

Destroying, hopes, dreams, and lives: *How the UK visa application costs and process impact migrants' lives*

What did Migrant Voice find out?

- The cost of renewing a visa is very high. A single person is expected to pay at least **£2,593 every 2.5 years** for the application fee and NHS surcharge alone. This means that at current cost, an individual on the 5-year route would pay **£5,186 and £10,372** if they were on the 10-year route before settlement.
- **Two thirds** of respondents said they end up spending **thousands of pounds in additional costs** each time they renew their visas.
- A third of respondents told us they have so far paid around £20,000 overall (for themselves and/or their family members), with 10% having paid in excess of £40,000.
- **Two thirds** of respondents told us that they have had to **go into debt** to be able to pay for their visa costs. People have told us of debts reaching £30,000.
- Our research showed that people are more vulnerable to **exploitation at work**, working extra-long hours, taking fewer breaks, working while sick, accepting lower paid work, because of the amount of money they must save for their visas.
- The application process and the costs associated with it have a detrimental effect on physical and mental health. Some people said they felt they are in a **“living hell”**.
- Some said that they were **unable to feed their children properly**, others that they were not able to help them to study or to send them to university. Some people specifically went without food or had to access food banks due to the impact of the visa costs.
- 95% of respondents told us they felt **extremely negative feelings** about their situation, with some using words such as “terrible”, “hopeless”, “mental torture”, and “ruined life” to describe their situation.
- Visa fees can also impact on every aspect of material life. Many felt that they are unable to lead what they consider a **“normal” life**.
- **The Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated existing problems for over half of the respondents**
- The survey participants come from a wide range of walks of life; yet they are all affected by the costs of visas.

What is Migrant Voice calling for?

- Visa fees for adults must not be higher than the administrative cost, children should go free,
- Abolish the Immigration Health Surcharge,
- Cap all routes to settlement at 5 years,
- Cut waiting times and improve communication from the Home Office, devise a quicker, simplified and less stressful visa application process