

# EU CITIZENS SURVEY

## 2024

Thank you to the over 550 of you who participated in our 2024 survey to tell us what matters most to you!

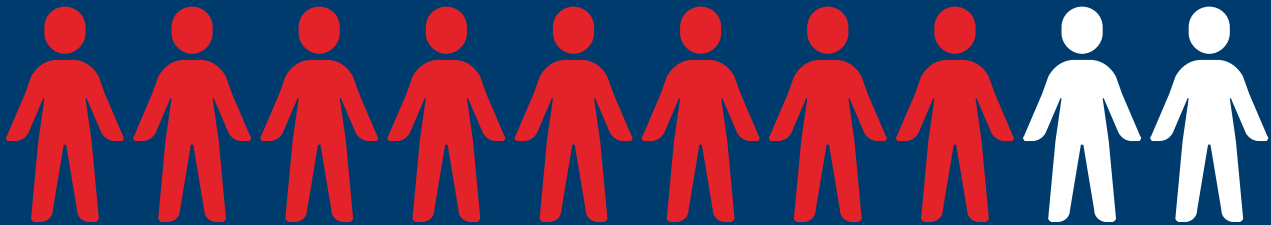
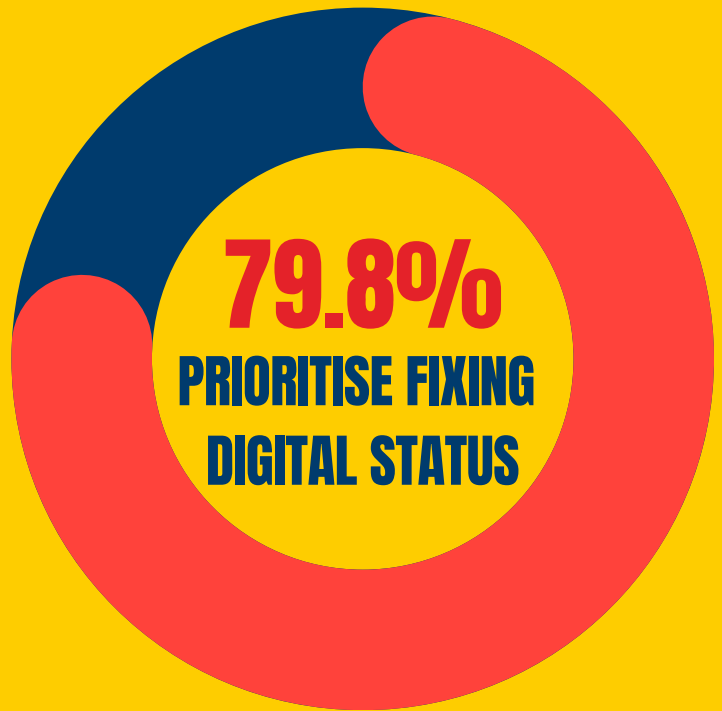
We cannot do what we do without your support, and we want to ensure we are working on the issues that are most important to you.



