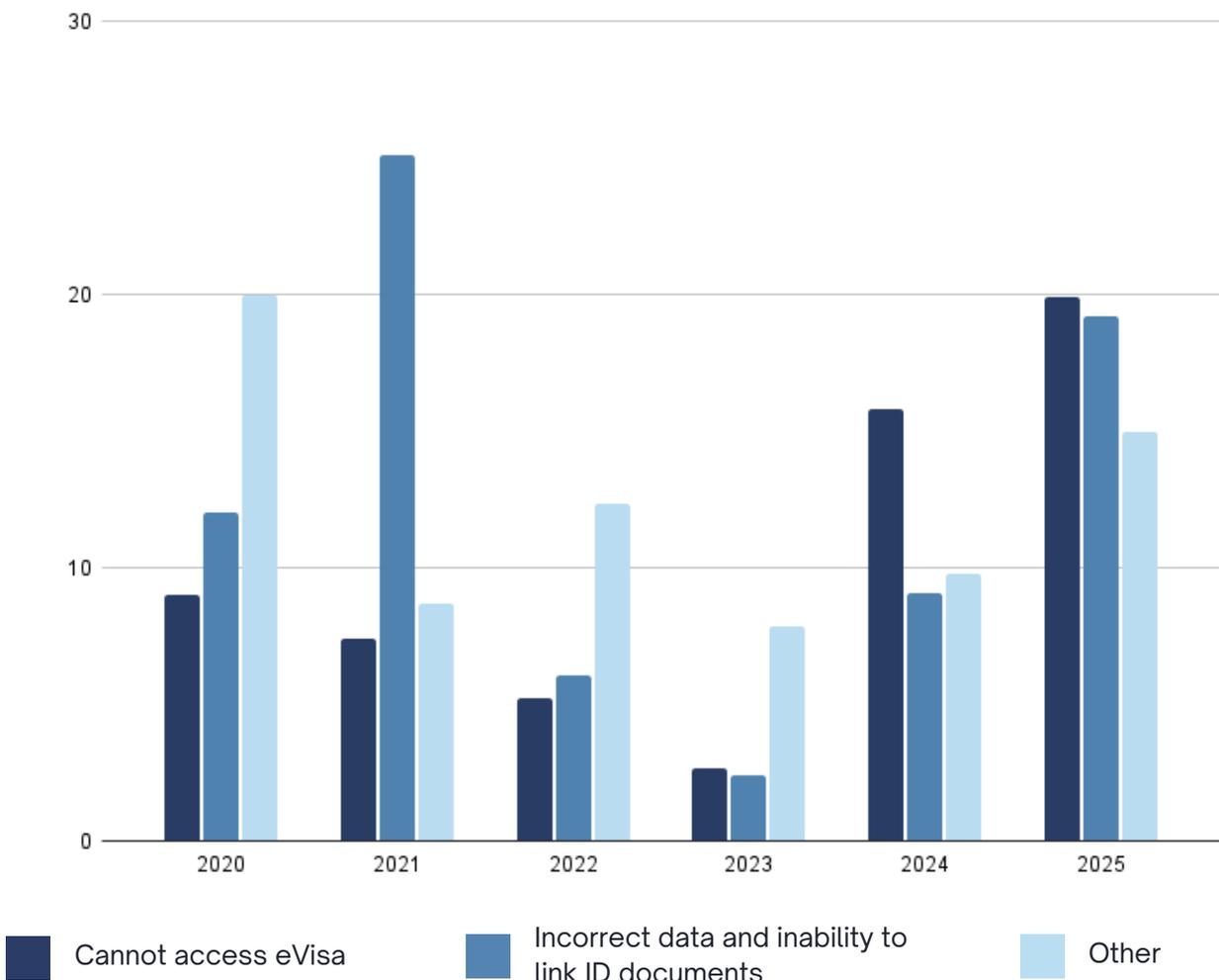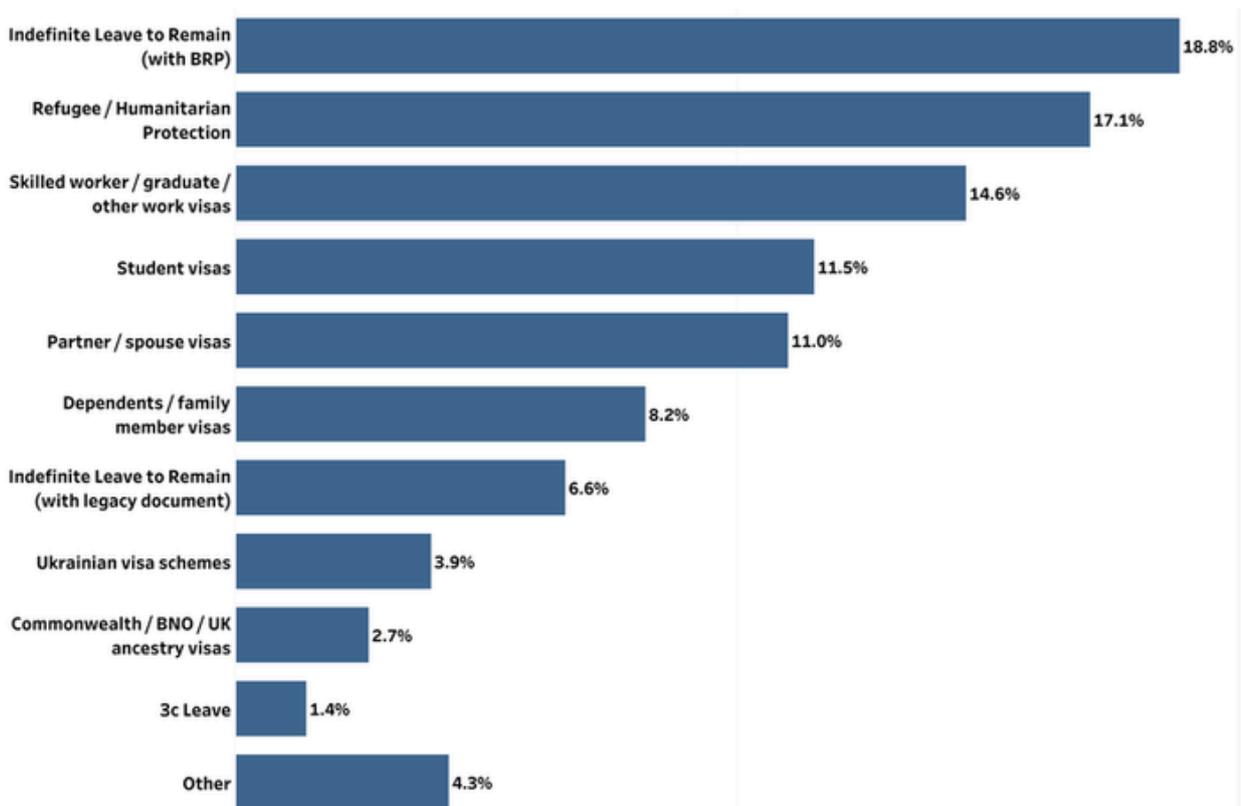
Breakdown of reports by immigration status

