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2022.11.28 - 2022.12.04

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[Rail transport](#)

Stark north-south divide in railway reliability, UK figures reveal

Labour demands government close loophole of pre-emptive cancellations



TransPennine Express has the highest cancellation rate of any British train operating company. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

[Helen Pidd](#) *North of England editor*

Sat 3 Dec 2022 03.00 EST

The stark regional divide in railway reliability across Britain has been laid bare, with figures showing 20% of TransPennine Express (TPE) trains were cancelled in November, compared with 2.3% on one commuter line in and out of London and 4.5% on the London Overground.

Exclusive figures obtained by the Guardian show the true level of [disruption suffered by passengers](#) because they include pre-emptive cancellations made

by 10pm the night before, which are not counted in government statistics.

Louise Haigh, the shadow transport secretary, demanded the government close this loophole and begin withdrawing contracts from failing operators.

TPE, which runs trains in the north of England and Scotland, has the highest cancellation rate of any British train operating company, at 19%-30% each week. It routinely cancels up to 60 services the night before, blaming high levels of staff sickness and a driver training programme. These so-called “P-code” cancellations, which must be made by 10pm the night before, disappear from the timetable and are not recorded by the Office of Rail and Road, which compiles railway performance data.

P-codes were designed to be used in circumstances beyond an operator’s control – for example, overrunning engineering work or a landslide blocking a line. But some rail companies – with TPE the worst offender – use the code when they do not have enough staff, misleading customers about the true reliability of their services.

Greater Anglia, which runs services from London to Essex and the east of England, cancelled 2.3% of trains in November. It also operates the Stansted Express, which recorded 3.7% cancellations. Neither made any P-coded cancellations.

C2C, which has the franchise for the London to Essex line, cancelled 285 trains in the same period, equating to 3.54%.

All three companies said they did not use P-codes for cancellations that were their fault. East Midlands Railway, which cancelled 2.9% of trains in November, said it had made just five P-coded cancellations because of short-term train crew sickness.

London Overground cancelled 4.5% of trains in November. All but a handful of those cancellations were made on the day, rather than using the P-code.

Train companies serving the north of England have cancelled the most trains in recent weeks, the Guardian has learned. TPE cancelled one in five trains

(19%) in November. Most of those (13.8%) were P-code cancellations. During the half-term week beginning 23 October TPE cancelled 30% of all trains.

A TPE spokesperson said the company was “extremely sorry” for a service that had “fallen short of what our customers, and our stakeholders expect and demand”. It blamed “the combined impact of prolonged higher-than-usual sickness levels and an unprecedented driver training burden – caused by Covid and additional requirements placed upon us by the December 2022 timetable changes and the TransPennine route upgrade”.

Grand Central, which operates between Bradford and London, cancelled 15.7% of trains in November, including P-codes. It said its figures were skewed by strikes in the first half of the month.

CrossCountry, which runs trains from Aberdeen right down to Cornwall, cancelled 14% of all services – 972 – in November and said it did not P-code for train crew shortages. “CrossCountry do not support P-Coding for a business-as-usual day, as that makes the train ‘disappear’ from retail systems leaving the customer confused,” a spokesperson said.

Northern Rail, which was taken over by the government in March 2020, said that between 16 October and 12 November it cancelled 7% of total services. Its on-the-day cancellation rate was 4.8% (2,418 services out of about 50,000). A further 1,252 services were either removed or amended as part of planned cancellations or service amendments because of “absence with fully trained train crew”, a spokesperson said.

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[TransPennine Express cancelled one in five trains in November](#)

David Sidebottom, the director of the passenger watchdog [Transport Focus](#), demanded greater transparency in performance data.

He said: “We’re acutely aware of the impacts that cancellations have on passengers – especially if they are at short notice. We’re uncomfortable that trains can be removed from the timetable as late as 10pm the day before they should have run and then don’t count as a cancellation in reliability data.

“We are pressing for greater transparency here, as well of course for train companies to keep focusing on running trains on time and not having cancellations.”

Avanti West Coast cancelled 7.7% of services in the four weeks from 16 October, based on the vastly reduced timetable it implemented in August. It did not use any P-codes.

Haigh said the government must close the loophole that meant P-coded cancellations did not show up in official statistics.

The Labour MP said: “This loophole allows operators to hide the true scale of the rail crisis across the north – it must be changed. It would be scandalous if performance payments were being awarded on the back of this phoney data.

“Enough is enough – passengers have been taken for a ride for too long. It’s time the government hold these failing operators to account, and without urgent improvement, begin withdrawing the contract.”

A Department for Transport spokesperson said: “The government is investing billions into northern transport and working closely with train operators to swiftly recruit new drivers and put long term solutions in place so passengers can travel confidently without disruption. The transport secretary [met with northern mayors](#) on Wednesday to discuss the current challenges.”

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[World Cup 2022](#)

World Cup 2022: news and buildup as the knockout stages begin – as it happened

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Comedy

Peter Kay brought to tears on opening night of comeback tour

Comedian appeared overwhelmed by reception as he took to stage at start of first comedy tour in 12 years

- [Peter Kay review – from tried and tested everyman routine to jaw-dropping pageant](#)



Peter Kay Photograph: Peter Byrne/PA

PA Media

Sat 3 Dec 2022 03.40 EST Last modified on Sat 3 Dec 2022 11.11 EST

Peter Kay was moved to tears on the opening night of his first live comedy tour in 12 years.

The comedian received a rapturous standing ovation that lasted several minutes, with audiences chanting his name, as he took to the stage on Friday.

He appeared overwhelmed by the reaction, pausing to lean against a stool on stage before standing up and dabbing his eyes.

“Oh Jesus look at me, I mean what’s that all about? ... how am I supposed to do bloody comedy now?” he asked audiences, prompting the first laughs of the evening.

He reportedly added: “Lovely Manchester you made me cry ... where did it come from, all that emotion?”

The two-hour show included Kay’s famous garlic bread routine, which was given an Italian makeover, and jokes about modern technology (“What did we do before Amazon? Catalogues!”).

The live tour marks Kay’s return to standup comedy after being largely absent from the public eye for the last four years.

Friday’s show at the Manchester AO Arena is the first in a mammoth arena tour spanning from December to August 2023.

He is due to visit locations including Birmingham, Liverpool, Sheffield, Belfast, Newcastle, Glasgow and Dublin, with the run ending on 11 August 2023 at the Sheffield Utilita Arena.

Following the announcement, Kay’s official website appeared to crash briefly under increased online traffic.

The live tour is the comedian’s first since 2010, when he scored the Guinness world record for the biggest selling run of all time, playing to more than 1.2 million people.

Kay, from Bolton, has been largely out of the spotlight in recent years.

He returned to the stage in August 2021 for two special charity events to raise money for Laura Nuttall, a then 20-year-old with an aggressive type of

brain cancer called glioblastoma multiforme.

There was also a brief return in January 2021 when he appeared on BBC Radio 2 to chat to Cat Deeley – who was filling in after Graham Norton left the station – about his love of music, mixtapes and the musical Mamma Mia!

He also made a surprise appearance at a charity screening of his series Car Share in 2018.

Kay cancelled his last tour in December 2017, citing “unforeseen family circumstances”.

Over the past few years, Kay has delighted fans with his hit Bafta-winning TV series Car Share and standup routines.

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Comedy

Peter Kay review – from tried and tested everyman routine to jaw-dropping pageant

Manchester Arena

After 12 years away from the stage, the slimmed-down entertainer is more unapologetically nostalgic than ever



Peter Kay: 'a hymn to the Proustian madeleines of our shared youth'.
Photograph: MEN Media



[Brian Logan](#)

Fri 2 Dec 2022 18.53 EST Last modified on Sat 3 Dec 2022 05.47 EST

No hotcake ever sold in greater quantity than tickets for [Peter Kay's new tour](#): at one stage in my own bid for access, I was numbered 450,000 in the online queue. It's a fair bet, then, that Kay will break the record he himself set in 2010 for the biggest-selling standup tour of all time – 1.2 million people saw that show. But is all the fuss justified? And will the long wait for this new show, fraught with speculation about Kay's health and the likelihood of him ever touring again, prove worthwhile?

If there was any doubt, it was dispelled the moment the slimmed-down 49-year-old stepped onstage at the Manchester Arena. The reception was long, loud and, for Kay, tear-jerking. He took a pause to settle himself: "How'm I supposed to do bloody comedy now?" Not much doubt, though, how Kay was going to do comedy. The two-hour show scarcely deviated from the everyman formula that has made him such a popular success. Some of it, indeed, was almost parodically formulaic, as the Bolton man riffed on modern technology ("What did we do before Amazon? Catalogues!"), led a singalong of 1970s advertising jingles, and gave his famous "garlic bread" routine an Italian makeover.

But for all that, it didn't come across as just another [Peter Kay](#) show. It has a more reflective air: the first half found Kay reminiscing on the dead-end jobs he worked before he was famous, including a stint as an usher in this very arena. The show's other theme is the recent death of his 96-year-old nan, a big presence in Kay's life. Earlier, that manifested as some first-base gags about gran's malapropisms. Later, it prompted a sentimental finale, as a conversation grandson had with granny at the end of her life is replayed over a family-album slideshow.

Elsewhere, while the set never directly addresses the reasons for Kay's temporary disappearance from public life, there is a section on his recent health challenges. In comic terms, it's the strongest part of the show, as Kay rolls his eyes at the anaesthetist asking for a selfie, then recounts the indignities of his recent operation for kidney stones. It's familiar standup territory, but Kay's got a minimalist gift for expressing indignity and dismay – and there's a great acting-out of a genitally entangled couple making their way to hospital after an unfortunate post-op accident.



Fans use their T-shirts to show their love for the Bolton comic. Photograph: Joel Goodman/The Guardian

While this routine is fit to stand alongside well-loved favourites from Kay's earlier shows, some of the material in the first act barely registers as

comedy. When our host orchestrates the audience in a TV theme recital, say, or goes all misty-eyed at one chocolate-bar jingle after another, his role is more conduit for our collective memory than comedian. You look in vain for punchlines – at least until the show’s multiple encores, when those early sections are revisited and built upon in quite spectacular fashion.

It would be unsporting to say too much about the jaw-dropping pageant that Kay lays on here, after the comedy show proper has come to an end. In keeping with the evening’s reflective vibe, there’s a section on misunderstood song lyrics, calling back to one of Kay’s most popular routines – and as funny as ever, because Kay takes so much pleasure in sharing with us these daft misapprehensions. After that, things get wilder, as all those TV themes and jingles return with bells and whistles added – and celebrity cameos, and hot air balloons, and our host dressed like Sergeant Pepper, living out his rockstar dreams.

By the end of Kay’s return to the stage after 12 years away, you can’t help but submit, not just to the spectacle, but to Kay’s commitment to celebrating his generational experience. Top Cat, the Bodyform advert, Blockbuster video: Kay doesn’t just joke about these Proustian madeleines of our shared youth – he fashions his whole show into a hymn to them. One can only imagine what anyone under 30 would think. But for Kay’s fans, it’s catnip. He returns to the stage older, as unapologetically traditional and even more nostalgic than ever, and delivers a show that’s pretty much irresistible.

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2022.12.03 - Spotlight

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The best books of 2022

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[Best books 2022](#)[Best books of the year](#)

Best fiction of 2022

Dazzling invention from Jennifer Egan, a state-of-the nation tale from Jonathan Coe and impressive debut novels and short stories are among this year's highlights

[The best books of 2022](#)



Illustration: Jonny Wan/The Guardian



[Justine Jordan](#)

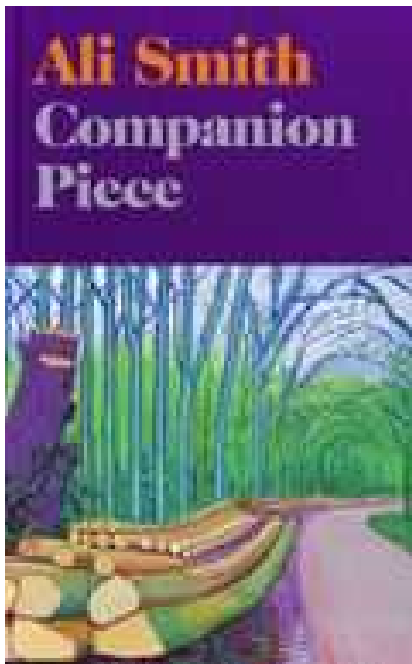
Sat 3 Dec 2022 04.00 EST Last modified on Sat 3 Dec 2022 04.01 EST

Some of the year's biggest books were the most divisive. In her follow-up to *A Little Life*, [To Paradise](#) (Picador), Hanya Yanagihara split the critics with an epic if inconclusive saga of privilege and suffering in three alternative Americas: a genderqueered late 19th century, the Aids-blasted 1980s, and a totalitarian future degraded by waves of pandemics. I was impressed by its vast canvas and portrayal of individual psychic damage set against seismic historical change.

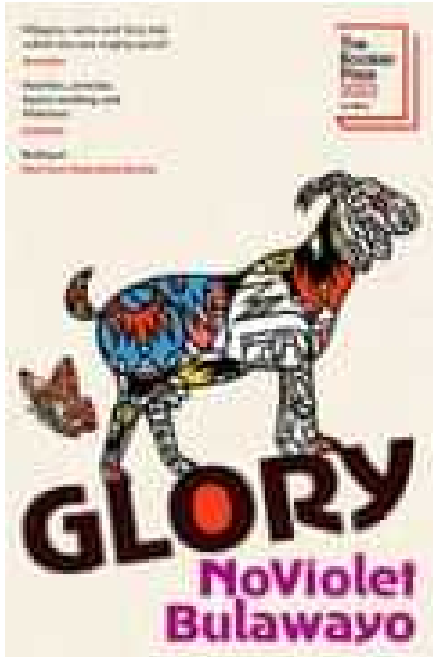
There were mixed reactions, too, to Cormac McCarthy's jet-black brace of novels [The Passenger](#) and [Stella Maris](#) (Picador), his first in 16 years; and to Ian McEwan's [Lessons](#) (Cape), seen as both baggily self-indulgent and richly humane. Setting the protagonist's life against the arc of postwar politics from the cold war to Brexit, and grappling with issues from the nature of creativity to the legacy of sexual abuse, it can be read as an indictment of the boomer generation who "ate all the cream".

Also asking how we got here is [Bournville](#) by Jonathan Coe (Viking). With his third novel in four years, Coe is on a roll; he tracks the fortunes of a family through snapshots of communal experiences, from the Queen's

coronation through the 1966 World Cup to pandemic lockdown, in a moving, compassionate portrait of individual and national change.

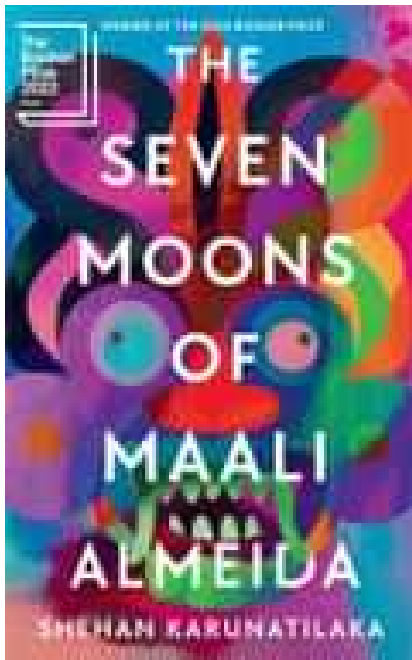


Ali Smith's response to lockdown was typically playful and profound; [Companion Piece](#) (Hamish Hamilton) sees the outside world impinge on one woman's careful isolation, in a novel about the importance of making connections between words, eras and people. Jennifer Egan's [The Candy House](#) (Corsair), meanwhile, harnesses a near-future technological advance – the ability to upload and share memories – to reflect on current concerns around surveillance and privacy with dazzling inventiveness. Mohsin Hamid's fable [The Last White Man](#) (Hamish Hamilton) interrogates race, community and the meaning of the other in a society where skin colour is changing. And I loved Joy Williams's menacing and madcap [Harrow](#) (Tuskar Rock), set in a surreal future of environmental breakdown and human exhaustion, a kind of Alice in Wonderland of the apocalypse.