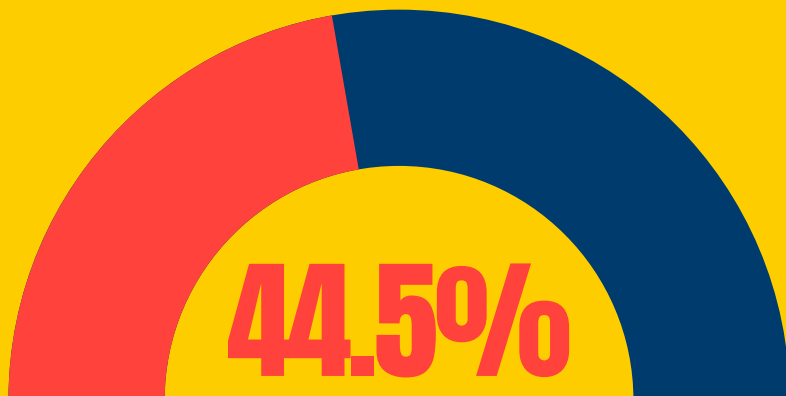
# AT A GLANCE

**91.7%**

PLACE MOST IMPORTANCE  
ON PROTECTING THE  
RIGHTS OF EU CITIZENS  
UNDER THE WITHDRAWAL AGREEMENT

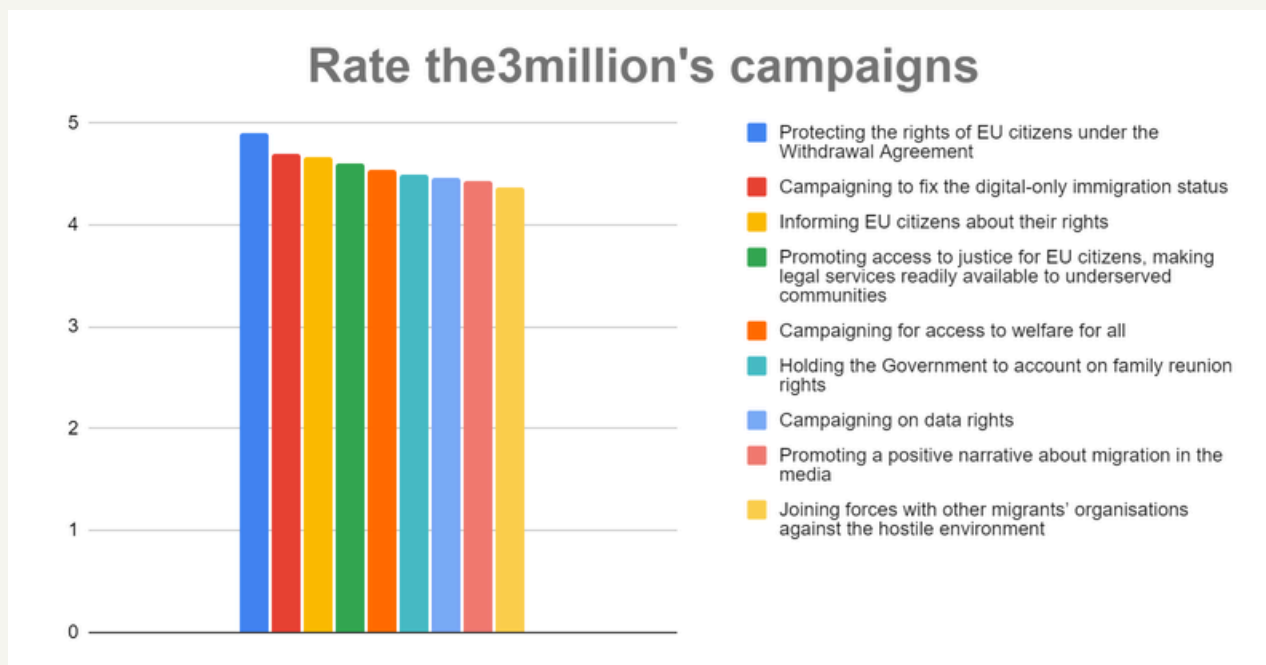


**82%** SUPPORT OUR QR CODE PROPOSAL



**HAVE NO  
CONFIDENCE IN  
THEIR FAMILY  
REUNION RIGHTS**

# Rate the3million's campaigns



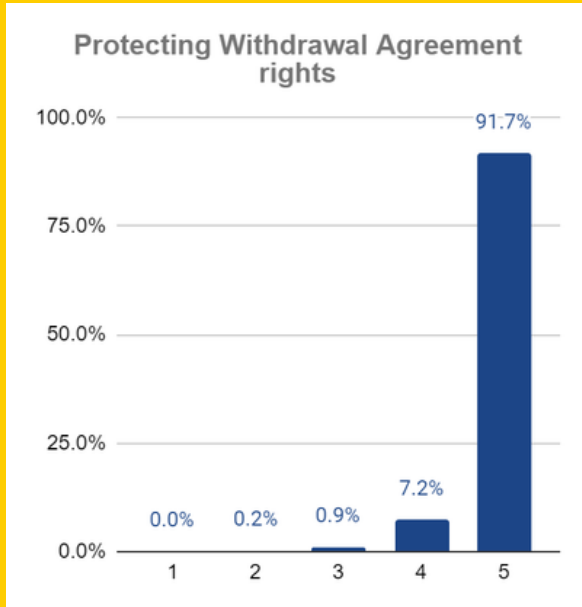
For each of the areas, we asked you to rate them between 1 (Not at all important) and 5 (Very important).

We were very happy to find extremely strong support for the work that we do, with each of the nine areas getting an average score of over 4.3.

the3million uses 'EU citizens' as shorthand for EU, EEA and Swiss citizens who were residents in the UK before 31 December 2020, and their family members (of any nationality) with derived rights.

# Protecting the rights of EU citizens under the Withdrawal Agreement

Top of your list was protecting the rights of EU citizens under the Withdrawal Agreement.



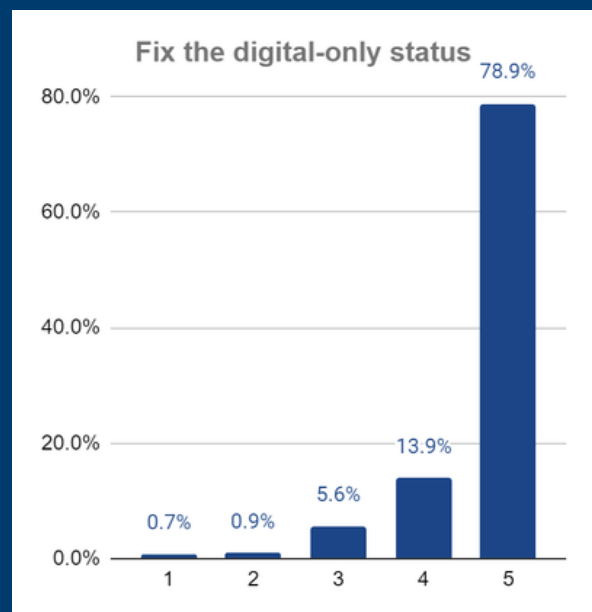
We agree with you completely about the importance of this. The Withdrawal Agreement was negotiated and signed between the UK and the EU, and it is vital that we hold the UK Government to account to implement it properly.

