



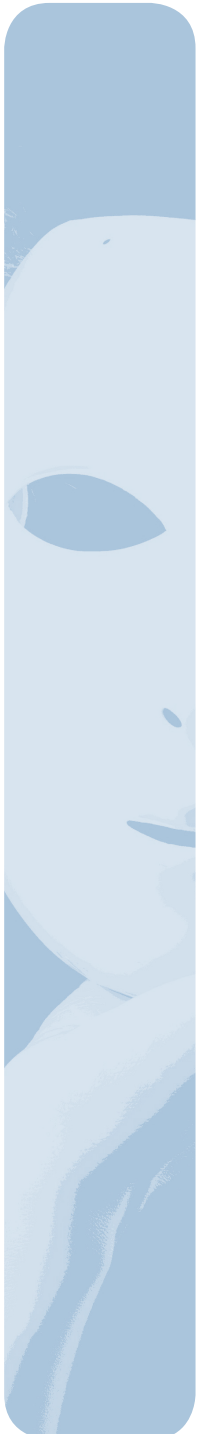
The menace of fake IDs

How a better understanding of security features can help spot fake IDs.



Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Underage drinking is an issue, but organised crime is the bigger issue	4
Security features and their role in spotting fake IDs.....	5
Conclusion.....	9





The black market for fake IDs is thriving

Introduction

Fake IDs are a lucrative business, fuelled by the anonymity that the internet and social media afford. A good quality forged document with secure elements, such as a hologram and UV features, of a genuine ID can be obtained at a reasonable price, at the mere click of a button.

Websites can be easily accessed which offer fake ID drawing customers in with captions such, "Spring break is coming! Students, get ready to travel and have fun with your new ID!" Group discounts are available, and the IDs are concealed in ways to avoid detection by X-rays, when being shipped. This is not surprising given there is a lot of money to be made and criminals tend to operate in areas where they are unlikely to be challenged. According to The Economist, a successful fake ID producer made an average of \$1500 a week, way back in 2012.¹ Depending on the quality of ID, prices averaged around \$100 and went as high as \$300.²

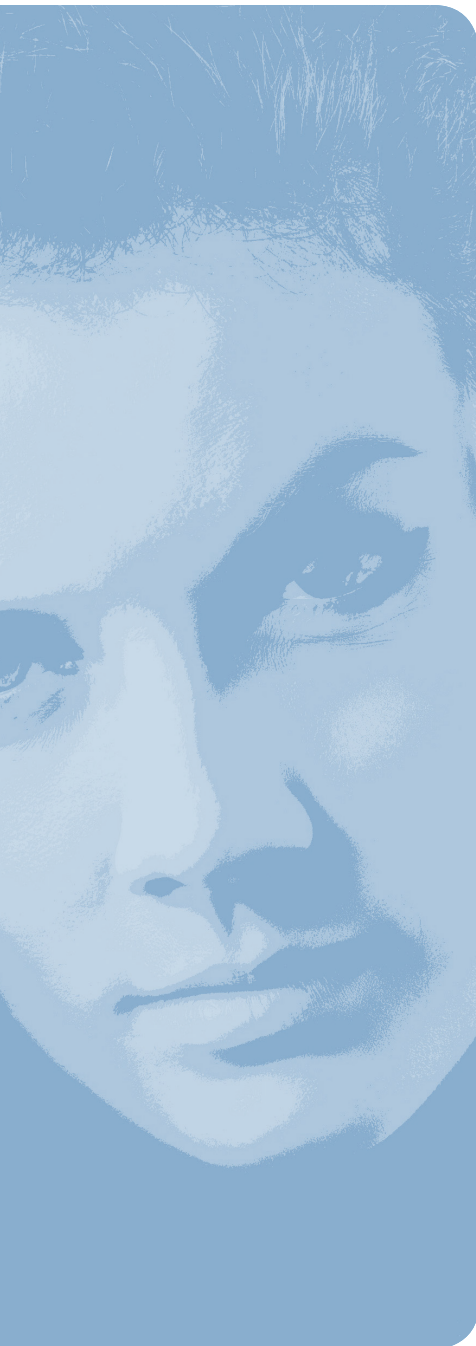
Cryptocurrency has added another level of complexity. In 2018, federal investigators in the United States seized around \$4.7 million worth of Bitcoins, from an alleged fake ID maker who was accepting Bitcoins for falsifying IDs.³



¹ <https://www.economist.com/international/2012/08/11/identity-crisis>

² <https://northwesternbusinessreview.org/the-business-of-fake-ids-95dcc571b3fc>

³ <http://fortune.com/2018/02/09/bitcoin-seized-fake-id-case/>



Underage drinking is an issue, but organised crime is the bigger worry

In countries like the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US), where the laws around underage drinking are enforced more strictly, most people equate fake ID use with underage drinking. In the UK, it's illegal to sell alcohol to anyone under the age of 18. While the legal drinking age in most countries is 18 years,⁴ the US has set the limit at 21 years.⁵ But this has only fuelled the problem.