Glory by NoViolet Bulawayo

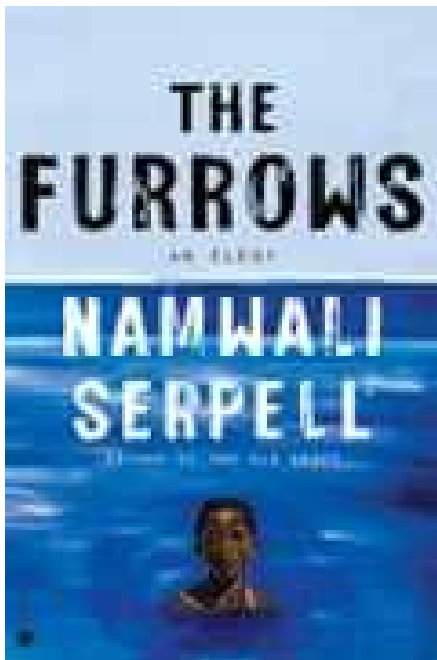
Radical invention characterises Percival Everett's devastatingly absurdist [The Trees](#) (Influx): focusing on a string of gruesome murders in Mississippi, it weaponises the genres of horror, comedy and detective fiction to lay open the history of lynching. In her rambunctious satire of Robert Mugabe's fall, [Glory](#) (Chatto), NoViolet Bulawayo braids the allegory of Animal Farm with an oral storytelling tradition and a social media chorus decrying dictatorship and repression around the world. Selby Wynn Schwartz's [After Sappho](#) (Galley Beggar) is another novel that plays with form, reclaiming hidden lesbian stories by tumbling together biography, scholarship and poetic flights of fancy in sketches of modernist artists and writers from Virginia Woolf to Colette and Josephine Baker. This one-of-a-kind book channels a spirit of righteous anger as well as lyrical freedom and joy.



The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida by Shehan Karunatilaka

Other standout novels illuminating the past include Louise Kennedy's [Trespasses](#) (Bloomsbury), set in Northern Ireland during the 70s. Based around a dangerous affair between a young Catholic woman and an older Protestant man, it combines gorgeously direct and acute prose with an incisive eye for social detail. Shehan Karunatilaka won the Booker prize with [The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida](#) (Sort Of), a blistering murder-mystery-cum-ghost-story set amid the carnage of Sri Lanka's civil war that similarly focuses on the effort to preserve ordinary life in the face of sectarian violence. Catherine Chidgey's [Remote Sympathy](#) (Europa) is an excellent investigation of communal guilt and obliviousness to Nazi atrocities, while in [Trust](#) (Picador) Hernan Diaz deconstructs capitalist excess and the illusion of money through different perspectives on the story of a New York financier. Maggie O'Farrell's follow-up to Hamnet, [The Marriage Portrait](#) (Tinder), is a glittering Renaissance fable of a girl caught up in Italian aristocratic intrigue, and Kate Atkinson is on deliciously acerbic form in [Shrines of Gaiety](#) (Doubleday), exposing the underbelly of London nightlife in the roaring 20s. Georgi Gospodinov's [Time Shelter](#) (W&N, translated from Bulgarian by Angela Rodel), in which a "clinic for the past" treats Alzheimer's patients, plays with ideas of history and nostalgia to explore Europe's 20th century and current confusion with wit and warmth.

It was a good year for unhappy families. Charlotte Mendelson skewers narcissistic control in [The Exhibitionist](#) (Mantle), a darkly witty portrait of an artist on the slide who has spent decades squashing the life and creative energies out of his wife and children. Rebecca Wait's [I'm Sorry You Feel That Way](#) (Riverrun) is a very funny, emotionally wise story of sibling rivalry and difficult mothers. There are no laughs, however, in Sarah Manguso's chilling [Very Cold People](#) (Picador), an uncomfortable, deeply impressive account of how silence, snobbery and repression in a New England town allow the poison of abuse to trickle down the decades.



Ross Raisin has quietly become one of Britain's most interesting novelists: [A Hunger](#) (Cape) explores the conflict between ambition and duty as a chef takes on a caring role when her husband develops dementia. Namwali Serpell's second novel, [The Furrows](#) (Hogarth), brilliantly dramatises the psychic dislocations of grief over a lifetime through the story of a woman haunted by the memory of her younger brother, who died under her care in childhood. Douglas Stuart followed Booker winner Shuggie Bain with a tough and tender story of family dysfunction and first love in [Young Mungo](#) (Picador). And in [Amy & Lan](#) (Chatto), set on a ramshackle farm commune, Sadie Jones gives us a wonderfully achieved child's-eye view of messy family interactions and the up-close life-and-death drama of the natural world.

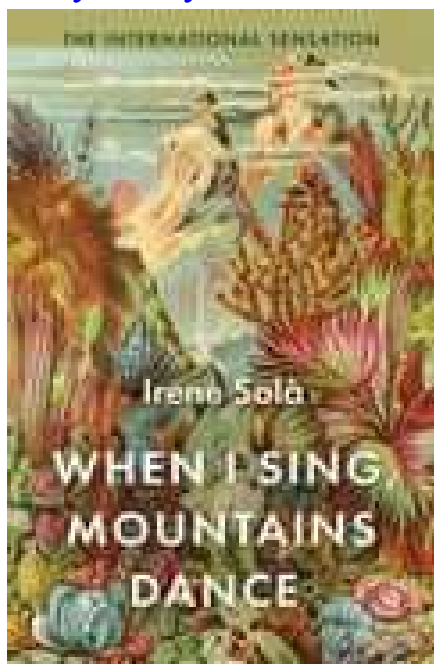
Three hard-hitting debut novels shone out. [An Olive Grove in Ends](#) by Moses McKenzie (Wildfire) portrays a young Black man's struggle to define what success might look like in a Bristol neighbourhood in the grip of gentrification. The book delves deep into faith, violence, addiction, ambition and love with power and grace. Jon Ransom's [The Whale Tattoo](#) (Muswell), focusing on a gay working-class man in watery rural Norfolk, is lyrical, atmospheric and brutal by turns. And Sheena Patel's [I'm a Fan](#) (Rough Trade Books) punctures the bubbles of social media in a fierce tale of obsession and power dynamics.

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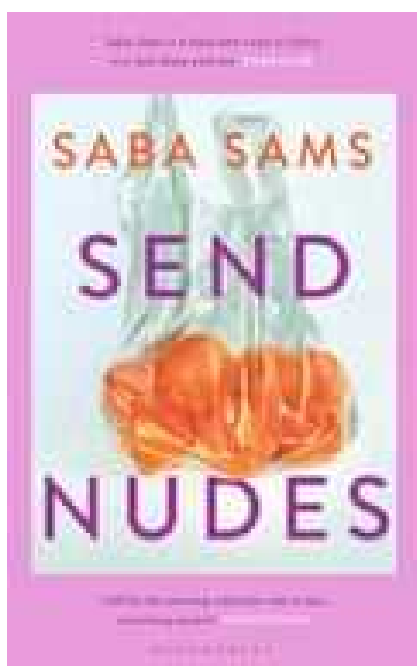
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Set in the Pyrenees and giving voice to everything from mountains to storms, mushrooms to dogs, English-language debut [When I Sing](#),

[Mountains Dance](#) by Irene Solà (Granta, translated from Catalan by Mara Faye Lethem) is a playful, polyphonic triumph. Closer to home, poet Clare Pollard's fiction debut, [Delphi](#) (Penguin), is an ingenious response to Covid, combining ancient Greek prophecy with the daily frustrations of lockdown to face up to our fears for the future. [Vladimir](#) by Julia May Jonas (Picador), a provocative post-MeToo morality tale about a female professor's crush on a younger man, is sharp and deliciously readable; as is the huge hit [Lessons in Chemistry](#) by Bonnie Garmus (Doubleday), which brings bite as well as charm to the tale of a super-rational scientist navigating sexism in early 60s America.



Three notable debut short-story collections introduced fresh, contemporary new voices. Saba Sams's unsettling, full-throated [Send Nudes](#) (Bloomsbury) captures girls and young women on the brink of change; Jem Calder's [Reward System](#) (Faber) smartly anatomises contemporary life in the relentless glare of the smartphone; and Gurnaik Johal's [We Move](#) (Serpent's Tail) delicately traces relationships and disconnections across a British-Punjabi community. Short-story virtuoso George Saunders returned to the form with [Liberation Day](#) (Bloomsbury), tragicomic allegories of try-hard regular folk caught up in hells beyond their understanding.

Emmanuel Carrère continues to spin his fascinating web of social observation and self-inquiry in [Yoga](#) (Cape, translated from French by John Lambert), charting personal and psychic upheaval in the wake of the Charlie Hebdo terrorist attack. Yiyun Li's richly mysterious [The Book of Goose](#) (4th Estate) marks a departure from her recent autofiction; but this tale of a passionate friendship between two young peasant girls in postwar France, and how they parse their shared will to create and to act upon the world, seems to hold many layers of truth about art, love and self-creation. Lastly, a small miracle from another genre-hopper: in [Marigold and Rose](#) (Carcenet), Nobel-winning poet Louise Glück presents the first year in the life of twin baby girls with formal and philosophical sleight of hand. This wry, read-in-a-sitting delight channels the myriad possibilities of fiction with a huge sense of fun.

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Best books 2022 Science fiction books

Five of the best science fiction and fantasy books of 2022

A deep space community, a compelling critique of empire, a UFO novel like no other and more

The best books of 2022



Illustration: Jonny Wan

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Sat 3 Dec 2022 04.00 EST Last modified on Sat 3 Dec 2022 04.04 EST



Deep Wheel Orcadia

Harry Josephine Giles (Picador)

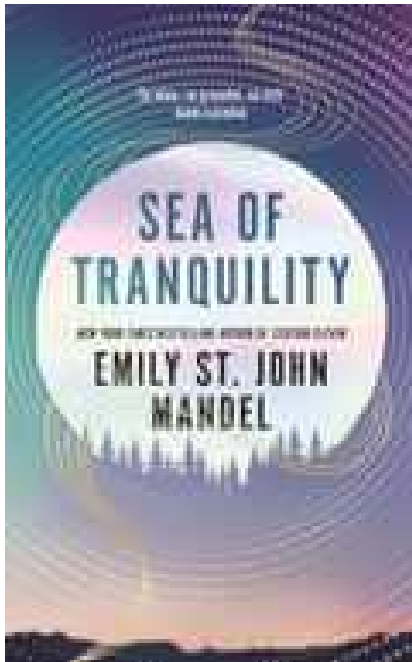
Winner of the 2022 Arthur C Clarke award, this is a remarkable feat of language and imagination: a verse novel written in Orcadian Scots, with a lively and inventive southern English translation running along the bottom of the pages. If that sounds forbidding or abstruse, it shouldn't: Deep Wheel Orcadia is a rattling read. Two characters arrive at the titular deep-space station: Astrid, returning from Mars to her childhood home; and Darling, who is on the run. They join "the thraan mixter-maxter o fock", a "tossedawkward mix of people" who work the station, mining a strange substance called Light from a nearby gas giant. The small wheel-world is cognate with Giles's native Orkney in relation to the mainland, and the book details their hard work and hard play: drink and dancing, love and belonging. There is marvellous language on every page, and if the plot is a little pat, the whole makes for an unforgettable engrossment in community and estrangement.



Babel

RF Kuang (HarperVoyager)

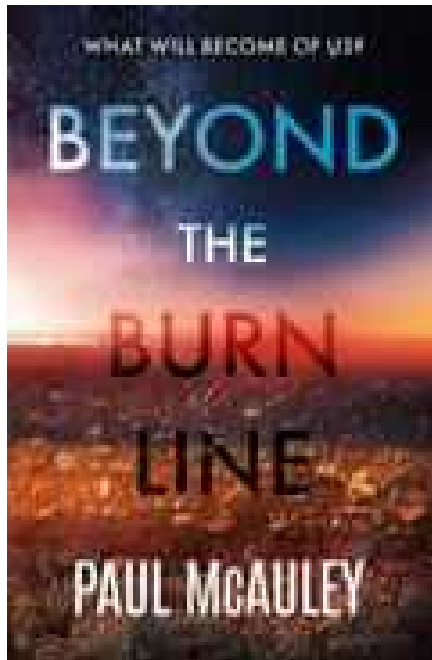
Kuang's bestselling alternative history is a complicated love letter to Oxford, encompassing both its beauty and its inescapable complicity with the horrors of imperialism. In the novel's version of 1828, Britain runs on magical "silver", and has used its power to conquer much of the world. Robin Swift, a Cantonese orphan brought to London by the mysterious Professor Lovell, is an enthusiastic student of languages, eager to enrol in Oxford's translation institute, the titular Babel. The novel is part fluently written narrative, part expert pastiche of academic writing (complete with footnotes) on matters linguistic and etymological. At the heart is a fascinating examination of the way translation works to bridge different languages and cultures by inevitably "traducing" them. A rich, compelling fable, with teeth.



[Sea of Tranquility](#)

Emily St John Mandel (Picador)

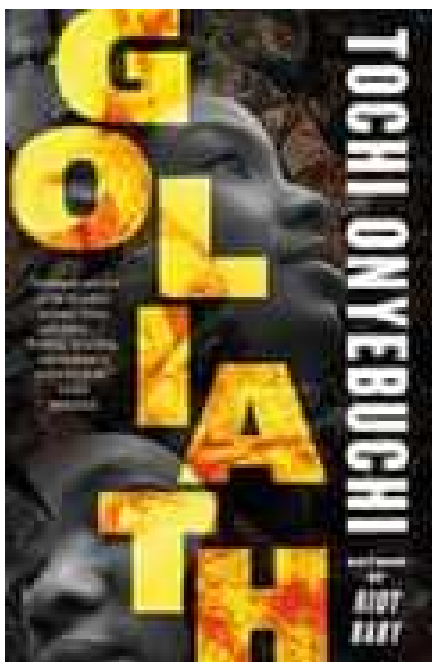
The author of [Station Eleven](#) weaves a cunning time-travel narrative from four main strands. Young Edwin St Andrew is crossing the Atlantic by steamship in 1912, leaving polite society for the desolate beauty of the Canadian wilderness; in the 23rd century, Olive Llewellyn travels from her moonbase home for a book tour on Earth promoting her latest novel, about a global pandemic; in 2020 a teenage girl called Vincent goes into the Vancouver woodland with a video camera. And in another century, detective Gaspery-Jacques Roberts, hired to investigate a mystery in the North American wilderness, begins to uncover how these timelines interconnect. The novel starts slowly, but builds an inexorable, unputdownable momentum as the various elements cohere: life and counterlife, reality and illusion, love and memory. Distinctive, remarkable work from one of the genre's major voices.



Beyond the Burn Line

Paul McAuley (Gollancz)

A UFO novel like no other. In McAuley's far future, lights in the sky and alien craft are being observed not by human beings, but by the uplifted forms of animal life that replaced us after our extinction. McAuley's evolved raccoons are beautifully written, their sane, balanced society a lens through which the failings of humankind are refracted. The slow-burn, immersive story so beguiles the reader that twists and plot reveals are kept effortlessly out of view until being unveiled with maximum effect. McAuley is, for my money, the best writer of SF in Britain today, and here he is at the top of his game.



Goliath

Tochi Onyebuchi (Tor)

A big, bold future history relating, in expertly orchestrated detail and scope, an exodus from a ruined Earth and the fate of those left behind. It's the 2050s, and the wealthy are abandoning the planet for more congenial lives in hi-tech space colonies. The poor struggle in the collapsing infrastructure as the rich buy up souvenirs of their old lives, shipping neighbourhoods offworld brick by brick. This is a structurally ambitious novel, fired up with righteous energy: Onyebuchi handles his kaleidoscopic narrative and large cast of characters with aplomb. Fundamentally a satire on gentrification, with space's "Final Frontier" styled as the new suburbs, *Goliath* is a giant achievement.