We do this mainly through litigation (for example [intervening in this important case](#) about the expiry of pre-settled status), and direct engagement with the Home Office (for example [writing to the Home Office](#) to achieve a change in policy on accepting late applications to the EU Settlement Scheme).

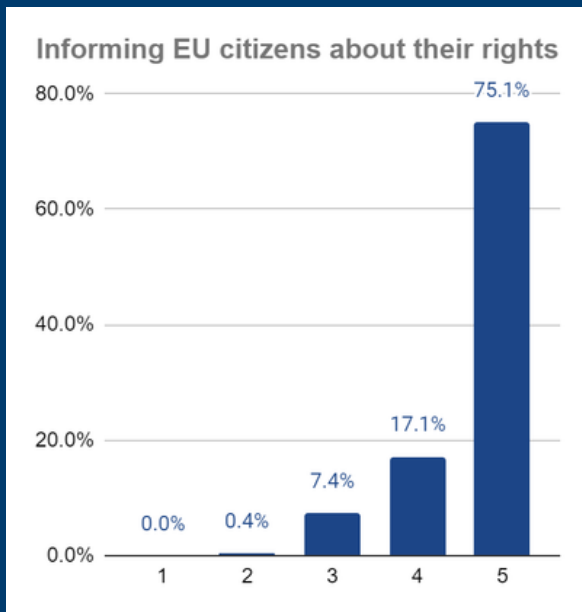
## Campaigning to fix the digital status

This has been a long-held priority for you - in late 2019, Tanja Buelmann of Northumbria University conducted the largest nationwide survey on the [Experiences and Impact of the EU Settlement Scheme](#), and over 89% of the respondents stated they were unhappy about the lack of a physical document.

We will say more about our campaigning further in this report, as we asked you some specific questions about our proposals to fix the digital status.



# Informing EU citizens about their rights



We believe this is vital, as a lot of information around the EU Settlement Scheme is extremely complex, and often hard to find or understand on the Government website.

We have a "Know Your Rights" section on our website, with a [Resource Hub](#) of in-depth information on different topics, and an [FAQ bank](#) of questions and answers.

These are informed and updated by your questions to us via our [Contact form](#), and the experiences you tell us about using our [Report-It forms](#).

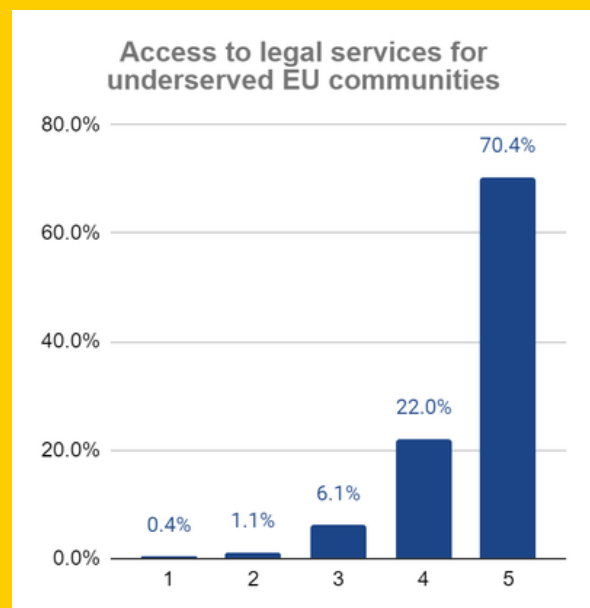
And if you're not already signed up to our newsletter, you can do so [here](#).

# Promoting access to justice for EU citizens, making legal services readily available to underserved communities

Legal and policy injustices do not just exist in courtrooms or legal documents. They are lived everyday by people in our communities.

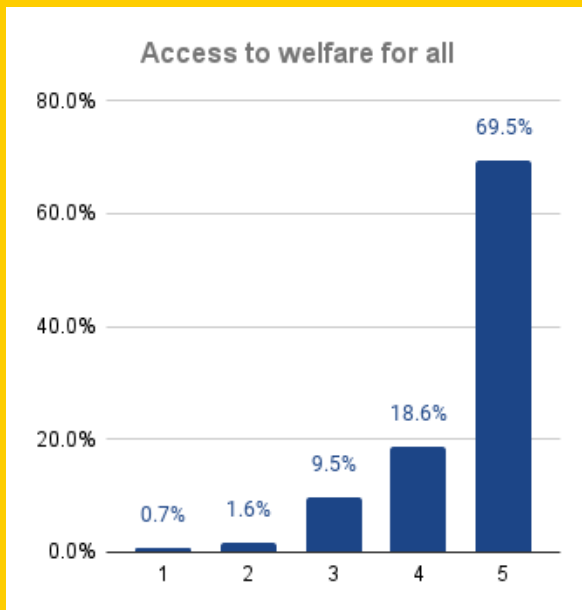
Our [community lawyering initiative](#) ensures that lived experiences are the driving force behind our fight for rights, welfare and social justice – whether it's standing up for them in court or pushing for policy changes through campaigning or advocacy.