The EU Settlement Scheme was the first immigration route on which people were provided with digital-only immigration status. Reports the3million received between December 2020 - March 2024 were only related to EU citizens and family members.

Since March 2024, until present, reports from migrants on all visa routes have been received.
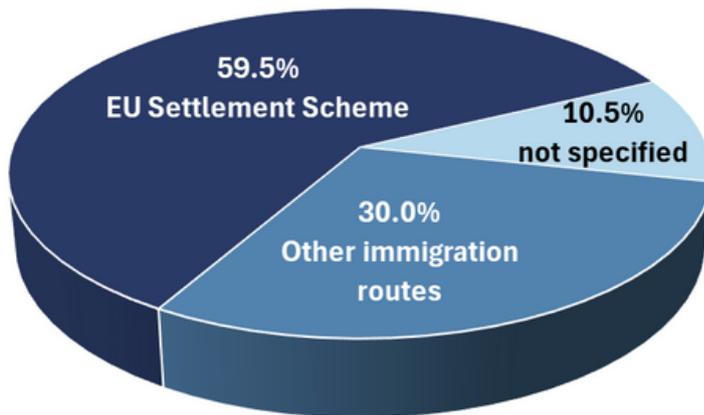
Breakdown of reports by other immigration status except the EU Settlement Scheme

Out of 1,877 reports, 563 reports specified a different immigration route other than EUSS, as broken down below.

Immigration route	Percentage
Indefinite Leave to Remain (with BRP)	18.8%
Refugee / Humanitarian Protection	17.1%
Skilled worker / graduate / other work visas	14.6%
Student visas	11.5%
Partner / spouse visas	11.0%
Dependents / family member visas	8.2%
Indefinite Leave to Remain (with legacy document)	6.6%
Ukrainian visa schemes	3.9%
Commonwealth / BNO / UK ancestry visas	2.7%
3c Leave	1.4%
Other	4.3%

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