The American Journal of Public Health Research 2017 published a study conducted at three large state universities in Florida, USA to evaluate the use of fake IDs to circumvent the underage drinking laws. More than 33% of the respondents had a fake ID, and 80% of these students used fake IDs to purchase alcohol and/or enter a bar to drink alcohol.⁶ Often the use of a genuine ID which does not belong to the person using it, is a more common practice than the use of fake IDs.

Counterfeit IDs also aid organised crime, child labour, human trafficking, and terrorism. People also use fake IDs to gain improper access to firearms, bank accounts and government benefits. Criminals use fake IDs to avoid detection, board flights or wire money. Reports reveal that the perpetrators of the Paris and Brussels attacks obtained fake IDs to cross borders and rent housing.⁷ The precedent for using fake IDs in terror acts dates back millennia. However, it is not just the United States or Europe that are at risk. In South-east Asia, terrorist groups have, in the past, used Malaysia as a hub to secure fake IDs. Kenyan authorities are looking for the leader of a fake ID syndicate, who issued IDs to terror suspects who were purportedly planning an attack in Nairobi.⁸ Fake IDs are a threat to security, and not just underage drinking. It is imperative that we equip ourselves with the knowledge of how we can spot fake documentation, and make use of technologies which can help us create more secure IDs.

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legal_drinking_age

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_alcohol_laws_of_the_United_States

⁶ <http://pubs.sciepub.com/ajphr/5/6/3/index.html>

⁷ <https://www.thestate.com/news/local/article207891399.html>

⁸ <https://www.capitalfm.co.ke/news/2018/05/kenyan-printing-fake-id-cards-terrorists-wanted-police/>

Security features and their role in spotting fake IDs

A fake ID can be any one of the following:

- Genuine document which is being used by someone else, e.g. a child using their older sibling's passport.
- Genuine document which has been altered, e.g. a driving licence with the date of birth scratched off.
- Fake document which is a copy of a genuine document.
- Genuine document which has been fraudulently obtained, e.g. a real passport that has been stolen and used by somebody else.
- Fake document which is a form of ID that does not exist, e.g. a press pass representing the user as a journalist.⁹

The most common fake ID includes those that look like driving licences, such as national identification cards, European or international driving permits and provisional motorcycle licences.

Typically, valid photo driving licenses or passports serve as proof-of-age documents in most countries though other documents are also considered acceptable depending on the country. For instance, the state of New York, USA accepts a valid driver's licence or non-driver identification card issued by the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles, the Federal Government, a State Government, Commonwealth, Possession or Territory of the United States or a Provincial Government of Canada; or a valid US passport, or valid passport of any other country; or a valid military ID from the US.¹⁰

In the UK, a Proof of Age Standards Scheme (PASS) card is also accepted as proof of age. But student IDs and armed forces IDs, even with pictures, do not qualify as acceptable ID and nor do birth certificates.¹¹

⁹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/183495/False_ID_guidance.pdf

¹⁰ <https://www.lawrodriguez.com/acceptable-proof-age-purchase-alcohol-new-york-state/>

¹¹ <http://www.spotcounterfeits.co.uk/how-spot-fake-identification.html>



Each form of ID usually contains a photograph of the person, their date of birth, personal details, an official hologram and other security features but fake ID producers do produce cards, which at first glance can fool the uninitiated.

The UK's Home Office has published guidance on 'Identity document validation technologies' (IDVT) that help establish the authenticity of various Identity documents.¹² When performing a manual check, it is advisable to tick off three elements:

- (1) Examine the card to confirm whether the document is genuine
- (2) Validate the Identity Document
- (3) Link the holder to the document

While this seems fairly straightforward in theory, a manual check is not as easy in practice. "There is rampant fraud," notes Bill Riley, a former U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent. "Even experts like myself, we can say with fairly reasonable certainty — but not 100% — whether a document is fake or not."¹³

Across the world, governments and businesses are investing resources in introducing anti-counterfeiting features such as lamination, digital photos, colour-coded cards and accessories, barcodes, ultraviolet (UV) or fluorescent printing, ghost images, micro text printing, magnetic stripes, smart cards, secure watermarks and holograms that make identity documents more secure.¹⁴

Organisations must provide their employees with the right training to help them spot even the best counterfeit IDs, especially because banks, shops, pubs and other businesses typically don't possess card readers and other equipment to spot fake IDs and employees may not possess the guile or suspicious nature to automatically question ID holders.