But this isn't a journey we can take alone. Share your story, amplify your voice, and join a movement dedicated to bringing access to justice to the forefront of our communities. Together, let us stand up for our rights and shape a future where every voice is heard, and every story matters.



Ready to [make a difference](#)?

# Campaigning for access to welfare for all



We believe that everyone with status under the EU Settlement Scheme should be protected by the Withdrawal Agreement, and should therefore have the right to equal treatment. This includes being eligible to welfare on the exact same basis as a British citizen living in the UK.

An example of our work here is our recent intervention in a County Court case, to support a citizen with pre-settled status who is being denied homelessness assistance. For more information, see [our news story](#) on the case.

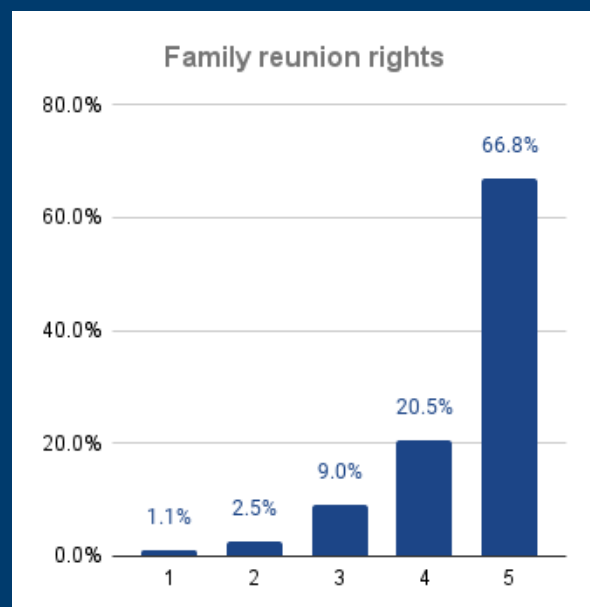
We have [launched a crowdfunder](#) so that we can strategically intervene in cases to make the case for a fully inclusive and protective EU Settlement Scheme. We'd be very grateful for your donations!

# Holding the Government to account on family reunion rights

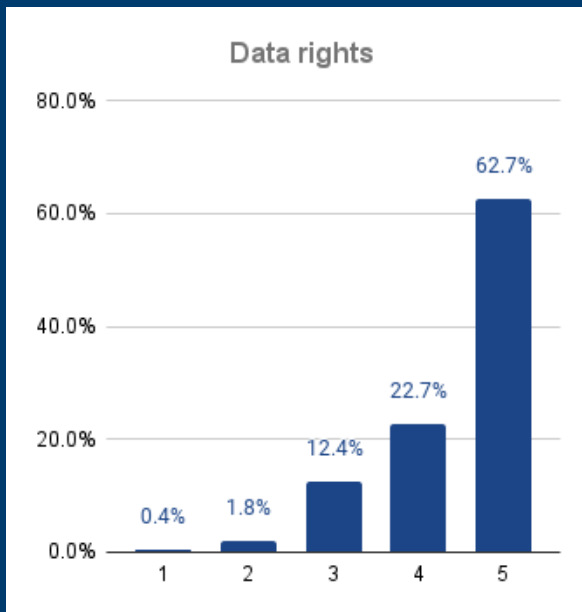
Brexit brought with it a reduction in family reunion rights, including a sharp cut-off: extended family members, including durable partners, had to apply for an EEA residence document before 31 December 2020. We [achieved policy change](#) to address some very unfair situations caused by the combination of Home Office delays and this cliff-edge.

Relationships (other than new-born children) had to exist before 31 December 2020. More and more, people are having to turn to the UK's other immigration routes like [spousal visas](#), which are difficult and expensive.

Family reunion visas can be [slow](#) and difficult to get, and [travel restrictions](#) keep families apart. We continue to challenge these at every opportunity.



## Campaigning on data rights



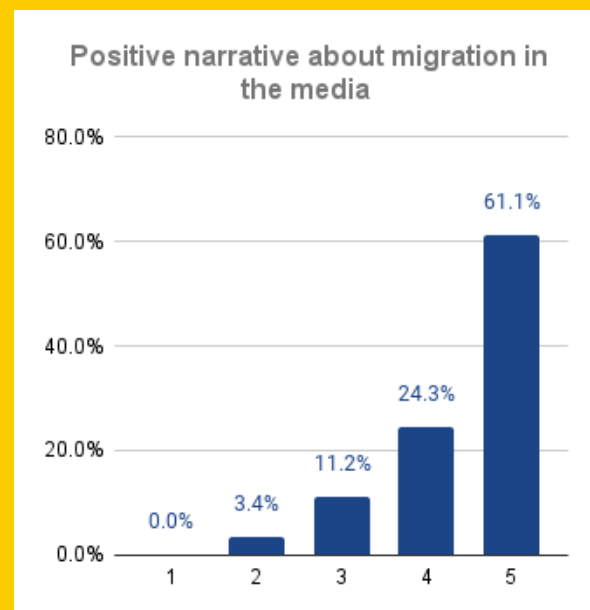
The Government included an 'immigration exemption' in its Data Protection Act 2018, which meant that migrants could be denied the data protections that British citizens enjoy, without the necessary safeguards and controls set out on the face of the legislation.