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Journeys through music, history, magic and more, plus the standout books for young adults

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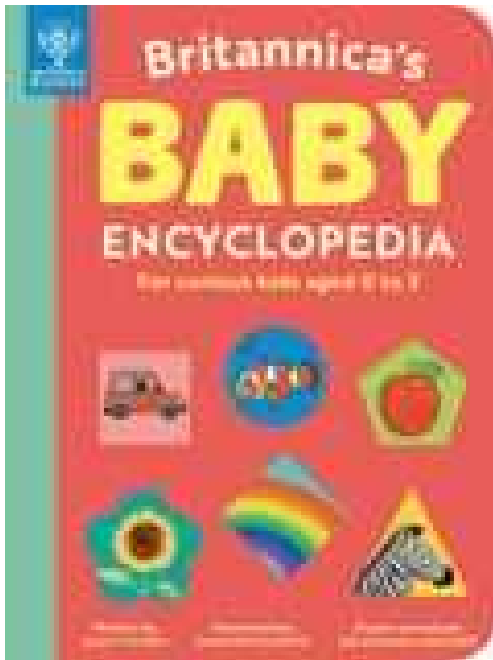
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[Imogen Russell Williams](#)

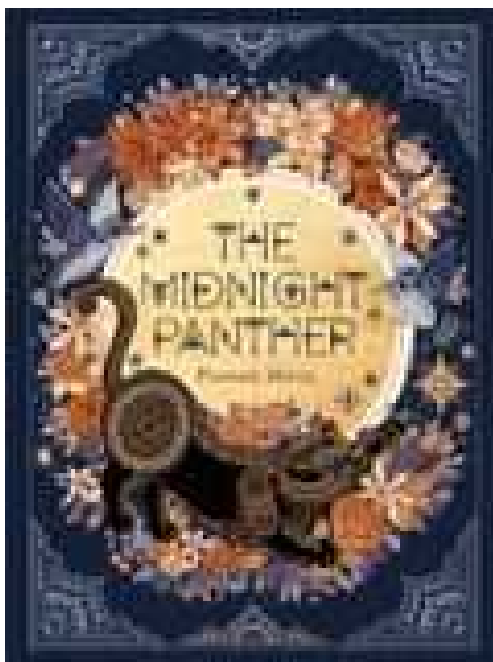
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Sat 3 Dec 2022 04.00 EST Last modified on Sat 3 Dec 2022 04.02 EST

This has been an outstanding year for children's literature, with conservationist, comic, reflective and adventurous books all finding enthralled readers. In picture books, [Britannica's Baby Encyclopedia](#) by Sally Symes, illustrated by Hanako Clulow, is aimed at 0-3. Filled with crowd-pleasing topics such as numbers, shapes, animals and food, this big, bright, thoughtfully curated board book is ideal for babies to leaf through (and for toddlers to demand their favourite sections over and over again).



A gorgeous fable of self-acceptance, [The Midnight Panther](#) by Poonam Mistry (Templar) follows small, shy Panther as he tries to emulate Lion's magnificent mane and Tiger's stripes before finding the courage to climb into the treetops and look out into the night, as dark and exquisite as he is. Mistry's simple, effective story and stunning geometric artwork, influenced by Indian textiles and traditional designs, make this a picture book to remember.



A thematic departure for Oliver Jeffers, though illustrated in his characteristic luminous style, [Meanwhile Back on Earth](#) (HarperCollins) uses a car trip and a sibling squabble as a springboard for a detour through the solar system – and a journey back through Earth’s history, focusing on human conflict. From Mercury, Venus and Jupiter, humanity’s wars over territory and resources look increasingly small in this gently challenging picture book for readers of perhaps 5+.

Or take a journey through the history of music-making in [Listen to the Music](#) by Mary Richards (Quarto), allowing children of 5+ to hear fragments of melody, ranging from a medieval hymn to a Mozart piano sonata, from classical Indian raga to 1940s bebop. Engagingly written, and illustrated with welcoming charm by Caroline Bonne-Müller, it encourages young listeners to examine their own musical responses.

[The Boy Who Lost His Spark](#) (Walker) by Maggie O’Farrell, meanwhile, is perfect for sharing with 6+ readers. Miserable about moving home, Jem dismisses his younger sister’s insistence that an impish “nouka” is living in their extinct volcano hill – but the nouka senses Jem needs some mischief to rekindle his own spark. This tender tale’s folkloric magic is heightened by Daniela Terrazzini’s atmospheric illustrations.



Listen to the Music by Mary Richards. Photograph: Quarto

Poetry lovers of six and up will find inspiration in the slim, wide-ranging [Courage in a Poem](#) (Little Tiger), an anthology exhorting young readers to face their fears and embrace their sense of self (as Cecilia Knapp says: “You are the perfect satsuma. You are the electric fizz of tangy sweets”). Featuring Victoria Adukwei Bulley, Elizabeth Acevedo and Jay Hulme, among others, it’s a thoughtful, joyous mood boost illustrated in vibrant colour by four different artists.

Inquiring readers of 7 or 8+ will relish [The Bedtime Book of Impossible Questions](#) by Isabel Thomas, illustrated by Aaron Cushley (Bloomsbury). Thomas explores fascinating conundrums, such as “Why am I me and not someone else?” and “How long would it take to count to infinity?”, and answers them with enough carefully gauged research to both satisfy and whet the reader’s appetite. Top-notch nonfiction from a profoundly accomplished author, it’s the sort of book that could ignite lifelong scientific curiosity.

Beautiful and compelling, the long-awaited [Tyger](#) by SF Said (David Fickling) is imbued with rapture and menace by Dave McKean’s chiaroscuro illustrations. Adam Alhambra lives in the Soho ghetto with the rest of London’s “foreigners” until one day he finds an extraordinary being: a wounded celestial tyger. She needs Adam’s help, as well as his friend Zadie’s, but to save her they must unlock their own dangerous, secret inner powers ... Set in an alternative Britain where oppression and division have driven out joy, compassion and creativity, *Tyger* is both a riveting 9+ adventure and a fable layered with meaning.



The Boy Who Lost His Spark by Maggie O'Farrell and Daniela Terrazzini
Photograph: Walker

Another beautiful book with an allegorical animal theme, [Leila and the Blue Fox](#) by Kiran Millwood Hargrave (Hachette) intertwines the journeys of Miso, a migratory Arctic fox, and Leila, who left Syria to make a new home in England and is now trying to reconnect with her scientist mother in Norway. Navigating sub-zero temperatures and the gulf that's grown between them, Leila and her mum find healing and hope as they follow Miso's courageous path. This ambitious novel for 9+, including Tom de Freston's glimmering illustrations, deals sensitively and powerfully with trauma, conservationism and displacement.

Lastly, [The Tale of Truthwater Lake](#) by Emma Carroll (Faber) follows Polly, living through a heatwave in 2032, as she discovers a drowned village revealed by drought and finds herself transported back to 1952, when the village was first flooded. Combining the gripping story of an indomitable young swimmer with quiet observations on the impact of human activity, this intensely readable novel shows the 9+ reader a vision of the past through a thought-provoking near-future lens.

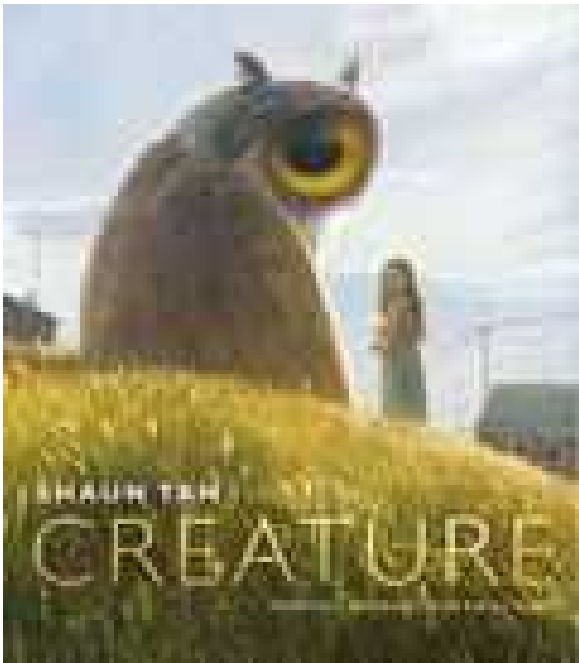
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Young adults



[Creature](#)

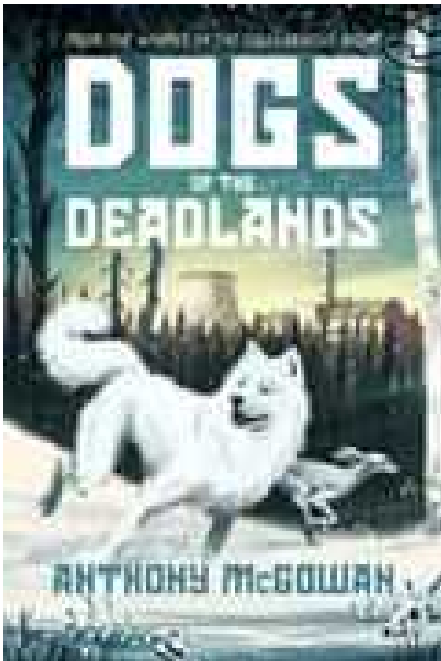
Shaun Tan, Walker Studio

From the creator of *The Arrival* and *The Lost Thing*, this huge compendium of “paintings, drawings and reflections” is filled with Tan’s “odd little interlopers” – the mysterious creatures he has drawn since childhood that populate the pages of his published work and sketchbooks, “more humane for not being human”. Its absorbing philosophical commentary and unsettling, bizarre, delightful beings will appeal to imaginative, artistic 12+ dreamers.

Dogs of the Deadlands

Anthony McGowan, illustrated by Keith Robinson, Rock the Boat

When the Chernobyl disaster happened, the people living nearby were forced to abandon their pets. Now pups Misha and Bratan are growing up wild with danger on all sides and face the threat of starvation and attack. Will they ever again have contact with humans? Best for readers of 12 and up, this visceral story of heartbreak and survival, complemented by Robinson's sharp images, has the memorable feel of a classic such as *White Fang* or *Watership Down*.



The Collectors

Philip Pullman, illustrated by Tom Duxbury, Penguin

This short, disquieting tale, heightened by Duxbury's linocut illustrations, has the feel of an MR James ghost story, complete with college setting, unsettling painting – and mysterious deaths. Featuring an early incarnation of Marisa Coulter, it's a perfect stocking filler for 12+ His Dark Materials fans.

Five Survive

Holly Jackson, HarperCollins

Six teenagers are road-tripping in an RV, on their way to the beach for spring break, until their tyres are shot out and they're faced with an ultimatum from the unseen marksman. One of them is keeping a deadly secret – and unless they surrender themselves, all six are marked for death ... A nail-biting thrill ride for 14+ from the author of *A Good Girl's Guide to Murder*.

Well, That Was Unexpected

Jesse Q Sutanto, Electric Monkey

When 17-year-old Sharlot Citra gets caught in a compromising position, she's shipped off to Indonesia for the summer, her phone confiscated. And when George Clooney Tanuwijaya – no relation – *also* gets caught in a compromising position, his wealthy, influential family decides he needs a well-behaved girlfriend to get him back on track. Accidentally drawn together by their parents' catfishing, can Sharlot and George possibly have a chance at a real relationship? A hilarious, heartwarming YA novel, part delightful romcom, part love song to Indonesia.

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2022.12.03 - Opinion

- The reality of Brexit is biting hard. Poor people are suffering most – and now everyone can see it
- Harry and Meghan are showing the royal family how brand management is done
- England doesn't expect much these days, except when it comes to the World Cup
- Cartoon Martin Rowson: sinking the unsinkable

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The reality of Brexit is biting hard. Poor people are suffering most – and now everyone can see it

[Jonathan Freedland](#)



We are paying £6bn more just to eat. After years of abstract debate, the human consequences of our exit become clearer by the day



‘Leave campaigners knew reality was a hostile environment for the Brexit project, one that would expose its folly.’ Photograph: Francisco Seco/AP

Fri 2 Dec 2022 12.50 EST Last modified on Fri 2 Dec 2022 16.40 EST

Enveloped in Westminster silence it may be, but every day and in every way Brexit is getting more real. For so long, this was an argument made through the medium of abstract nouns: “freedom”, “sovereignty”, “control”. But now reality is intruding. This week came word that Brexit added [almost £6bn to Britons’ food bills](#) over a two-year period, and that it was the households with least that were affected most. There’s a reason politicians refer to “bread-and-butter issues”: because there is nothing abstract about food and what it costs.

Looking back, it was always a tell that leave campaigners sought to avoid the realm of the concrete, preferring to stick with intangible talk of “independence” or a regained mastery of our national destiny. They knew reality was a hostile environment for the [Brexit](#) project, one that would expose its folly. Remainers tried to resist, hoping not to fight on the battlefield of dreams but on the terrain of facts and figures, yet it never worked. It just made them sound boring, casting them as spoilsport bean-counters and, besides, all their numbers were themselves abstractions – projections of a hypothetical future. The forecasts of gloom could be, and were, swatted aside as “project fear”.

What's more, the Brexiters offered material reassurance to those who wanted a dash of concrete mixed in with the vision and romance. They promised there would be an extra £350m a week for the NHS. Britain outside the EU would enjoy the "[exact same benefits](#)" it had inside. Daily life wouldn't just be the same, it would be much better. In 2019, three years after the referendum, [Jacob Rees-Mogg was very specific](#): "I can see the opportunities of cheaper food, clothing and footwear, helping most of all the incomes of the least well-off in our society."

Cheaper food, he said. We no longer need to rely on either the promises of one side or the projections of the other to determine whether Rees-Mogg was right or wrong about that. Instead we have hard numbers and our own eyes. This week's research by the London School of Economics (LSE) found that, thanks not to the war in Ukraine or the pandemic or "global factors", but explicitly to all the extra red tape incurred by Brexit, the cost of food imported from the EU added a total of £210 to the average household's grocery bill over 2020 and 2021: a 6% increase in that period.

Because poorer families spend a larger share of what little they have on food, that £210 Brexit levy has hit them disproportionately hard. You only have to read the Guardian's [heat or eat diaries](#) to see the impact of rising prices. "I have been stockpiling food for some time," [Londoner Sharron Spice](#) wrote this week. "Tinned vegetables, soups, tuna, fish, corned beef ... I have to rotate my tins to make sure they're in date."

It's not as if there isn't enough food to go around. An estimated 7bn meals [went to waste](#) this year, with farmers citing Brexit – and the resulting shortage of fruit and veg pickers – as a key factor. The National Farmers' Union found some [40% of its members had lost crops](#) because they didn't have enough people to bring in the harvest. Those shortfalls used to be met by seasonal workers coming in from the continent, but Brexit has shut them out – and so perfectly edible food is left to rot.



‘The National Farmers’ Union found some 40% of its members had lost crops because they didn’t have enough people to bring in the harvest.’
Photograph: MediaWorldImages/Alamy

Bit by bit, reality is succeeding where rhetoric (and statistical projections) failed. No longer are opponents of Brexit forced to make the case that in a world as interconnected as ours, cutting ties makes no sense. Or that walling yourself off from a trading bloc made up of your nearest neighbours – so that it is harder both to sell your stuff and buy their stuff – is obvious economic lunacy. Reality is making that case instead, day in and day out.

If it’s not at the kitchen table, it’s at the hospital, where strain on the NHS – in the form of those same staff shortages – has been “exacerbated by the Brexit vote”, according to [Nuffield Trust research](#) published this week. An [earlier Nuffield report](#) found that, “The situation in social care is the most urgent”, with the halt in EU migration barring would-be care workers from coming to this country to help.

Or it may be at the airport, where British holidaymakers are now required to queue for hours where once, armed with their old maroon passports, they could breeze through – so losing a precious chunk of their hard-earned annual break. Or it may be at the ferry terminal, where UK musicians who once earned a decent living performing on the continent now find [Brexit has](#)

[blocked their path](#). In myriad ways, the material experience of Britain's departure from the European Union, and, especially, the single market, is doing the job of persuasion that remainers and their arguments tried but failed.