¹² <http://www.professionalsecurity.co.uk/news/government/identity-document-validation/>

¹³ <http://uk.businessinsider.com/ap-experts-legal-status-check-systems-can-be-easily-exploited-2018-8>

¹⁴ <https://www.idsuperstore.com/learning-center/a-beginners-guide-to-creating-secure-id-cards/>



While authenticating and validating the document, keep the following in mind:

1. **Know what to look for on the card:** Each ID is intentionally styled differently - take for instance, the driving licences issued in the US. Each state has a different style, and the issuing authority, publishes manuals explaining physical aspects of IDs issued in order to help spot counterfeits more easily. For example:
 - **Orientation:** Most US states comply with American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA) standards, and issue a vertical driver's license ID for a person under 21 years. Driver's licenses for those over the age of 21 are horizontal.
 - **Errors:** A misspelling on the ID, for example - the name of the country or state - issuing the ID, means the document is definitely forged. Look closely for errors such as different languages, incorrect or no signature, information in the wrong places or wrong colour.
2. **Examine security features thoroughly:** Cards are usually equipped with features like microprint, holograms, ultraviolet print, microprint, barcode and secure watermarks.
 - **Holograms:** An effective anti-counterfeiting feature, holograms are often used in combination with other authentication technologies. Advances in holographic techniques make holograms quite difficult to copy accurately. As a result, they often serve as overt first-line authentication while covert features such as scrambled images, micro-text and UV-sensitive or other specialty inks provide second-line authentication.¹⁵

For example, PASS cards issued in the UK have a distinctive hologram is difficult to counterfeit - a 3D hologram with the characteristic 'A' in the lettering.¹⁶ If the ID's surface isn't smooth, and it has a hologram that looks artificial, and/ or is stuck on top of the plastic, it is most likely a fake.
 - **Ultraviolet or fluorescent print:** Ultraviolet (UV) print enables ID card issuers to embed strong covert security features in a cost-effective and simple way into high security cards. Images such as photographs, logos, symbols or even text printed using UV ink are not visible to the naked eye and appear only when the card is examined under ultraviolet light.¹⁷ When the card is tilted in the light, some images or text may be visible only from certain angles. For example, on the driver's licence issued in Illinois, US, the name of the state appears diagonally across the front of the card.
 - **Secure watermarks:** Secure watermarks serve as a robust security feature for ID cards. They add a degree of personalisation that cannot be replicated easily by those without access to specialised ID card printers. Moreover, this feature provides an affordable and quicker alternative to custom holographic overlamine solutions: quicker because the time for producing the cards is also lesser than the holographic solution.



¹⁵ <https://www.packagingdigest.com/smart-packaging/how-holograms-can-stop-counterfeiting>

¹⁶ <https://www.highspeedtraining.co.uk/hub/fake-id/>

¹⁷ <https://www.secureidnews.com/news-item/uv-printing-adds-covert-security-features-to-passports-and-cards/>



3. **Compare the ID with a valid one, and check for tampering:** In the absence of a card authentication device or a checking guide, compare the ID with a valid card for thickness, colour, size, and lettering.
 - **Thickness:** Counterfeiters use different paper or laminate, and a fake ID may therefore be thicker or thinner. A genuine card should not be too flimsy and bend easily.
 - **Size:** Take the EU driving licence cards as an example. Since January 2013, all EU-issued driving licences must be printed on a piece of plastic that has the size and shape of a credit card.¹⁸
 - **Lettering:** The UK driving license contains the text Driving Licence in bold capital letters. A fake might contain incorrect words across the top such as National ID or UK Driving Permit. On California licenses, for example, the cardholder's signature is now printed using raised lettering. You can run your thumb across it and feel the lettering.¹⁹
 - **Signs of tampering:** Feel the card to check if it has been tampered with. Genuine ID cards usually have a flat, smooth surface. If the edges are peeling, chances are it has been tampered with. A hologram that sticks out or a photograph that has been stuck on top of the plastic is an obvious sign.
 - **Lamination** is also a good way of preventing unauthorised tampering and counterfeiting. Lamination adds an extra layer of security between the card's printed surface and the outside. Any attempt to physically alter the card's appearance is immediately obvious. Laminate is usually clear but can incorporate images or holographic foils. Plus, lamination protects against the elements.
4. **Compare the cardholder to the physical description, photo:** Some IDs include a physical description of the person such as height, age or eye colour. Checking if the person presenting the ID matches the given description is necessary. For instance, the Italian ID card requests holders to enter their height. While it can be difficult to gauge height, a simple way to measure would be to compare the person against the examiner's height.

Almost all IDs today are required to have photos. Check if the photo looks remotely like the person handing over the ID, after factoring in the following possibilities – ageing, change in hair length, weight, etc. In addition, advances in plastic surgery can mean individuals do not look like older photographs of themselves and technology has made the manipulation of photographs widely accessible.

5. **Study the cardholder for signs of anxiety, ask questions, compare signatures, and if still in doubt, ask for another photo ID.** If the cardholder avoids eye contact, looks anxious or nervous, they might be trying to use a fake ID, and most likely fear being apprehended. Asking the cardholder questions about the details that appear on the card for example, parent's names or address, or even date of birth, could trip them up.

¹⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/transport/road_safety/topics/driving-licence/eu-driving-licence_en

¹⁹ <https://www.wikihow.com/Spot-a-Fake-ID>.



Conclusion

Fake IDs can pose a threat to national and international security, aid crime and human trafficking, and at the very least, facilitate underage drinking.

Organisations must therefore train their employees on how to spot fake IDs with emphasis on how specific technologies can help create ID cards that are more secure. Card issuers must invest in embedding security features so these authentication documents cannot be replicated easily in order to diminish the threat posed by fake ID.