Together with Open Rights Group we took the Government to court in two separate legal challenges. Both times the Court of Appeal agreed with us that the exemption was unlawful, and the Government has now finally amended the legislation to include necessary safeguards to the use of the exemption. We thank everyone for their support of our legal challenges, which would not have been possible without these generous donations.

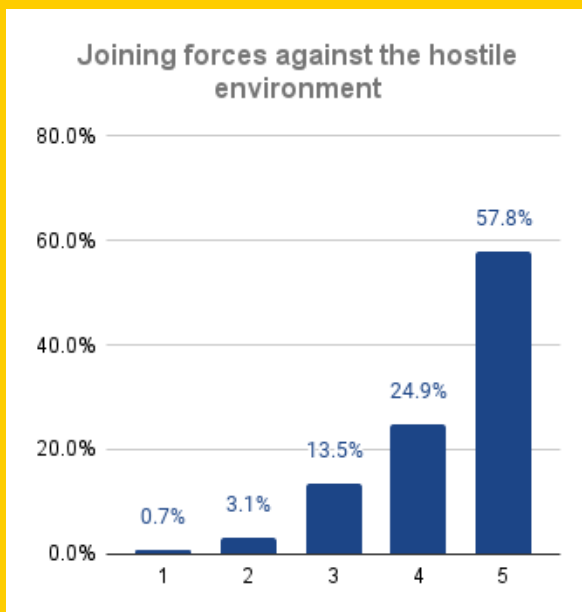
## Promoting a positive narrative about migration in the media

We know how influential public narratives are on decision-makers. We work with journalists to reveal injustices, we centre people's lived experience, diversity of voices and support them in engaging with the media.

We highlight shared struggles and solidarity, in a way which does not set EU citizens apart from British citizens or presents people either as victims or heroes.



# Joining forces with other migrants' organisations against the hostile environment



EU citizens in the UK after Brexit are suffering at the hands of a policy which alienates all migrants. We believe our rights will not be respected until this hostile environment is replaced by an immigration system based on compassion and fairness.

We stand in solidarity with other migrants' rights campaigns, to speak with a strong, united voice.

Many of you also mentioned a variety of other issues that are important to you, some of which we list below:

- Voting rights - see also our webpage <https://the3million.org.uk/voting-rights>
  - to be able to vote in in UK general elections
  - maintaining our right to vote in local elections
- Access to Citizenship - making it easier to achieve British citizenship, where cost is a major barrier. See also our webpage <https://the3million.org.uk/citizenship>
- Information on social security coordination, pensions and healthcare cover in the UK and abroad. We agree there needs to be much more information about this complex area, and are trying to work with some external stakeholders to provide more easily accessible information.

Discrimination and recourse to compensation. You told us that you want us to stand up for all those who encounter discrimination in all walks of life, with recourse to compensation. Please join our [Community Lawyering](#) network to help make a difference.

# Your views on our proposal for an alternative digital status

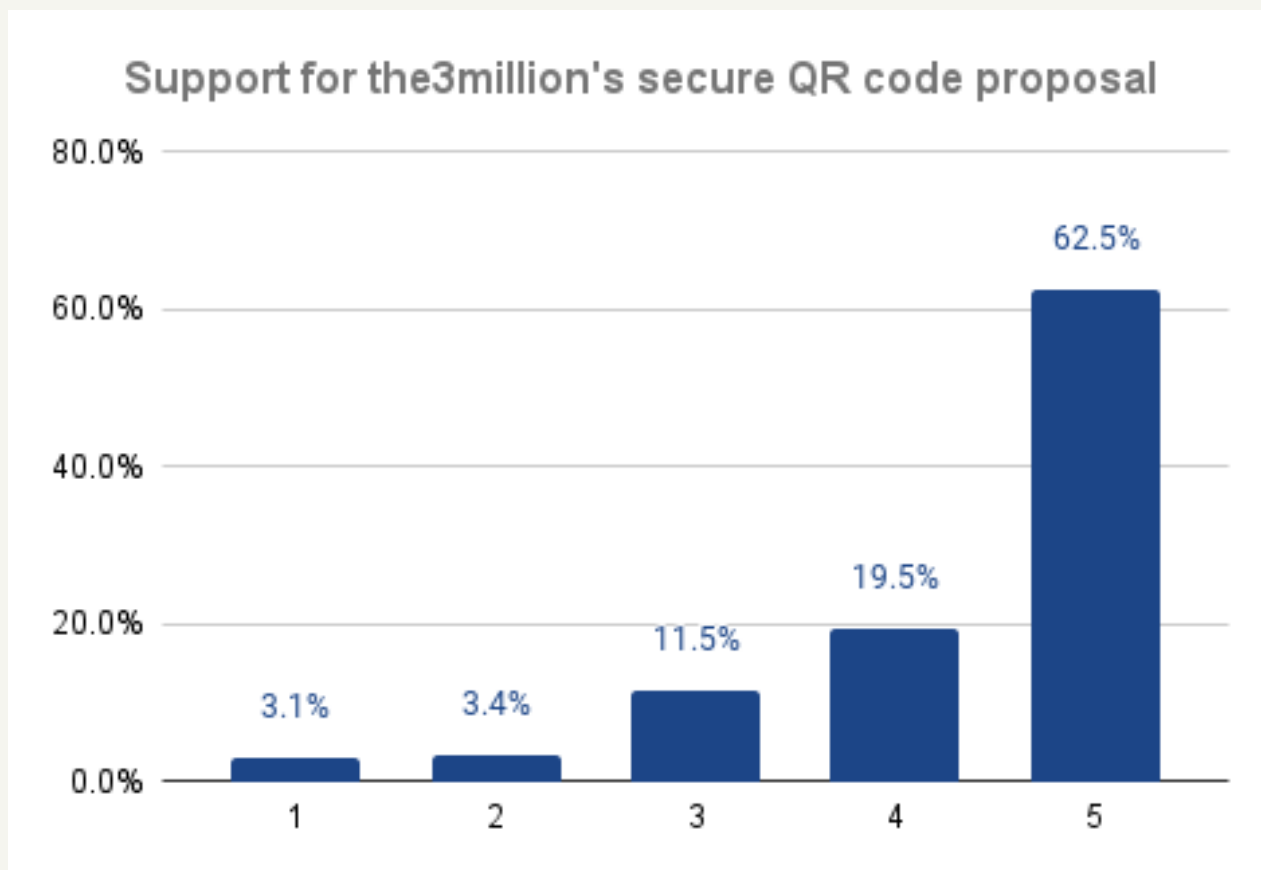
**82%**  
**SUPPORT**  
**OUR QR CODE PROPOSAL**