As reality does its work, even those previously sympathetic to the Brexit cause look at it through new eyes. Suddenly the various stats that were once a blur begin to form a pattern. If you're running a small business that used to be able to get a product into, say, the Netherlands in two days and [now finds it takes 21 days](#), then you get why the number of trade relationships between the UK and EU has [fallen by a third](#) – and you understand why the Office for Budget Responsibility calculates that Brexit alone will make Britain [4% worse off](#). That 4% translates into roughly [£100bn less cash](#) generated each year, £40bn less tax revenue – and therefore £40bn less spent on schools, hospitals and all the things we collectively, and desperately, need.

This is why [support for Brexit is plunging](#), each survey setting a record new low. The Conservatives' decline in the polls both reflects and reinforces the trend because, in the eyes of the voters, Brexit was always a Tory project. The fortunes of the two are tied together. Given that September's mini-budget torched the Tory reputation for economic competence, it's bound to have affected public judgment of their signature achievement. Britons felt in their own pockets the impact of Liz Truss's incompetence: for those who once trusted the party that chose her, that makes the Conservatives' insistence that Brexit will all work out in the end ring newly hollow.

Long before the pandemic, plenty of liberal commentators and others were warning of the dangers of the new post-truth age. [We did our best](#), but we could tell it was not fully cutting through. It was all a bit too abstract. Then Covid struck and suddenly people saw with great clarity that truth can be the difference between life and death: when an American president muses out loud on the possible virus-killing benefits of [injecting bleach](#), that fact is hard to miss. What was hazy in theory can become sharply clear in practice.

The national argument over Brexit has shifted from abstractions and promises to a cold, increasingly hard reality. For their own reasons, our politicians are silent on it now. But the reality is getting harder to ignore – and every day it gets louder.

- Jonathan Freedland is a Guardian columnist

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[Opinion](#)**Monarchy**

Harry and Meghan are showing the royal family how brand management is done

[Gaby Hinsliff](#)



As the Sussexes unveil a slick Netflix series, the Windsors are struggling with accusations of racism at a palace reception



An image showing the Duke and Duchess of Sussex from the upcoming Netflix documentary Harry & Meghan. Photograph: Courtesy of Prince Harry and Meghan/AP

Fri 2 Dec 2022 12.35 ESTLast modified on Fri 2 Dec 2022 15.17 EST

If ever there were a love story for the Instagram age, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex's beautifully chronicled romance is the one. Here they are, in a series of pictures from their private album released to promote next week's six-part [Netflix documentary](#) on their relationship, sitting atop a Jeep on what looks like their first holiday together. Here he is, serenading her on the guitar. Then the two of them, impossibly glamorous, spinning joyously around the dancefloor at their wedding; and her on a beach, pregnant and delightfully cradling the bump, against an almost too perfect sunset.

Couple goals, luxury travel, a baby: that's all the influencer boxes ticked. But perhaps the most telling image shows them late at night in their kitchen, just in from an official engagement. Harry has stripped off his dress jacket and is kissing Meghan, who is perched on the counter in an evening gown; it's sexy, dishevelled and achingly intimate, at least until you ask yourself how precisely there came to be a photographer handy to capture it.

But, of course, this is the Sussexes as they want the world to see them: young and in love, happy and free, defiantly enjoying the fairytale romance that unleashed such baffling hatred in some quarters when Meghan first married into the royal family. After the [death threats](#) and the trolls, the pressures that left her feeling suicidal and him terrified of losing her, like he lost his mother, it's not surprising that they are so anxious to take back control and overwrite the ugliness with something beautiful. They may be presenting a highly stage-managed version of themselves to the world, but isn't that what royalty has always sought to do? It's just that, lately, the slick Sussex brand looks rather better at it than the established market leader.

It's been another terrible week for the royal family, once again accused of harbouring racism within the institution after a Black female guest at a reception hosted by Camilla, the Queen Consort, said she was [persistently questioned](#) by a lady-in-waiting about where she was "really" from. A Black woman, invited into the heart of the family but made to feel profoundly unwelcome? Well, that rings too many bells for comfort.

"Meghan already told you [who those people are](#)," tweeted the American writer and activist Roxane Gay, after the domestic violence campaigner Ngozi Fulani came forward to describe her experiences. When it was only Meghan's word against the palace's about the racism she claimed to have experienced, she could more easily be dismissed as simply difficult, especially once she was herself accused of bullying palace staff. Not any more.



A screengrab from the trailer for the Netflix documentary Harry & Meghan.
Photograph: Netflix

The speed with which the palace distanced itself from the veteran lady-in-waiting [Lady Susan Hussey](#) suggests it does at least recognise how damaging all this is. King Charles has, to be fair, spent years thinking deeply about how to modernise the monarchy, appealing to younger Britons at home and dealing with the painful legacy of empire within the Commonwealth. But the Firm now appears to have hit that painful stage of corporate evolution when an organisation knows it needs to diversify, but is aghast to discover that means it actually has to change, rather than making a few token adjustments and blithely carrying on much as before.

Her defenders argue that 83-year-old Hussey's mistake was simply being born into an era where such comments were deemed perfectly acceptable. "Her sin, if there was one, was being old," writes the journalist and family friend [Petronella Wyatt](#) in the Spectator. "Most pensioners are unfamiliar with the wonders of woke etiquette." But Hussey was not most pensioners. She was a professional at work, whose role was to put every guest entering what can be an intimidatingly grand environment at their ease, and that requires the ability to move with the times.

Every guest invited to the palace is there because their work is deemed important to the nation, and the institution is responsible for ensuring they all go home with a magical story to tell their grandchildren. Diversifying the guest list is commendable – no doubt there weren't many Black women from Hackney on it when Hussey joined the court 60 years ago – but it isn't progress if it means people turning up only to be insulted. Which brings us, inevitably, back to Meghan.

Six years after the Olympic opening ceremony beguiled liberal Britain into thinking we really were the relaxed, modern, richly multicultural country we saw on screen, the sight of the royal family embracing a mixed-race princess raised our hopes again. To watch that wedding at which a Black bishop [preached passionately](#) about poverty, hunger and war, while Prince Charles gamely stepped in for her absent father to walk Meghan up the aisle, was to feel the cobwebs blowing away. Barely two years later, however, the unhappy Sussexes had decamped to the US leaving a trail of shattered illusions behind them.

Is the life they have now really the one they sought by leaving? Both seem faintly fragile still, and there are risks to the Faustian pact they have seemingly entered into with the media by mining their private lives for content. Netflix presumably isn't paying the big bucks just for a charming flip through the wedding album – a trailer shows Meghan apparently in tears – and nor are the publishers of Harry's [bleakly titled autobiography, Spare](#). No matter how much they think they are in control, Brand Sussex are content creators now and the pressure on them to keep revealing more and more of themselves to hold the attention of a restlessly scrolling audience will be relentless.

But then, having had his life commodified for public consumption from the cradle, perhaps Harry is used to that. What this week has underlined, meanwhile, is that the royal family arguably needed Meghan more than she needed them. She and Harry were always a creaking Windsor brand's best hope of renewal, its way into the hearts of a young, diverse, emotionally literate and politically aware new generation of Britons who still haven't warmed in quite the same way to the [new Prince and Princess of Wales](#) and who recoil in horror from stories like this week's. After all the dust has

settled, Meghan still has her Prince Charming. The Windsors, battling against a future of dwindling cultural relevance, are still searching for their happy ending.

- Gaby Hinsliff is a Guardian columnist
- ***Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please [click here](#).***

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[OpinionWorld Cup 2022](#)

England doesn't expect much these days, except when it comes to the World Cup

[Marina Hyde](#)



The country is riven by political incompetence and economic distress so expectations are low for everyone bar Gareth Southgate and his players



‘It’s notable that England’s national football side is almost the last area of the public realm of which some people still have the highest expectations.’

Illustration: Cameron Law

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Fri 2 Dec 2022 11.09 EST Last modified on Fri 2 Dec 2022 13.34 EST

Well. About last night ... to describe the conclusion of the group stages of this World Cup as crazy feels a bit like calling the residents of Arkham Asylum merely eccentric. For three minutes on Thursday, Costa Rica's lead over Germany would have meant Spain were heading home, with the coach Luis Enrique mercifully in the dark about this potential outcome. "If I'd have known," [he reflected mildly](#), afterwards, "I would have had a heart attack." It was certainly the evening for it.

ITV's Graeme Souness appeared to be suffering from a number of baroque medical conditions as he "analysed" the notion that the ball did not go out of play before Japan's crucial second goal against Spain. Graeme's conniption swiftly tipped over into such deep conspiracy theory that he is expected to follow his stint in Qatar with a secondment to Donald Trump's stop-the-steal campaign. "Why have we not seen the evidence?" the studio's Oliver Stone kept demanding rhetorically.

Should Souness find the siren call of US wingnuttery impossible to resist before the end of this tournament, he could perhaps be more competently replaced by any one of the rush of viewers who created their own at-home videos showing a ball which from one angle looked like it was wholly in their kitchen, but from another angle was actually revealed to still have an edge crossing over on to their living room carpet. Witchcraft. Sheer witchcraft.

Quick Guide

Qatar: beyond the football

Show



This is a World Cup like no other. For the last 12 years the Guardian has been reporting on the issues surrounding Qatar 2022, from corruption and human rights abuses to the treatment of migrant workers and discriminatory laws. The best of our journalism is gathered on our dedicated [Qatar: Beyond the Football](#) home page for those who want to go deeper into the issues beyond the pitch.

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Photograph: Caspar Benson

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Then again, it has all been highly watchable. Only Fifa could survey the WTF-fuelled mayhem of this World Cup's group stages and be entertaining talks to abandon the four-team format. Sporticidal maniac [Gianni Infantino has been spearheading these discussions since 2016](#), when he rubber-stamped the 48-team World Cup as part of his organisation's absolute commitment to the principle of quantity not quality. As things stand, plans have been under way to move instead to groups of three teams, with possible penalty shootouts to stop countries playing for results that favour them both.

If you can't have *quite* the level of financial corruption you enjoyed for decades, then I guess you scratch the itch by corrupting the product instead. That said, more teams mean more money, so in Fifa terms you get a twofer. There are now [hints that this sensationally appalling idea might be up for reconsideration](#), with backroom discussions in Qatar apparently increasingly open to the notion of four-team groups again, meaning the 2026 World Cup would clock in at just the 104 games.



Honestly, who'd be Gareth Southgate? Photograph: Adam Davy/PA

Anyway, all that is for another day, because [England](#) play Senegal in the round of 16 on Sunday, and the buildup finds The Country That Gave Football To The World TM managing its expectations like it manages its economy. Honestly, who'd be Gareth Southgate? The sheer intensity of the ire directed at England's most successful manager since Alf Ramsey has for some time suggested that its most aggressive proponents are angry about a vast constellation of other things for which Southgate and his team serve as a convenient proxy.

It's notable that England's national football side is almost the last area of the public realm of which some people still have the highest expectations. Trust in every other institution has drained away over the past decade and beyond, with pretty much the last thing "England expects" being for England to win

the [World Cup](#). Arguably the most striking thing about the often-grotesque failures of state during the pandemic was the relative indifference to them. The country deserved better – of course it did – but what initially saved the Johnson administration was that the country clearly did not expect better. That distinctly declinist state of affairs meant that it was ultimately Boris Johnson's lying which did for him, and much later than a number of much deadlier charges might have done in a state with the luxury of higher standards.

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Johnson's mayfly successor Liz Truss and her chancellor, Kwasi Kwarteng, famously unveiled a budget that led the former US treasury chief Larry Summers to observe: "The UK is behaving a bit like an emerging market turning itself into a submerging market." Which is, at least, partway to it being just like watching Brazil. Although England (the country, not the football side) is unfortunately not even demonstrating any of the emerging market characteristics of high growth, high productivity, an expanding middle-class ... maybe we've just got the fantastically-high-expectations-in-football bit. Hey – it's a start.

In fact, for the preceding two major tournaments, it has been possible to observe tartly that England are one of those countries who can be described as "playing on despite the political turmoil back home". This World Cup doesn't look likely to have broken that run so far – although now they are entering the business end of their draw it does feel as if it would take an awful lot of luck for Southgate's side to appease the section of the fanbase which believes a World Cup win is the very least they could do, actually. A number of our madder notions of exceptionalism are in the process of being

quietly abandoned after several years of wanton political and economic self-harm – perhaps football will end up the last remaining bastion of the tendency.

If it does all go tits-up for England on Sunday or beyond, maybe a quick stint on *I'm A Celebrity* could rehabilitate Southgate in the public imagination for his hideous crime of possibly making substitutions too slowly. After all, a mere three weeks on the show took the infinitely greater transgressor Matt Hancock all the way to the threshold of the jungle throne in the public vote. It's a funny old country, isn't it? It would take more than a few homemade fan videos to penetrate its enduring mysteries. And I think, on balance, that I'd prefer a full-blown Souness conspiracy theory to explain them than the rather less palatable reality.

Marina Hyde's World Cup Week will appear each Friday during the tournament

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[Guardian Opinion cartoon](#)

[Rishi Sunak](#)

Martin Rowson: sinking the unsinkable – cartoon

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2022.12.03 - Around the world

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[China](#)

China continues lifting Covid restrictions despite near-record case numbers

Testing booths removed in Beijing as cities across China ease commuter rules following unprecedented protests



The easing of Covid restrictions has gathered pace in the days following nationwide protests in China. Photograph: Thomas Peter/Reuters

Reuters

Sat 3 Dec 2022 00.40 ESTLast modified on Sat 3 Dec 2022 00.44 EST

Covid-19 testing booths were removed in Beijing on Friday, while Shenzhen followed other cities in announcing it would no longer require commuters to present their test results to travel, as an easing of Covid restrictions in [China](#) gathered pace.

As daily cases hovered near all-time highs, some cities took steps to loosen coronavirus testing requirements and quarantine rules as China looks to make its zero-Covid policy more targeted amid [an economic slowdown](#) and [public frustration that has boiled over into unrest](#).

Cities including Guangzhou and Beijing have taken the lead in making changes.

On Saturday, the southern city of Shenzhen announced it would no longer require people to show a negative Covid test result to use public transport or enter parks, after similar moves by Chengdu and Tianjin, among China's biggest cities.

Many testing booths in Beijing were shut as the capital stopped demanding negative test results as a condition to enter places such as supermarkets. On Monday, this rule will apply to subways, although many other venues including offices still have the requirement.

A video showing workers in Beijing removing a testing booth by crane on to a truck went viral on Chinese social media on Friday.

Some Beijing neighbourhoods posted guidelines on social media on how positive cases can be quarantined at home, a landmark move that marks a break from official guidance to send such people to central quarantine.

China is set to announce a further nationwide reduction in testing requirements.

The country began tweaking its approach last month, urging localities to become more targeted.

A deadly apartment fire last month in the far-western city of Urumqi sparked [dozens of protests against Covid curbs](#) in a wave unprecedented in mainland China since the president, Xi Jinping, took power in 2012.

Xi, during a meeting with European Union officials in Beijing on Thursday, is said to have blamed the mass protests on youth frustrated by years of the

pandemic, but said the now-dominant Omicron variant of the virus [paved the way for fewer restrictions](#).

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[Analysis](#)

China's easing of Covid curbs does not solve Xi Jinping's dilemma

[Emma Graham-Harrison](#)

Loosening controls further could spark a devastating outbreak, but tightening the rules again could trigger unrest



A woman wearing a face mask rides a bicycle in Beijing under a large television screen showing President Xi Jinping. Photograph: Mark Schiefelbein/AP

Sat 3 Dec 2022 03.00 EST

At the end of October, [Xi Jinping](#) had secured his position as China's most powerful leader in decades, his grip on the country cemented by a norm-breaking third term in office.

At the end of November, he faced the most [widespread protests](#) China had seen in decades, mostly focused on Covid restrictions but also featuring unprecedented calls for Xi to [step down](#).