Thank you for your valuable feedback on our proposal for an alternative implementation of digital status, which is based on Secure QR codes, a similar solution to the NHS Covid app that people used when they needed to prove their Covid vaccinations.

As we explained in our survey, we suggest that people could have an app on their phone, which produces a QR code for anyone such as employers, landlords and airline carriers to scan. It would be possible to print out these QR codes as a backup. People without smartphones could request a card version of their QR codes.

We asked you for your overall support for this proposal, with 1 meaning you don't support it at all, and 5 meaning you fully support it.

We were pleased to read that 82% of you either supported or strongly supported the proposal.



## We were also really grateful for the many detailed feedback comments we received, which we summarise briefly below:

- Many of you expressed a strong preference for a physical, biometric document, and questioned the Government's objections that this would not be secure enough or would be too expensive. As one respondent put it: "How can almost every other country make a secure personal ID document, but world-beating Britain can't?"
- A number of you expressed concern that our proposal may not work for those who struggle with technology, or don't have access to smartphones (or indeed, the latest versions of smartphones). This is why our proposal does include a requirement that the Government make available a physical card version - which is very much cheaper than a biometric card and just as secure if not more so.
- Some respondents said that QR codes could be just a shortcut to a Home Office database entry and still rely on the internet and Government websites in order to work. While basic QR codes do mostly redirect to another website, our proposal is instead based on using Secure QR codes which contain all the necessary information within the code itself. Even in situations where neither the status holder or the checker are connected to the internet, it is possible to scan the QR code and see proof that the person has valid status.



- Some of you raised concerns about security, whether the QR codes could be hacked and whether people could just use someone else's QR code to impersonate them. Our proposal is based on Public Key Infrastructure (PKI - see [here for a great explainer blog about PKI](#) as used in passports). PKI is used to assure the person checking that this QR code could ONLY have been generated by a UK Government entity. This does mean that checkers need to use a dedicated checking app that understands the UK Government's public encryption keys and can therefore reject QR codes that weren't suitably encrypted. This should not really be a problem because this app can be made available on the Gov.UK website for those checking within the UK. For international travel there are internationally agreed standards for just this job. (See International Civil Aviation Authority standards on '[visible digital seals](#)' if you are interested in the technical details).
- Others raised really useful questions and suggestions around making it easier to link new passports to one's immigration status - including reminders when old passports expire.

Finally, some of you shared some thoughts around those checking the status. Some of you are worried that employers might not engage with using an app and find it too complex, whereas others are worried that checking might become too easy and lead to the introduction of more checking requirements.

We are very aware of the risks and dangers to any proposal and of course would far rather live in a world where no-one's status needs to be checked at all.

At the same time, we have heard from and spoken to so many people affected by the problems with the current View & Prove (see this shocking recent news article [Home Office immigration database errors hit more than 76,000 people](#)) that we consider **the Government MUST look into alternatives that give you a proof of status that sits with YOU, not on a Home Office online database.**

# Your issues and concerns

**We asked you to share any issues and concerns, on proving immigration status, accessing social welfare, around family reunion rights, using a digital-only status and how you feel about your future in the UK.**

## Proving immigration status

A significant proportion of respondents had encountered problems proving status, across several areas.

You told us about the barriers in general to using View & Prove - for example if your status doesn't work, or the website is unavailable, or you struggle with the language barriers, or how long it can take to get changes (such as a change of name) to your status accepted.

Many of you mentioned **employers and recruitment agencies**, how some don't understand or want to engage with the share code process and are irritated by its complexity, choosing to go for 'easier' applicants instead, and how in other cases the share code process didn't work - due to system outages, share codes failing, and misunderstandings about the 'wrong type of share code'. Others talked of **landlords** who are reluctant to do the checks and are more likely to discriminate by favouring British passports, which is especially a problem in a very competitive rental market.

There were a lot of reports about applying for **EHIC cards**, where providing a share code didn't seem to be enough, and the application process was fraught with technical glitches.

**Travelling** was mentioned often, both boarding from abroad, and entering at the UK border. You told us about demands for proof of status when abroad, not being able to use the eGates when arriving back in the UK, increased questioning by Border Force officers, some not understanding settled status, having a hostile attitude, or seemingly being unable to see the status attached to your passport. Some of you mentioned that having a previous refusal of status meant that you're detained at the border every single time you return to the UK. Travelling with national identity cards still seems to cause lots of problems, even though the Withdrawal Agreement specifically provides for this, in practice many carriers are reluctant to allow it.

Others highlighted that there are Government departments which are not set up to accept anything other than British or Irish passports - such as **HMRC** when dealing with tax refunds, pension or other matters. Problems applying for **bank accounts and mortgages** were mentioned too - with some providers demanding sight of a physical visa.

If your passport is issued in your birth name, but you use your **married name** in your daily life in the UK, you told us that you encounter problems renewing driving licences and proving status generally. Although it's now possible to add a married name to your EUSS status (but only if it's shown on the main page of your passport), it is far from straightforward and still involves having to send in your passport by post.

Several of you highlighted the problems around having the **older types of Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR)**. When the EU Settlement Scheme launched, the Home Office said that people with ILR didn't need to apply for settled status. Now it is becoming much more difficult for those who didn't - if you don't also have a Biometric Residence Permit you are now being made to apply for one only to find it expires by the end of 2024 and becomes digital only.

Helping an adult dependant who is **lacking capacity** can be very difficult, requiring an expensive court document just to have the ability to add renewed passports to someone's status.

Luckily, quite a few of you also said you had not had any issues yet, but you recognise this is also because you have not yet had a need to prove your status for example due to a change of job, a mortgage application, or travelling. Others said that even though you had not yet had a problem, you are worried every time you travel back to the UK. Many of you also said that you'd acquired British citizenship so that you have a greater sense of security, and physical proof of your status in the form of a passport.

## Accessing social welfare

We heard from some of you that having pre-settled status, and older types of Indefinite Leave to Remain, can be barriers to getting student finance, universal credit and other welfare benefits.

Others explained how the application process can be extremely complex even when you do have the right to receive benefits, and some of you mentioned difficulties understanding the official language used when trying to access welfare.

We also heard accounts of conflicting advice and decisions from the central Government department DWP and local councils.

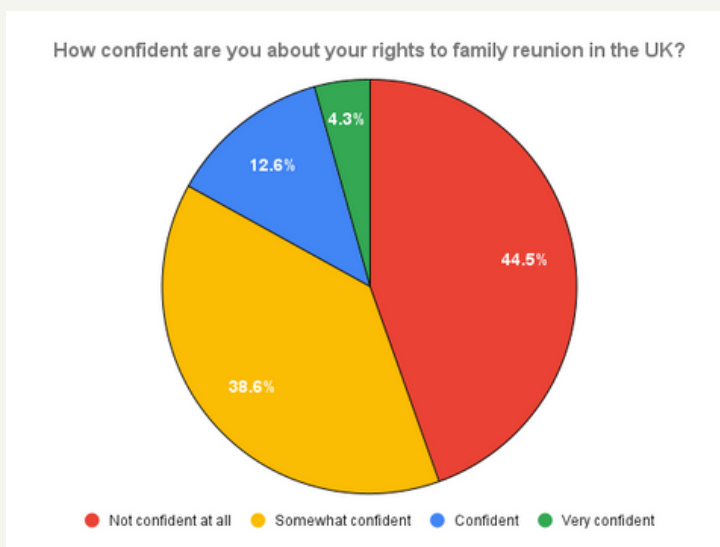
## Family reunion rights

It is concerning that only 17% of you felt either confident or very confident about your rights to family reunion in the UK. As some of you rightly pointed out, we should have added a "Not applicable" option to this question.

Your detailed responses show that the reasons for this fall into the following:

- You don't feel it's clear what family reunion rights we actually have, and that the rules seem to be constantly changing
- It's very difficult to bring elderly parents without proving they are dependent on you
- Concerns that even with the Withdrawal Agreement, the UK Government will change and diminish rights over time
- Worries that the Home Office will continue putting increased barriers and hurdles in the way of accessing family reunion outside the Withdrawal Agreement - moving the goalpost on things like requiring a higher income threshold
- Some of you highlighted the complicated rules around unmarried partners
- Anxiety over the process, that it might be very time consuming, complex and perhaps even expensive

The majority of you who expressed concern are very worried about family members abroad who might need your care in future but will be ineligible for EUSS status, such elderly parents where you cannot prove dependency, or extended family members such as siblings.