It was an extraordinary juxtaposition of political authority and vulnerability within the space of a month, and one that no one inside or outside the country had foreseen.

China's hi-tech surveillance network and punitive laws make anonymous protest almost impossible and the cost of coming on to the streets extremely high. Security forces equipped with facial recognition and other artificial intelligence software can comb through footage of protests. They have apparently started turning up at the homes and colleges of some who take part.

Beijing clearly recognised the fury and frustration that drove these public demonstrations, because it has [responded with concessions](#). Across the country, authorities have lifted controls that were deployed with zealous conviction as part of Xi's personal commitment to zero Covid.

Citizens in some cities have suddenly found they can catch a bus, get on the metro or enter a mall without needing a recent negative PCR test, while elsewhere those potentially exposed can avoid lockdowns or serve quarantine at home.

This loosening offers only a very temporary solution to the dilemma that China's leader now faces, however. And it is one that his ruthless accumulation of personal power will not help him solve.

If Xi allows further easing of controls, China risks being plunged into a devastating national Covid outbreak that would probably claim tens of thousands of lives at best – hundreds of thousands at worst – and temporarily overwhelm a patchy health system.

After nearly three years of isolation from the world and from Covid, China's population is extremely vulnerable to the disease, with almost no natural immunity. A [lacklustre vaccination programme](#), using domestic vaccines

that are not as effective or long-lasting as those developed in the west, has not done enough to bolster those defences.

Just two-thirds of people have had a booster shot, and less than half of over-80s. The government is pushing to address this but Covid is likely to spread at a rate that outpaces even China's impressive mobilisation abilities. That could in itself cause a popular backlash.

Yet if Xi reverts to heavy-handed attempts to eradicate Covid, the unrest could begin again. It could also be a trigger for anger about other grievances, in a country beset by perhaps the most serious array of political and economic challenges in a generation.

Growth has slowed, against a backdrop of the global financial crisis and Chinese Covid-related isolation. The tech sector has been hamstrung by US chip sanctions. Unemployment has soared, with one in five young people out of work in cities, while overall the population is [ageing fast and may soon start to decline](#), leaving those young people who do have jobs responsible for supporting a ballooning cohort of retirees.

The property sector, into which so many poured their life savings because of a shortage of other investment outlets, is [in crisis](#).

China's leader has not publicly acknowledged the demonstrations, but reportedly spoke about them in a meeting with the visiting European Council president, Charles Michel, on Friday. He told the EU delegation that those who turned out were mostly "frustrated students", the [South China Morning Post](#) reported. He described Omicron as less deadly than Delta, which diplomats interpreted as paving the way for further easing of restrictions.

This may ultimately be a sign of confidence. The security apparatus has largely headed off further demonstrations this week, flooding protest sites before crowds could gather and seeking out for intimidation those who attended last week.

Xi has a firm grip on the military, after stacking the top ranks with loyalists. Ultimately, if a deployment of brute force is required to stay in control, there is no reason to think Xi – who has presided over a campaign of extraordinarily harsh repression in the Xinjiang region – would have any compunction about deploying it, even if he and other leaders would prefer to use other methods.

“Xi and the party will face a lot of headwinds,” said Steve Tsang, the director of the Soas China Institute in London. “But short of a perfect storm, the chance is that Xi should be able to keep things under control.

“Xi is trying to use intimidation, actual or implied, to deter people from protesting or organising themselves in way that may pose challenges to the party state, and then seek to remove some of the sources for such protest. But he also has a backup, which is to use force, at various levels, to repress.”

Neighbouring North Korea, an isolated, impoverished fortress country, was [referenced by some protesters](#) as the future they wanted to avoid. However, it may offer another lesson for China’s communist leadership – that dictators do not necessarily require a thriving economy, or public support, to stay in power if they have tight control over their country and a monopoly on use of force.

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[China](#)

[Analysis](#)

Zero-Covid policy is costing China its role as the world's workshop

[Martin Farrer](#)

Beijing's endless lockdowns are causing shortages for western firms such as Apple, and it may not be long before they move their supply chains elsewhere



Epidemic control workers in Beijing trying to prevent the spread of Covid-19 on 2 December. Photograph: Kevin Frayer/Getty Images

Sat 3 Dec 2022 03.00 ESTLast modified on Sat 3 Dec 2022 03.12 EST

The anti-lockdown unrest gripping [China](#) has forced the authorities in Beijing to respond by easing some restrictions in big manufacturing centres, as they map out a “new stage and mission” in the country’s deeply unpopular zero-Covid policy.

There are concerns that more freedom of movement could allow the virus to rip through a population where immunity is lower than in the west. Those health risks mean the “world’s workshop” is heading for a difficult winter, casting a shadow over the prospects for international trade.

Western companies have learned lessons from the first wave of lockdowns, and some may be better prepared, but for others, at a time when supply chains are still recovering from nearly three years of on-off pandemic problems, there is trouble ahead.

Apple has already [warned of Christmas shortages](#). Now analysts say the recent shutdown of Foxconn’s huge iPhone factory in Zhengzhou could have cost Apple a third of its Christmas inventory.

“It is a debacle of epic proportions for [Apple](#),” says Dan Ives of US data research firm Wedbush. “In many Apple stores we are seeing major iPhone 14 Pro shortages of up to 35% or 40% of typical inventory heading into December. The Chinese supply chain is the Grinch that stole Christmas. Shortages are eye-popping.”

Apple is not the only company affected; logistics and transport data indicate a general production slowdown. Last week, road and rail shipments in China dropped by 36%, according to the supply chain data firm FourKites. Chinese shipping to the US has continued to decline and is down 34% compared with earlier in the year.

As a result, [car manufacturers are seeing a shortage of supply from China](#), which could make it even harder to find a new car in the UK. Honda has paused production at its factory in Wuhan, while Volkswagen said this week it had been forced to suspend making vehicles at its facility in Chengdu because of a rising number of Covid cases. The German carmaker has also placed two of the five production lines at its Changchun plant on hold because of a shortage of parts.



The production line at a Dongfeng Honda car plant in Wuhan, Hubei province. Honda is among the manufacturers whose output has been hit by Beijing's zero-Covid policy. Photograph: AFP/Getty

Although some factories may reopen now that the Chinese government is easing lockdowns [in manufacturing hubs like Guangzhou](#), Ives says the latest flare-up of problems could be the “straw that breaks the camel’s back” for western companies’ relationship with suppliers in the world’s second largest economy.

For executives in Apple’s Cupertino headquarters, having spent billions of dollars on building a state-of-the-art assembly system in China, the ongoing, unsustainable problems and lack of visibility on policy from Beijing are a “gut punch”, Ives adds.

“This is going to have strategic long-term impact for Apple, Tesla and other companies that rely on China for the chip supply chain. I think there is shock within Apple. Cupertino has been able to navigate the zero-Covid situation better than any other company. But for this to happen to Apple in the Christmas season is a gut punch.”

Ives said Apple was unlikely to “just accept it and move on” and expected the company to accelerate moves to shift some of its operations to other

countries such as Vietnam and India.

A wider shift away from reliance on China has already begun, encouraged by the Donald Trump-led trade wars with China and the pandemic disruptions of the past three years.

Mark Swift of Make UK, the UK manufacturers' lobby group, said those supply chain snarl-ups had already played havoc with British companies, making it difficult to measure the impact the latest difficulties would have.

But he warned that six out of 10 companies surveyed by Make UK thought supply chain problems were the biggest risk to their businesses. As a result, more companies were beginning to move away from the fabled "just in time" system of supply management to one best described as "just in case".

"That's a significant change to business models," he said. "They can't afford to have their supply chains solely in China. They'd rather have components coming from Manchester or Munich."

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Flavio Romero Macau, associate professor of business at Edith Cowan University in Western Australia and an expert on supply chains, said the final outcome would depend on how well China managed the next few months of Covid outbreaks.

He points to China's very low rate of cases – currently of 218 per million (0.02% of the population) – which is likely to rise if the zero-Covid policy is

eased. Hong Kong, for example, has a rate of 228,415 cases per million (22.8% of the population).

“China will eventually catch up with Hong Kong,” he says, because zero-Covid is “unsustainable” – a view shared by many western experts. “That’s a potential 322 million cases, most of them expected to be mild – 99.8% if it reflects world statistics.”



Protesters hold up a sign and sheets of blank paper at the University of Hong Kong campus in solidarity with demonstrations in mainland China against strict Covid restrictions. Photograph: Yan Zhao/AFP/Getty

Much would depend on Beijing’s ability to keep control of any outbreak, or whether Covid spreads more rapidly through China than it has so far.

The former would mean mild supply chain disruption, but the latter scenario could mean “a sharp increase in absenteeism that ceases manufacturing capacity for a time”, says Romero Macau. “The risk of a major disruption is high, with supply chains paralysed for a few weeks.”

The wider impact on China’s own economy, which has already been hit by a slump in its huge property sector and is growing more slowly than at any time for 35 years, could also be important.

Dennis Unkovic, a US corporate lawyer, trade expert and author of Transforming the Global Supply Chain, said it was becoming clear to companies that “China is much more vulnerable overall than most western observers had predicted”.

“The Xi-enforced closures of cities throughout China have severely impacted the Chinese economy,” he said. “This has affected more than just the growth potential of the Chinese economy. The closures have exacerbated the ongoing fracturing of the global supply chain.”

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Coronavirus

WHO estimates 90% of world have some resistance to Covid

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has warned gaps in vigilance are leaving space for a troubling new variant to emerge



The World Health Organization estimates that 90% of the global population has some resistance to Covid. Photograph: Andrew Harnik/AP

Agence France-Presse

Fri 2 Dec 2022 22.58 EST

The [World Health Organization](#) estimates that 90% of the world population now has some resistance to Covid-19, but warned that a troubling new variant could still emerge.

Gaps in vigilance were leaving the door open for a new virus variant to appear and overtake the globally dominant Omicron, the WHO director

general, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, said.

“WHO estimates that at least 90% of the world’s population now has some level of immunity to Sars-CoV-2, due to prior infection or vaccination,” said Tedros, referring to the virus that causes the Covid-19 disease.

“We are much closer to being able to say that the emergency phase of the pandemic is over – but we’re not there yet,” he told reporters.

“Gaps in surveillance, testing, sequencing and vaccination are continuing to create the perfect conditions for a new variant of concern to emerge that could cause significant mortality.”

Last weekend marked one year since the organisation announced Omicron as a new variant of concern in the Covid-19 pandemic, Tedros noted.

It has since swept round the world, proving significantly more transmissible than its predecessor, Delta.

Last week, [the latest real-world study of updated Covid boosters](#) showed that new vaccines by Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna are likely to provide better protection compared with the original shots.

The study of more than 360,000 people indicated that the boosters offer increased protection against new variants in people who have previously received up to four doses of the older vaccine.

Since their introduction to the US in September, the vaccine boosters, which contain both original and Omicron BA.4/5 coronavirus strain, provided greater benefit to younger adults aged 18-49 years than those in the older age group.

Tedros said there were now more than 500 highly transmissible Omicron sub-lineages circulating – all able to get around built-up immunity more easily, even if they tended to be less severe than previous variants.

Around the world, 6.6 million Covid deaths have been reported to the WHO, from nearly 640 million registered cases. But the UN health agency says this will be a massive undercount and unreflective of the true toll.

Tedros said more than 8,500 people were recorded as having lost their lives to Covid last week, “which is not acceptable three years into the pandemic, when we have so many tools to prevent infections and save lives”.

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Headlines friday 2 december 2022

- [Live Labour majority in City of Chester seat soars to over 10,000 in byelection victory](#)
- [Analysis Labour stays on course for power with Chester byelection victory](#)
- [Byelection Labour easily holds City of Chester seat in first test for Sunak](#)

[Politics live with Andrew Sparrow](#)Politics

Labour byelection victory ‘a clear message to Sunak’, says Starmer – as it happened

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/live/2022/dec/02/chester-byelection-labour-majority-rishi-sunak-conservatives-uk-politics-latest-live-news>

[Labour](#)

[Analysis](#)

Labour stays on course for power with Chester byelection victory

[Kiran Stacey](#) Political correspondent

Little sign of Tory resurgence under Rishi Sunak after thumping win for Labour against difficult backdrop

- [UK politics live – latest news updates](#)



Labour's deputy leader, Angela Rayner (left), and newly elected MP Samantha Dixon take a selfie with a party activist in Chester on Friday. Photograph: Danny Lawson/PA

Fri 2 Dec 2022 04.54 ESTLast modified on Fri 2 Dec 2022 05.27 EST

For several months, nervous Labour MPs have looked at the national polls and asked themselves whether their commanding leads can really be trusted.

On Thursday night, voters in [Chester](#) gave them, at least for now, an answer: yes.

Thursday's [thumping byelection victory](#), with Labour winning its highest ever majority in the seat in a 14-point vote swing, suggests the party would win a comfortable majority if a general election were held today. It provides further evidence Labour is rebuilding support in the so-called red wall of northern seats, many of which it lost at the last election.

Sir John Curtice, a professor of politics at Strathclyde University, told the BBC on Friday morning the result suggested the opposition party was heading for a “favourable” majority.

“This is consistent with the claim that a) [Labour](#) are in a stronger position than they’ve ever been in the last 12 years; and b) the performance is consistent with what happened last time we had the defeat of a Conservative government,” he said.

One Labour source said: “This is a phenomenal result for us, a landslide, bigger even than 1997 [when the party won 53% of the vote]. These are the kinds of seats we need to be winning if we are to show we are on course for a general election victory.”

The seat is not the marginal it once was. In 2015, Labour won by just 93 votes, but the party won sizeable majorities at the two elections since.

Nevertheless, the party went into the byelection against a difficult backdrop. The vote was called after Chris Matheson [resigned amid sexual misconduct allegations](#). Labour officials said, however, that the controversy had not been a big issue on the doorstep, where voters were keener to talk about the economy, as well as more local issues such as Chester high street.

Samantha Dixon, the new Labour MP, said during her acceptance speech that she had been greeted on the doorstep by one voter who was wrapped in blankets after her energy bills rose by hundreds of pounds.

For the [Conservatives](#), the result gives some tentative signs that the electorate is not as hostile to the party as it was in the final days of Liz

Truss's premiership, when Labour enjoyed national poll leads of more than 30 points.

But if the party hoped Rishi Sunak's leadership might help restore the voter coalition that propelled it to election victory in 2019, there is little sign of that.

Andy Carter, the Tory MP for Warrington South, [told the Telegraph](#) on Thursday night: "We are mid-term in what has been an incredibly challenging parliamentary term on the back of Covid, a war in Ukraine where prices have shot up."

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He added: "We've got two years until the next general election ... I think [Rishi Sunak] has been in the job for five weeks doing a great job tackling inflation."

If Sunak wanted more time to be able to prove himself to voters, he will not get it. The parties will contest two more byelections in north-west England in the coming weeks. The first will be in [Stretford and Urmston](#) on 15 December, and the second on an unconfirmed date in West Lancashire.

Some Conservative MPs believe, however, that the result in Chester shows the situation is unsalvageable for the new prime minister.

Sir Charles Walker, the MP for Broxbourne, told Times Radio on Friday: "It's almost impossible to see us coming back from this." He added that the

best Sunak could hope for at the next election would be to “win maybe 220 seats and form a viable opposition”.

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Labour

Labour wins Chester byelection with ‘best result since 2010’

Rishi Sunak’s first test ends brutally, with 14-point swing pollsters say would give Starmer comfortable majority at election

- [UK politics live – latest news updates](#)



The Labour winner, Samantha Dixon, said in her victory speech that the Tories ‘no longer have a mandate to govern’. Photograph: Danny Lawson/PA

[Sammy Gecsoyler](#) and [Kiran Stacey](#)

Fri 2 Dec 2022 09.52 EST First published on Thu 1 Dec 2022 21.03 EST

Labour was celebrating a commanding byelection victory on Friday after retaining the seat of [Chester](#) with a substantial 14-point swing that pollsters

say would give the party a comfortable majority if repeated at a general election.

The Labour leader, [Keir Starmer](#), tweeted his congratulations to Samantha Dixon, the incoming Labour MP, on Friday morning, after she won the seat with the party's highest ever vote share.

Labour secured a majority of 10,974 on a 14-point vote swing, in a [brutal first electoral test](#) for Rishi Sunak.

Starmer tweeted on Friday: "The message to Rishi Sunak's Conservative government is clear: people are fed up of 12 years of Tory rule and want the change [Labour](#) offers. It's time for a Labour government."

Receiving 17,309 votes with 61.22% of the vote share, Labour achieved its highest ever majority and share of the vote in the seat. Conversely, the Conservatives received 6,335 votes and a 22.4% vote share, their worst result in the constituency since 1832. The [Liberal Democrats](#) came a distant third on 2,368 votes.

Dixon said in her victory speech early on Friday: "Tonight the people of Chester have sent a clear message. They have said Rishi Sunak's [Conservatives](#) no longer have a mandate to govern."

Charles Walker, a Conservative MP who is standing down at the next election, said: "Rishi Sunak is doing all the right things, but this result underlines that he has inherited an impossibly difficult position. I don't think voters will ever forgive us for the acts of indulgence in September and October with our 50-day premier [Liz Truss]."

'The government has run out of road': Keir Starmer reacts to Labour's Chester byelection win – video

Sir John Curtice, a professor of politics at Strathclyde University, told BBC Radio 4's Today programme on Friday the result indicated Labour would win a sizeable victory if a general election were held today.

“This is the best performance by Labour ... since David Cameron first walked through the door of Downing Street [in 2010]. It is one indication that Labour are in a stronger position than they’ve been in at any previous point when they’ve been trying to try to challenge the Conservatives over the last dozen years.”

He added: “A 13-point swing wouldn’t be enough for an enormous majority, but it would undoubtedly be enough to produce a favourable majority.”

The constituency has come a long way from being the most marginal in the country in 2015, when Labour won by only 93 votes. In 2017, Labour won by 9,176 votes and by 6,164 in 2019.

Speaking after the result, Alison McGovern, the shadow employment minister and MP for nearby Wirral South, said the people of Chester were “fed up of Tory rule and want the change Labour offers”.

“After the Tories crashed our economy, it’s clear that only Labour can be trusted to help families across the country make ends meet ... The Tories have no mandate to govern. It’s time for a Labour government.”

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The Conservative candidate, Elizabeth Wardlaw, told local reporters it had “been a very good experience for me” before swiftly leaving the election count.

This was the first Westminster byelection since the resignations of Boris Johnson and Liz Truss and the financial fallout from the latter’s mini-budget.

While the Tories were not expected to take the seat, the fall in their share of the vote from 38.3% in 2019 to 22.4% on Thursday night is likely to add to fears among Conservatives in Westminster who are already facing dismal opinion polls nationally.

The byelection was triggered by the Labour MP Chris Matheson [resigning in October after allegations of sexual misconduct](#). Parliament's bullying and harassment watchdog and the standards commissioner found he had violated the Commons' sexual misconduct policy.

The constituency's status as a "safe seat" for Labour is a recent development. In 2010, the Conservatives took the seat from Labour with a 2,583 majority.

This is the 11th byelection held since the 2019 election. Labour has won four of them, with the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives each having won three.

In terms of gains, the Lib Dems gained three seats while Labour and the Conservatives have gained one seat each. The Scottish National party held its seat in the 2021 Airdrie and Shotts byelection.

Dixon becomes the third Labour MP to represent City of Chester in its history. Before 1997, the constituency had never elected a Labour MP.

Another byelection, in the Labour safe seat of Stretford and Urmston, will be held on 15 December following [Kate Green's resignation](#) after being appointed Greater Manchester's deputy mayor for police and crime. No date has been set yet for the byelection in West Lancashire following the [resignation of Labour's Rosie Cooper](#) to take up a role with the NHS.

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2022.12.02 - Spotlight

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- [Navigating the NHS How patients are affected by delays](#)
- ['I would probably be delighted' How Christine McVie opened up about wanting to rejoin Fleetwood Mac](#)
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‘Things need to die for something else to come through’: Wet Leg, Nilüfer Yanya, Shabaka Hutchings and more on the year in music



(from left) Nilüfer Yanya, Rhian Teasdale, Sherelle, Shabaka Hutchings and Eliza Rose, photographed at Lafayette London. Photograph: Linda Nylind/The Guardian

Eliza Rose, Shabaka Hutchings, Sherelle, Rhian Teasdale and Nilüfer Yanya gather for our annual roundtable on the state of the music industry, discussing self-care, plagiarism allegations, post-release editing – and Kanye



[Kate Hutchinson](#)
[@katehutchinson](#)

Fri 2 Dec 2022 01.00 EST

It was the year that Ed Sheeran won a court case, Beyoncé returned, Kanye West horrified the world and musicians struggled with the new economics of playing live. We got together five artists who made a mark on 2022 to discuss it all. Eliza Rose is a London-born DJ whose independently released single *Baddest of Them All* spent two weeks at No 1. [Shabaka Hutchings](#) is a multi-instrumentalist who performs with [Sons of Kemet](#), Shabaka and the Ancestors and the Comet Is Coming. [Sherelle](#) is a DJ who broke through with her 2019 Boiler Room set and has since recorded a mix for Fabric. Rhian Teasdale is one-half of Isle of Wight indie band [Wet Leg](#), whose 2021 debut single, *Chaise Longue*, went viral; they released their self-titled debut album this spring. [Nilüfer Yanya](#) is a London-born guitarist and songwriter who has released two albums, 2019's *Miss Universe* and this year's *Painless*, to widespread acclaim.

January

Neil Young demanded that [Spotify](#) remove his music due to Joe Rogan spreading vaccine misinformation. Is it up to musicians to be calling out these companies?

Shabaka Hutchings All musicians aren't Neil Young. He can do that because he's in a position where if he takes his music off Spotify, it will be a massive media event. And then because of that, people start talking. That's the whole point of it – not to punish Spotify, but to bring to light the fact that there's this cancerous rhetoric going around on this platform unchecked.

Eliza Rose He's in a position of power.

Sherelle They are two white guys with very strong opinions about how certain things are. So they naturally are going to be listened to, that's just how the world works. I'm not too sure if the effect would be the same if it was coming from a PoC artist.

Rhian Teasdale It ties in to social media, and having Trump and Kanye taken off there [since this interview, both have since been reinstated]. If it's begun with social media platforms, then surely it should happen with streaming platforms as well?

S One argument is that having someone as controversial as Joe Rogan on there allows people to listen to how silly he is.

SH If they don't say it, there's no way of addressing the thought; you've got misinformation that's not being countered.

RT Also the moment you take something down, you're empowering it. And then suddenly, Joe Rogan's followers will be like: "Why are they taking away the truth from us?"

SH It's the same as with statues: take down statues or make an effort to recontextualise them, so it's not that you take them down and they disappear but that the symbol doesn't mean the same thing as it was originally intended. There could be some kind of ... disclaimer sounds dry, but some kind of thing that makes you know that this point is contested and here is the alternative.

February

Little Simz won the Brit award for breakthrough artist (and in October, the Mercury prize), despite being on her fourth album. Are we recognising great UK talent too late?

Nilüfer Yanya I did think it was crazy that she was called a breakthrough artist. She's been such a big artist in our minds for a long time.

RT She's independent, she's Black and she's female – all things that are going to go against her.



Little Simz winning the Mercury prize in October. Photograph: JMEnternational/Getty Images

ER I started singing when I was 21 and I gave up after that for years because it felt like an uphill struggle. Times have changed now and I was able to build my own platform with the power of social media. Today you don't necessarily have to have the machine behind you as an independent artist to get your accolades. But it's still not perfect.

Do awards matter?

SH I've never had anything to do with the Brits. If I get breakthrough artist when I'm 45, then cool. Ten years ago, there were no prospects of creative instrumentalists getting anywhere, there was just the token jazz act in the Mercury. If you said you did jazz, you'd be in a pub playing to a bunch of old white guys. Things are getting better: Kendrick Lamar, Robert Glasper; creative instrumental music is at least seen by the mainstream as being music among other music. The question for me is: what *are* the Mercurys and the Brits? We call them institutions, but it's a group of specific people who make choices. How are they making the choices? Who chooses *them*?

NY I don't really pay much attention to these events.

SH I was asked to be a judge for the Grammys one year and you get sent tons of names before you get to the nomination stage, which is why everyone does those weird “for your consideration” posts. But actually it’s about who you know. You scan a list and go: “Oh, yeah, I’ve heard about this, and this.” It’s a question of visibility.

RT It’s nice for everyone at the label because they’re working hard as well. But the real wins are when you do a good gig or when you make a good song. That is why you’re doing it, not for these awards, these mysterious overlords.

Wet Leg have just been nominated for five Grammys. That’s got to mean something?

RT It’s surprising because I don’t know what hoops we’ve jumped through to get there – but there *are* hoops. We had an interview and it was like: “So, what do you know about the Grammys?” And I was like: “Oh, is that the one with the actors?”

NY And then you’re a spokesperson for UK bands. And they’re like, how does it feel? And you’re like: “I don’t know!”

RT Regardless of nominations, just being a new band that’s very busy, *that* has been a huge learning curve. You *have to* make mistakes, and it has to be in front of everyone, apparently.

March

Ed Sheeran appeared in court over plagiarism accusations (he was vindicated). What effect is the increasing number of cases like this having on creativity? How is this new litigious era in songwriting affecting you?

NY There was a [video of Ed](#) on [Instagram] being like: “Please, we need to stop the rate of people saying: ‘You’re stealing my song.’” He said it’s damaging the industry, which came across as very insincere. All music is stolen to a degree, but the thing that really annoyed me is that he is trying to put a full stop on this conversation and be like: “This is wrong. You can’t

come after me. This is an original song,” which is true – but there’s so many styles of music that are being stolen every day and being used by bigger artists.



Sherelle: ‘It’s great that artists are taking a stand against fan behaviour.’
Photograph: Linda Nylind/The Guardian

ER I don’t think anything’s original, everything is inspired by something else. But it’s a bit of a free for all at the moment and people are becoming greedy [by suing artists]. I do think all the litigation going to stop creative flows.

SH That’s how creativity happens. In jazz, people copy vibes all the time to progress: take someone you like and play a bit like them until you get past it.

April

There was a wave of artists asking fans to [change their behaviour at shows](#). Should gigs be more on artists’ terms?

NY I don’t ask a lot from my audience at a show – it’s always a lot nicer when you feel like people are listening and you have their attention, but crowds change so much from show to show and I’m totally OK with not

controlling that. The phone thing is a weird one, because I think a lot of people benefit from their fans posting about their shows, which is something maybe bigger artists don't need! I think venues could remind audiences the way they do at cinemas.

S It's great that artists are taking a stand against fan behaviour. I often have had issues with people holding up their phones and being quite intrusive. I would prefer if no one had their phone out because I want them to be in the moment and not live through their phones. It makes me sad that sometimes we're not present.

May

By this point you were all shaping up to have massive years. How do you ride the hype wave without it affecting your art?

S If anyone can tell me what the balance is ...

ER Please share!

S In electronic music, it's like: "Where's your cover [story]? Where's the next big play?" It's dog-eat-dog when you're breaking out. There's a lot of accolades, which I've been fortunate enough to win, but it gets in your head: "Am I supposed to keep winning stuff in order to prove myself?"

SH I sent an email to my managers and agents early in the year, at a particularly hectic point of touring, saying: "I want everyone to consider the parable of the goose that laid the golden eggs." If you kill this goose then none of you are going to get paid any more. So just remember this when you're just pushing me out on the road like this.

Everyone Yep!

SH The agent said thanks for talking to them about that because there's not often a lot of consideration of what they're pushing artists to do. It depletes you.

S I didn't even realise how many shows I did. So I counted them and if I had done all of my shows, it would have been 99. And if we look at how many weeks there are in a year, and work out when that holiday would be, it was only two weeks' worth of free time. But the rest of the week, I'm supposed to be doing emails and other bits, because I don't just do DJing, I've got labels to look after.

ER I don't know how long anything's going to last, so I'm utilising what I can for this moment and trying to use this hype wave to cement myself in this space, and trying to have longevity.

NY It's something I think about a lot – sustainability as opposed to exterior goals. But then ... why do I also have that goal where I want people to see what I'm doing? I could be putting that energy into [making] music and not worrying "is this going to be successful, is this going to be a good album?"

SH It's not a bad thing. That's what we do, communicate with an audience. The question is, how much you have for yourself and how much you give out. I don't look at any reviews or anything because it's too much stuff to deal with. My sustainability is in my practice. I practise the flute every day. A lot of the industry thing just goes away if you are engaged in a practice.

Everyone So true.

RT [sarcastically] There's this whole thing with TikTok: it's so *important*. We all need it to survive. Self Esteem said something about it really eloquently earlier in the year. There's a lot of pressure to be posting on socials. The other day I was looking back at the Wet Leg Instagram account when it was just me and Hester posting to our friends and it was so wholesome. Now every time we post, it's like: "Oh, my God, this is going to go out to X amount of people?" We are starting to get asked about a second album. We want to go back to that feeling of when we made Chaise Longue: just me, Hester and Joshua, really late at night, with a microphone up in the living room. I don't feel pressure to make the thing. But I do feel the pressure of: how am I going to get back to that carefree feeling with so many people watching?



Rhian Teasdale: ‘Just being a new band that’s very busy has been a huge learning curve.’ Photograph: Linda Nylind/The Guardian

S I cleared my Instagram recently. I felt weird about posting videos of me DJing, because I see other DJs and musicians posting and then it then becomes a battle of “Who’s got the biggest amount of hands in the air?” It’s ironic because how I blew up is a video of me dancing with my friends and having a good time on Boiler Room. Don’t get me started on TikTok.

RT We do have help with our social media, but everything that they suggest has to be approved by me and Hester and the rest of the band. And so someone’s getting your “tone”. It feels so gross.

NY It’s a monster, you need to keep feeding it.

June

Beyoncé returned with Renaissance. Was it about time that dance music’s Black roots were acknowledged in the mainstream?

ER She worked with the right people, she acknowledged the queer community. I was proud as a PoC for her to do that album.

S Only a couple of years ago, people weren't looking at dance and house music as a mainstream genre. And now she has created space for that to happen.

SH Does mainstream mean that the people who voted for Brexit and Trump also sing your songs, in addition to people that didn't vote for them?

S Harking back to LGBTQIA+ people within those scenes is really cool. Beyoncé has a way of being able to be within the mainstream that means particular people would not be threatened by her. White women have said: "I feel like Beyoncé." The colour element isn't really there, she's seen as a colourless being. Also, Eliza being the first female DJ to get a No 1 since Sonique [in 2000, with It Feels So Good] adds to the history of PoC in dance music. That's important because of the historic erasure of Black women within it. It's Beyoncé's album on one side, Eliza on another.

One of the most eyebrow-raising aspects of that album, and Drake's album this year, is that some people said he and Beyoncé were bringing back house music. But did it actually go anywhere?

NY It's the same with guitar music. People are always saying guitar music died. Nothing really stops in music.

SH The capitalist structure makes you assume that there's perpetual growth to everything. Things need to die for something else to come through.

Which music needs to die in 2022?

SH Probably mine – we killed Sons of Kemet. It felt like the right thing to do. It started on a personal level, because from 2024 I'm taking a hiatus from the saxophone and just playing the flute. But it generally felt like a good time, after 10 years and four albums, to knock it on the head and go off into flute obscurity.

July

Beyoncé and Lizzo edited ableist slurs out of their music; later in the year [Taylor Swift edited the word "fat"](#) out of one of her videos. Should

artists be able to airbrush their mistakes?

ER I don't take issue with it, as long as the sentiment of the song overall doesn't change.

S It's just about taking accountability. I also think people have the right to not change that song if they don't want to.

RT As long as you are the one leading that change then that's cool. Sometimes people change things because they've been called out. If everyone is changing lyrics because of cancel culture then that creates a fear of saying anything.

S You're not being authentic, basically.