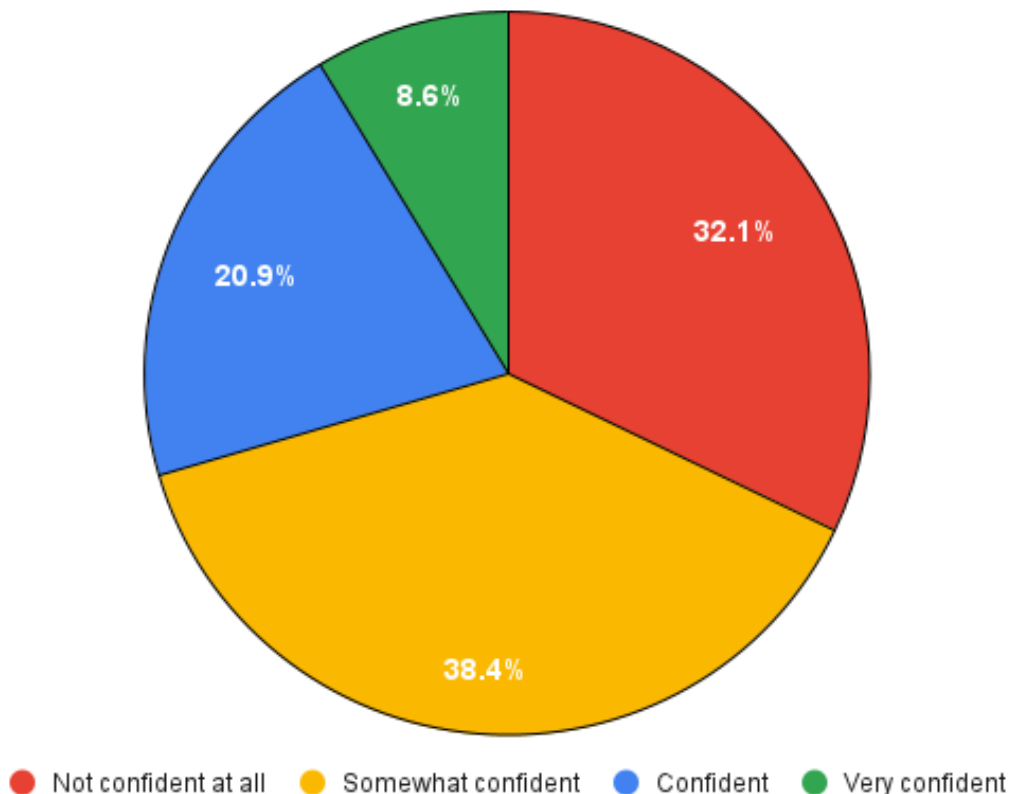
## Using your digital status

You told us that your concerns on digital status included:

- Struggling with technology, suffering anxiety because of it
- Concern for others who don't have a smartphone or are not comfortable with digital systems
- Forgetting how to access it at the time of need, what the correct website is, or no longer having access to the phone number or email address that the security code is sent to
- Being unable to access the View & Prove service through not having a phone signal, no access to WiFi or data, loss of battery or loss of phone.
- System glitches making it impossible to prove status just when you need to
- Those wanting to check your status not understanding the nature of our online-only status
- Lack of trust in the Home Office
- Fear of being discriminated against in favour of those who have physical proof of status
- Lack of acceptance outside the UK, meaning a higher chance of being denied boarding return flights home
- Finding it difficult to update the status with changes such as new identity documents, or change of address
- Fear that Home Office databases could be hacked or deleted

Most of all, many of you tell us that you simply want the confidence of physical proof of your status that you can hold in your hands, under your control, and that isn't volatile and dependent on the internet and government databases.

How confident are you about using your digital status?



## Your most pressing concerns

When we asked you what your most pressing concerns were relating to your immigration status and future in the UK, you highlighted:

- The hostile environment
- The narrative in much of the media that blames foreigners for UK problems
- Lack of trust that the UK will honour its international agreements, and that status and rights could be revoked or reduced over time
- Lacking a sense of security, including anxiety that status can be revoked and that you could be removed from the UK or separated from family
- Being able to prove residence here to be able to go from pre-settled to settled status
- Being unable to bring elderly relatives over in future who need your care
- Not having a physical proof of status, and for those who currently still have a biometric card the fact that it won't be valid after December 2024
- Suffering discrimination
- Fear of travelling in case you struggle to be allowed back into the UK on your return
- Not having the right to vote, and being unable to afford British citizenship or finding the process to become British too complicated
- Accessing benefits, and the NHS should it become necessary
- Worries about the future, and the complexities around obtaining pensions if you've lived in different countries

The overriding theme in your responses was a lack of trust in the Home Office, the rules being changed under your feet, and the anxiety this creates because you can't be certain about your future rights in the UK.

## Your future in the UK

2.7% of you say you have firm plans to leave the UK, and a further 12.6% told us you are thinking about leaving. Almost three quarters (72%) of you intend to stay in the UK in the short or long term. **This is our home!**