Taylor Swift. Photograph: Dave Hogan/Getty Images

NY I think it's good. We're in this culture at the moment where you're not allowed to make mistakes. But I think it's good when people make mistakes and to try and rectify it. Whereas "I don't want anyone to know I've made a mistake" is a different kind of fear. It's not healthy.

S You've got to look at who is on their teams. For Swift's team to not realise that "fat" could be offensive shows to me that they don't have a very diverse

team on hand. If their friends all look like them or sound like them, they're not really going to think about other people. The view that they've got in front of them is themselves.

August

The AI-generated rapper FN Meka was dropped from a major label after complaints of racial stereotyping. Has enough been done to counter racism in the music industry following summer 2020? What, if anything, has changed?

NY I don't think enough can ever be done to counteract racism, full stop.

ER What I can't understand is, how many people did that go through to get signed off?

S With FN Meka, it's just the glorification of Black male culture. It's perpetuating negative stereotypes. There's a lot of people within the rap world who are passing away and music execs are trying to tap into that world. FN Meka definitely wasn't made for a Black audience; more for a white audience who enjoys Black music but also gets off on the trauma porn of it all. Why was he being [beaten] by the police? That just proves that nothing's ever going to change. People posting up black squares and then saying they're going to have initiatives ...

RT It's so performative.

S Exactly. Like: "Let's get some Black interns, some Black junior people in." But what about the execs, or other people in higher positions? A lot of companies had that one initiative that they did. And now when you see their offices, it's just as white as ever.

NY The whole system is still being run by the same people. And then also put against the backdrop of financial recession, everyone's got a good excuse why they can't make real changes.

SH What if there can't be any change? This is the question that no one asks. What if racism doesn't end? What if it's too culturally ingrained? And we

can get old, we can post a little black square and we can talk and do stuff. But what if the actual root of it is deeper than just a few people understanding what they or their ancestors have done wrong. What if there's something there's more fundamentally at odds with ...

NY It evolves? It doesn't go away.

SH Yeah, it doesn't go away.



Eliza Rose: 'DJs are in a privileged position.' Photograph: Linda Nylind/The Guardian

RT It's so hard to tell whether the industry has changed when you're in your own echo chamber. I look at younger generations and I see it's getting less and less racist from where I'm sat in my echo chamber and my own experience.

NY Or it's getting deeper.

RT That's a really horrible thought.

SH It's not that horrible. Actually, it's pretty liberating. Because then you're not shocked at occurrences, you go: "OK, that's happening, how do you

move forward?” Or how do you create situations that cushion the impact on people of colour, bearing in mind that it’s not going to go away?

September

This month represented a peak for artists cancelling shows for mental health and financial reasons. Is this the worst time ever to be a musician?

SH It was the best of times. And it was the worst of times.

RT Everyone was really excited coming out of the pandemic. I’ve never been busy with touring before this because we’re a baby band but for us, bookers, fans, it was: “Let’s go, let’s go!” And then you realise: “Oh, shit. I’m human and I need a certain amount of sleep.” It’s basic self-care but when you’re on that treadmill, it’s a hard balance.

SH The pandemic made people aware of what self-care actually looks like, because before that, the situation was unsustainable.

S I feel sorry for promoters now who are trying to sell tickets because it’s cold and there’s a lot less disposable income. Tickets can be super expensive.

NY It comes down to lack of stability in the music industry. You’re expected to commit to touring schedules even if you’re not sure you can financially. Even if you can’t afford it at the moment, can you afford it next year? Is that tour going to break you? It all comes down to the big questions: what is achievable? And what is stability? And why are you doing it? It’s hard to know where that line is.

S I think what’s going to have to happen is that for some shows, people might have to do payment plans, like they do with festivals.

NY You can do it for shoes, why can’t you do it for shows?



Shabaka Hutchings on stage with Sons of Kemet. Photograph: Tim Mosenfelder/Getty Images

SH It's difficult because to expect to earn your income as a touring musician is unrealistic. It's not going to happen for everyone. When people say [impressed voice]: "You're touring the US and it's on Instagram!" – touring the US is *terrible*.

Everyone Yeah!

SH The food is terrible. It's really difficult. You're travelling long distances in a van.

S And the visas are really expensive.

Is it easier to be a DJ?

ER I didn't realise how difficult it was for touring artists and bands, until I saw Santigold's [statement on cancelling her tour](#). It was really eye-opening for me, to see the struggles of my peers. DJs are in a privileged position: there's not a lot of overheads, only one person needs to fly, one person in a hotel.

October

Kanye West used white supremacist slogans in a fashion show, made antisemitic remarks and was consequently dropped by many brands affiliated with him. Is there a way back for the rapper? [At the time of this interview, Kanye had not yet returned to Twitter or made his 2024 presidential bid]

SH What does it look like if there's not a way back for him? Is it that he just disappears? If this is effectively a society that calls itself Christian, as in those principles underpin it, then forgiveness and redemption should be possibilities. Otherwise, we're this brutal society that ostracises people. I feel really sorry for Kanye. Not to dismiss what he's done and the hurt that he's caused, but he's going through a public breakdown. I think a lot of people aren't sad for him because he's got money. But he's been afforded this money by the system that now is breaking him.

ER You can have battles with mental health and not say racist rhetoric. It's dangerous what he's doing, he's giving people permission to say certain things.

RT The people around him that have been enabling him, maybe those people will stop making money and that is when someone will stop to help him.

S Sometimes people wait till a person is basically dead. I'm definitely not pushing this for him at all. But it's a massive car crash.

ER It's like Amy Winehouse isn't it?

Everyone Yeah.

S It's definitely not right. I think because he's got so much money, he can't be cancelled. Being a guy, he can also get away with it – because Azealia Banks was cancelled pretty fast.

SH There is a thing about publicly humiliating powerful Black men. When Black men get to a particular position, if they then do something wrong then

they get their comeuppance. He's just that figure for this age. It's sad because he's been so influential on a musical level.

November

The singles chart celebrated its 70th anniversary. How relevant is the chart today?

S For me they're only relevant because Eliza went to No 1.

ER Being in the charts was never a goal. It was so unattainable and seemed so far out of reach. I'm gassed, mainly because *Baddest of Them All* is an underground track that I released on my dubplate label and wrote completely by myself. Now it's signed to Warner, but it just shows that there is still space for different types of music to make it to the top.



Nilüfer Yanya: 'We're in this culture at the moment where you're not allowed to make mistakes.' Photograph: Linda Nyland/The Guardian

December

If you could make a New Year's resolution for the music industry in 2023, what would it be?

RT Equality in all senses, whether that's race or even genre.

NY If the music industry was to not be an industry then that would be really interesting; if it wasn't about who's making the most income, because you weren't worried about numbers.

S Community, basically.

ER More space in the mainstream for the underground to come through. I'd like to see bigger labels keeping an eye on what's bubbling in the underground scenes, which ultimately influence the charts.

SH Communication. There might be answers from someone who's done it before you.

S Just looking out for people. And I hope people get to have more disposable income. Freeze those electric bills!

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2022/dec/02/things-need-to-die-for-something-else-to-come-through-wet-leg-nilufer-yanya-shabaka-hutchings-and-more-on-the-year-in-music>

[NHS](#)

Navigating the NHS: How patients are affected by delays

Years of under-investment and then the shock of the Covid pandemic has left many areas in the NHS struggling. This interactive shows how delays can affect four different patients

[*Ashley Kirk*](#), [*Carmen Aguilar García*](#), [*Pablo Gutiérrez*](#), [*Garry Blight*](#), [*Pamela Duncan*](#) and [*Niels de Hoog*](#)

Fri 2 Dec 2022 04.00 EST Last modified on Fri 2 Dec 2022 04.20 EST

Patients are facing increased delays at almost every stage of their [NHS](#) treatment, as the health system struggles to find the resources to deal with demand.

The latest data shows waiting lists across [England](#) have surpassed record highs every month for two years running, one of many major challenges currently facing the NHS.

“There is not one area of NHS provision that isn’t really struggling,” Alastair McLellan, the editor of Health Service Journal, [told the Guardian](#) in August. “There is literally nowhere where it isn’t bad, and in some cases really bad.”

But what impact does this have on ordinary people trying to access the NHS in 2022?

Through a combination of interviews with health professionals and analysis of official data, the Guardian has plotted the journeys of four fictional patients through their NHS journey and how waiting times have changed at each stage of their treatment and recovery.

We look at how the crisis affects the day-to-day lives of four patients: someone with breast cancer, someone requiring cataract surgery, a patient with heart issues and one with a hip fracture. These case studies have been created in consultation with health experts and represent realistic patient pathways that a person with one of these conditions could expect.

The Head of Policy at Macmillan [Cancer](#) Support, Minesh Patel, said that delays existed prior to the pandemic, but Covid “has made these much worse and led to backlogs.”

“Hardworking cancer professionals are doing the best they can to treat people, but vast gaps in the workforce have been growing for years, leaving NHS staff exhausted and burnt out, and too many people left in limbo waiting to be seen.”

Mr Patel warned that “these excruciating waits can significantly affect people’s physical and mental health”.

Daniel Hardiman-McCartney MBE, Clinical Adviser from the College of Optometrists, said that the “rapid increase in the number of [independent NHS-funded] clinics has destabilised traditional eye care provision in some areas and has exacerbated problems related to the shortage of ophthalmologists”.

The lack of eye doctors in NHS trusts has “resulted in longer delays in some areas for people with chronic eye conditions” such as glaucoma or people with comorbidity or complex problems, which can increase the number of people affected by preventable sight loss.

For Mr Hardiman-McCartney, eye care could be improved by better supporting local ophthalmologists’ departments with optometrists. While there are some areas in England with successful examples, this “frustratingly remains a post code lottery, with the main barrier being local systems’ reluctance to fully utilise the optometric workforce.”

Professor Antony Johansen, consultant orthogeriatrician in Cardiff and clinical lead at the National Hip Fracture Database, told the Guardian: “Hip fracture care is losing the momentum that was so successfully maintained during the pandemic, and a patient’s chance of next-day surgery has fallen lower than we’ve seen for a decade.

“This may reflect poorer population health, as well as strain on ambulance services, emergency departments, hospital beds and operating theatres. Delayed surgery will worsen these pressures by increasing patients’ risk of complications and prolonging their time in hospital.”

Professor Ioakim Spyridopoulos, an honorary Consultant Interventional Cardiologist at Newcastle’s Freeman Hospital, told The Guardian that while the NHS response to acute life-threatening conditions is “still excellent”, urgent or elective care such as valve replacements “lags behind other leading European nations.”

For patients who require urgent treatment for a heart condition, “the cause for delays for urgent patients is mainly due to hospital staffing issues and bed capacity.

“As a consequence [of longer waiting times], these patients have a higher risk of dying while waiting for treatment, and even the general outcome is much worse when treated too late.”

In a statement released to coincide with the release of several of the metrics covered here, NHS England said the service was contending with its busiest October ever, including for the most serious ambulance callouts.

NHS medical director, Prof Sir Stephen Powis said there was “no doubt October has been a challenging month for staff who are now facing a tripledemic of Covid, flu and record pressure on emergency services”.

“Pressure on emergency services remains high as a result of more than 13,000 beds taken up each day by people who no longer need to be in hospital. But staff have kept their foot on the accelerator to get the backlog down with 18-month waiters down by three-fifths on last year.”

The service said that recent NHS analysis found that the service was diagnosing more patients with cancer at an earlier stage than ever before.

Notes

While patient pathways vary depending on geography, the patient and the severity of the case, each scenario has been verified by a health professional as a reasonable care pathway someone could expect. The majority of the data used in this piece was from the NHS England and NHS Digital, however some data was also sourced from the [Royal College of Physicians](#), the [Royal College of Ophthalmologists](#) and the [British Heart Foundation](#). [MacMillan](#), the [Health Foundation](#), the [Royal College of Nursing](#), the [College of Optometrists](#) and [Heart Research UK](#) were consulted in the development of accurate patient journeys. Our cataract operation scenario refers to Leicester City CCG as equivalent national figures were not available.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/society/ng-interactive/2022/dec/02/nhs-waiting-times-list-how-patients-are-affected-by-delays>

Pop and rock

‘I would probably be delighted’ – how Christine McVie opened up about wanting to rejoin Fleetwood Mac

For a fan, interviewing the late musician was like a surreal dream. Better still was the privilege of hearing about her lifelong friendship with Stevie Nicks



Genuine ... Christine McVie in 1983. Photograph: Eugene Adebari/REX/Shutterstock



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It was strange enough being in Christine McVie's flat – high up and hovering over a stretch of the River Thames in Battersea with an upright piano in the corner of the room (oh, to be her neighbour). But it was stranger still [hearing what she had to say](#). As we sat together on her light grey sofa in December 2013, McVie told me how she had left Fleetwood Mac in 1998 thinking that she wanted a quiet life in the Kent countryside with her dogs and Hunter wellies. But that hadn't been what she had wanted at all. Fifteen years on, McVie was restless, isolated, a little lonely ... and wouldn't it be nice if she could be back playing with the band? "If they were to ask me, I would probably be very delighted," she ventured nervously.

What was I supposed to say to this? It seemed obvious to me that they would take her back in a flash. Earlier that year, Stevie Nicks had said she'd "beg, borrow and scrape together \$5m and give it to her in cash if she would come back. That's how much I miss her!" And just two months before, McVie had even appeared on stage with [Fleetwood Mac](#) to thrill the crowd with a surprise encore of her hit Don't Stop.

Of course, it's eminently possible that this was all stage-managed by the band: ask McVie to sound reticent in front of a journalist in order to build the hype around her grand return. But this was also a genuinely dysfunctional band that revolved around the careful massaging of male egos. Communicating their deepest desires to each other via the press was equally likely. I think McVie was being genuine in her cautious approach, not just because I like to pretend I played a key role in getting the classic lineup of Fleetwood Mac back together, but because everything about her seemed genuine.

When I told McVie how excited I was to meet her – a rare bit of fanboying that I would normally steer well clear of – she looked uncertain how to respond, a tad embarrassed. While Nicks, who I had met a few weeks earlier in Paris, had spoken fantastically about fate and celestial beings and communicating with her late mother through her jewellery, McVie told me tales about mastering blues bass lines with her left hand and how she supposed she must be “good with hooks”. (“Oh, do you think so?” I had to hold myself back from replying to the woman who had written Say You Love Me, Over My Head, You Make Loving Fun, Songbird, Don't Stop, Over and Over, Hold Me, Little Lies and Everywhere.)

The difference between the two female members of the band played out in the music, too, where McVie, with her optimistic songs about falling head over heels in love and moving on from broken hearts, complemented Nicks's more mystical and poetic output. In a way, McVie was the McCartney to Nicks's Lennon; each was stronger for having the other by her side.

The same was true, I discovered, about them as people. It was a privilege to hear the story of their friendship, something that can get lost beneath the wreckage of the affairs and cocaine-fuelled rows that serve the Fleetwood Mac myth. Because what really kept the band afloat during their most tumultuous period was the bond that these two sisters of the moon shared from the moment they first met up – [for Mexican food in 1974](#).



No pushovers ... Christine McVie with Stevie Nicks in 1987. Photograph: Aaron Rapoport/Getty Images

Back then, McVie was given the final say on whether Nicks could join the band. She admitted that she might have felt threatened by another woman, five years younger and from glamorous Los Angeles, competing with her for songwriting space. But she liked Nicks instantly – and from there the band’s music blossomed. There were still plenty of tantrums, of course, and lots of bitchy infighting – only it was the men providing all that. Whenever tensions simmered too high between the guys, Nicks and McVie would seek solace in each other: sharing Dunkin’ Donuts, doing each other’s makeup, rolling their eyes at the bad behaviour of their male counterparts.

There were double standards galore. After the splits – between Christine and John McVie, and Nicks and Lindsey Buckingham – the two women were discouraged from bringing their subsequent partners on tour. What would be the point when their exes would just glare at them and start fights? But the men would happily bring their new girlfriends along. “Oh, it was all right for them,” said McVie. “But whatever keeps the lads happy, I suppose.”

They might have been pragmatic but they were no pushovers. “We made a pact, probably in our first rehearsal, that we would never accept being treated as second-class citizens in the music business,” Nicks told me. “That

when we walked into a room we would be so fantastic and so strong and so smart that none of the uber-rockstar group of men would look through us. And they never did.”

Nicks once said from the stage that McVie was her “mentor ... big sister ... best friend”. I was probably only in her London flat for an hour or so, but I left feeling that if I were ever in a globe-straddling rock band, dealing with the many madnesses of the music industry, there would be few better people to have on your side than [Christine McVie](#).

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[Protest](#)

‘Freedom in China is precious’: Tiananmen Square protest veteran salutes new generation



Protesters shout slogans during a protest against China's zero-Covid measures on Monday in Beijing. Photograph: Kevin Frayer/Getty Images

Activists have despaired for decades as Beijing has hardened its grip. Now they see a turning tide



[Wilfred Chan](#) in New York

Fri 2 Dec 2022 01.00 ESTLast modified on Fri 2 Dec 2022 13.14 EST

Rose Tang was stunned when she saw videos last week of crowds in [China](#) chanting in Mandarin, “Give me liberty or give me death.” It was a phrase the Brooklyn resident had last heard more than three decades ago, when she was one of the student leaders at the pro-democracy protests in Beijing’s Tiananmen Square.

It took her back to the afternoon of 3 June 1989, when she spotted military convoys rumbling toward the protest camp. She threw on a black outfit and rode her bike into the square, determined to defend it. But nothing could have prepared her for the massacre that followed in the early hours of 4 June as the soldiers started shooting and killing the young protesters, including one of her friends. She remembers climbing over a tank to survive.

“We wanted the Communist party to introduce democracy, but we didn’t want the Communist party to leave China,” Tang says. So today’s protests, which have called for the removal of the CCP and its leader, are “really the first time we’ve seen such a demand in public on such a large scale”.

Today, Tang, 53, remains an activist. She’s part of a small contingent of Chinese former democracy leaders in de facto exile – who say it’s been emotional to watch mass protests erupt in China anew. Zhou Fengsuo is a 55-year-old former Tiananmen student leader now living in New Jersey who tells me he wept when he saw videos of the [protests spreading](#) across multiple cities. “Freedom in China is precious,” he says, “and it’s been postponed for so long.”



Rose Tang stands in Tiananmen Square on 21 May 1989. Photograph: anonymous/ fellow student protestor

Since the Tiananmen massacre, the activists have despaired as the Chinese Communist party’s grip over society has appeared to become absolute. Tang says she became “hopeless and depressed” over the years as she watched the regime crush one protest after another – especially in Tibet and Xinjiang, where ethnic minorities have struggled to resist Beijing’s colonization, and Hong Kong, where years of pro-democracy uprisings have ended in defeat. She felt especially gutted when some of her old friends started supporting

the regime – including a former Tiananmen Square participant who posted online that “the government did the right thing, so that we can have stability and prosperity in China”, she recalls.

But the tide could be turning. Protesters across the country are unleashing years of pent-up frustration over the hardline pandemic restrictions ordered by leader Xi Jinping, who elbowed out rivals to seize an unopposed third term last month. Under Xi’s restrictions, workers have been locked in factories and forced to keep pulling long shifts amid flagging economic growth that’s left as many as [one in five young people](#) unemployed. Residents have their doors nailed shut, sometimes without sufficient food or medical care. In September, a bus taking residents to a quarantine camp overturned on the highway, killing 27 people. But what sparked the current protests was a [building fire](#) in the Xinjiang region last Tuesday, in which 10 people died after emergency personnel struggled to reach the victims due to lockdown measures, according to local accounts.

Beijing’s dominance of the country’s communications, and the heavy penalties it doles out for dissent, make it difficult to know how China’s residents really feel about their leaders. That’s also what makes the present demonstrations so remarkable. Protesters, while broadly opposing Xi’s pandemic policies, have also called for democracy, freedom of speech, Xi’s resignation and the end of the Chinese Communist party itself.

That’s inspiring for Alex Chow, a 32-year-old activist who helped organize Hong Kong’s 2014 pro-democracy mass protests as a student leader. During that movement, Chow attempted to fly to Beijing to appeal to Xi Jinping directly, but he was stopped from boarding his flight and [later imprisoned](#). He now lives in exile in Washington DC, where he chairs the Hong Kong Democracy Council, a nonprofit advocacy group. Many in Hong Kong had assumed “nothing will change” in China, he said – “so it’s really a surprise to see the protests spreading.”



Rose Tang at a candlelight vigil marking the anniversary of the Tiananmen massacre, on 4 June 2020 in Brooklyn. Photograph: Jane Stein

Chow says he's "energized" by the creativity of the young protesters, who have used [cheeky tactics](#) to evade authorities, such as holding blank pieces of paper, or slogans sarcastically praising the government. But Beijing and its supporters have already begun [accusing protesters](#) of being puppets of foreign powers – which means overseas activists like Chow also have to think carefully about how to best provide support: "whether our voice should be strong and steadfast, or more strategic and cautious". At the very least, he says, the protests should "open up space for diasporic groups to talk about China and the new dynamic there".

The protests have already produced some unexpected encounters. In the last few days, Chow says he's heard accounts of Chinese people in the United States reaching out to their Hong Kong and Taiwanese counterparts to apologize for not previously supporting their movements, a sign "there might be some room for reconciliation." Activists are also hopeful that the protests will help build bridges between Han people – referring to the dominant Chinese ethnic group – and Uyghurs, who have faced [severe state repression](#) in their native home of Xinjiang, where the deadly fire erupted last week. Tang says she's been especially moved to see videos of Han

protesters calling Uyghurs “compatriots” instead of “ethnic minority friends” – the belittling term often used by Chinese government officials.

But the protesters face an uphill battle. Xi still has “immense power in controlling the media, the military and the public security system, so we’re in a fluctuating and fluid state where everything could happen”, says Chow. He hopes demonstrators will have the “mental space” to think through how they would respond to a possible military crackdown.

That’s something Tang’s been thinking about now for 33 years. “It’s OK to not be a [Tank Man](#),” she says, referring to the Tiananmen protester who blocked a military convoy – because simply speaking out is already a triumph. “The seeds of this moment were planted in 1989 and have been struggling to sprout through the hard soils of China. But the young people in China inspire the old people like me. And we really are on the right side of history.”

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2022.12.02 - Opinion

- Facing eviction, I've learned that relying on 'good landlords' is a feudal throwback
- Prisons are an overflowing, squalid, absurd waste of money. So why do the public want more of them?
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[Opinion](#)[Renting property.](#)

Facing eviction, I've learned that relying on 'good landlords' is a feudal throwback

[Moya Lothian-McLean](#)



Private tenants are powerless. Keep your doctrine of kindness, and give us a legal safety net instead



Illustration: Ben Jennings

Fri 2 Dec 2022 01.00 EST Last modified on Fri 2 Dec 2022 06.20 EST

I am in the midst of a house move. It is not by choice. I am one of the thousands of renters in London [facing eviction](#) – although technically our landlord has simply decided not to renew our tenancy, a decision that doesn't seem to factor into official eviction stats, though it should, given the frequency with which it's occurring.

My landlord was one of that rare breed: the “good” landlords. You hear about them occasionally. The bar is very low, yet most private landlords (in [London](#), at least) fail to clear it. Not a price gouger; fixes things when asked; doesn't treat tenants like squatters who happen to be paying half their monthly salary for the privilege of residing in their buy-to-let.

But without [proper legal protections and rights](#) for private tenants, such as rent caps, tenancy security even in cases of house sales, and the option of [indefinite tenancies](#), all that separates a good landlord from a bad one is the wafer-thin concept of decency. Tenants are totally reliant on the whims and personal circumstances of their particular landlord. As such, privately renting is not just a financial and psychological burden: it is also a crash course in extensive relationship management.

See: putting off getting the boiler fixed because the washing machine was just replaced, and if you ask your landlord for two costly repairs in a row a little switch in their brain might flip your house from “asset” to “albatross”, and they might decide to sell. Or calling a house meeting to collectively draft an unfathomably sycophantic email two months before your contract renewal essentially begging the landlord to grant you and your housemates the great honour of staying in their beautiful property. Sending them flowers, just because. (There is a housing crisis, and you need them to like you enough to ignore the estate agent in their ear telling them they can collect 30% more in monthly rent.)

And yet, at the slightest pressure decency withers and dies. In September, my “good” landlord asked to increase the rent by a small and reasonable amount, in line with rising living costs (no word, of course, about decreasing the rate to mirror real-terms pay cuts). My housemates and I agreed, but requested the increase came into effect after 90 days, according to the terms of the contract we had signed, rather than immediately. The landlord pushed back, with an undertone of aggrievement that we would repay their kindness in such a fashion, and then went quiet. Days later, we were informed our tenancy was ending. By adhering to the only legal protection we had, we’d become an albatross.

Unspoken was the reality that by referencing the vulgar, transactional nature of the landlord/tenant relationship, we had pierced the gossamer veneer of civility. We had reminded our landlord that they were a landlord, and not simply a kind benefactor. It was ungrateful in the face of their generosity. Personal affront sealed our fate.

Where the state has withdrawn, I have noticed an increasing emphasis on interpersonal “decency” to one another, an exhortation to rely on a supposed inherent goodness that will see us all done right by. Perhaps the seeds of this rhetoric were first planted by David Cameron’s vision of a “[big society](#)”, which involved the cutting down of actual society, via slashed public spending, and its replacement with [voluntarism](#). There is a cultural emphasis on being “kind” in lieu of solid legislative frameworks and state safety nets to catch us when we fall.

Often, it is those people with the most material power who preach this doctrine: at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, the then chancellor, Rishi Sunak, was [instructing the public to](#) practise “kindness” and “decency”, and later refusing to [overhaul statutory sick pay](#). Wealthy celebrities and influencers [wield the phrase “Be kind”](#) like a get-out-of-jail-free card at the slightest hint of criticism. And there is a reliance on the individual compassion of the likes of landlords, in order to keep a roof over our heads. This “kindness” is a myth: it is bondage of a feudal nature, an exercise in massaging the egos – or should that be the consciences? – of those with assets and access in the hope that they will continue to patronise the rest of us.

Unfortunately, this vague folk concept of “kindness” disappears as soon as those at the top of the totem pole feel a squeeze; see landlords en masse increasing rental rates in line with their own living costs, never mind that [some aren’t even grappling with higher mortgage repayments](#) and have more than enough of a financial cushion from the properties they let out.

It is understandable in times of crisis: a scarcity mindset becomes particularly sharp. The perception of being harder up, however, means kindness falls by the wayside. Self-preservation kicks in, and damn objectivity when it comes to assessing actual power dynamics.

“It’s been a very difficult time for landlords, too,” my friend was told earlier this year, after a rent increase on her mouse-infested flat. The landlord in question collects income from 11 properties. Under the decency doctrine, everyone’s suffering is equal.

Keep your kindness. I would rather have housing security or the ability to easily book a GP appointment without relying on a sympathetic receptionist’s pity when I turn up at the surgery in tears at 8am. “Decency” without the backing of robust welfare and legislative infrastructure is nothing but a farce, existing to alleviate the guilt of the haves in relation to the have-nots. It is a finite resource. The UK, it seems, is close to running on empty.

- Moya Lothian-McLean is a contributing editor at Novara Media

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Opinion Prisons and probation

Prisons are an overflowing, squalid, absurd waste of money. So why do the public want more of them?

[Polly Toynbee](#)



We know longer sentences do more harm than good. Let's focus our resources on threadbare public services instead



HMP Woodhill, near Milton Keynes, is operating at below capacity because of staff shortages. Photograph: David Sillitoe/The Guardian

Fri 2 Dec 2022 03.00 EST Last modified on Fri 2 Dec 2022 09.18 EST

Prisons in England and Wales are overflowing, again. [Police cells are being requisitioned](#), again. Over the years, prison numbers go up and up – even though the Sentencing Council itself finds [scant evidence](#) that more time in jail does any good. Prisons are bursting at the seams because of ever-lengthening sentences. Damian Hinds, the minister for prisons, is eager to blame the barristers’ strike for this crisis. That’s outrageous: barristers’ strikes have merely highlighted the existing prison logjam.

Here’s the real cause: the public’s appetite for locking people up seems insatiable. Nothing is ever enough. The more politicians implement tougher sentences, the greater the public taste for even stiffer penalties. Fact-free, tabloid-stoked impulses for vengeance merge with politicians’ desire to out-tough each other on crime.

Michael Howard’s “prison works” speech in 1993 abruptly reversed a brief period of Tory liberalism during which prison numbers had fallen. David Blunkett’s landmark 2003 Criminal Justice Act increased life sentences from an average of 12 to more than 20 years. This led to soaring numbers of

prisoners in jail (when Margaret Thatcher left office in 1990 there were 45,000; now, [there are 82,000](#)). The chair of the justice committee, Bob Neill, is a rare Tory voice calling for less custody.

This crisis in prisons is a horribly familiar story. Every public service has suffered severe cuts. Abysmal wages make it impossible to retain and recruit staff, and neglected buildings fall into gross disrepair. The public accounts committee (PAC) warns of the “eye-watering” backlog of repairs needed in UK prisons – they will [cost £1bn](#). The government has claimed it will [spend £4bn](#) on expanding prisons, but this seems to be slipping away, going the way of those “40 new hospitals”.

What’s needed isn’t bigger prisons with more places in them, but fewer prisons with properly paid and trained staff, and good rehabilitation programmes. The PAC warns of an “[expected surge in demand](#) across the criminal justice system from the recruitment of 20,000 new police officers”. That perfectly matches the 20,000 more prison places that have been promised. More police officers with targets to hit means more arrests and more young men jailed; Richard Garside of the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies estimates the average cost of locking up a prisoner is £40,000 a year.

HMP Woodhill in Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, is typical. I visited a couple of years ago – it was chosen for me presumably as one of the less awful ones. Its impressive governor was struggling to keep the prison afloat then, but its recent chief inspector’s report paints an even more dismal picture than the one I saw. The prison has been rated poor on safety, poor on purposeful activity, not sufficiently good on rehabilitation and release plans, nor on “respect”. It has an inadequate daily regime (prisoners are allowed only two hours a day out of their cells, and even that is only on weekdays).

Woodhill is running at below capacity. This is not owing to a lack of demand for places, but because one large unit has closed due to a lack of staff. The report concludes that staff shortages are “the single most limiting factor to progress”, making it “inevitable” that outcomes “will deteriorate even further”. This, it says, is “despite committed and enthusiastic leadership”. Indeed the governor, Nicola Marfleet, knew the problems all too well when I met her. Staff leave as fast as they are recruited, and most are inexperienced,

yet their work involves overseeing dangerous and complex category-A prisoners. Most stay in post for three years or less.

As in every prison, nearly half of Woodhill's prisoners will be back. When I asked Marfleet what would reduce crime levels, the one thing she didn't say was more prison. On the contrary, she said: "Sure Start centres, for all families, catching problems right from birth." But most Sure Start centres have long gone.

Still, the public want more prisons. As a result, Britain has more prisons per head of population than most similar European countries. Research this year by Mike Hough, a professor of law at Birkbeck, and others shows that people think sentences are getting lighter than they were 25 years ago. Some 76% of those expressing an opinion say sentences are getting shorter and are too lenient, even though in reality average sentence lengths have increased. When asked what punishments ought to be meted out, the public often choose custodial sentences that are very close to what they already actually are.

Ignorance is the blight of democracy, inexcusable when simple information on everything is only a click away on any smartphone. But far more unforgivable are the politicians who keep stoking that "tougher and tougher" appetite instead of explaining the facts. That results in overflowing and squalid jails with criminals who are destined to come back time and again. It's an absurd waste of money that should be redirected to the threadbare services for early years, children's mental health and everyone's education.

- Polly Toynbee is a Guardian columnist

This article was amended on 2 December 2022. Due to an editing error, an earlier version said that David Blunkett's 2003 introduction of imprisonment for public protection sentences had increased life sentences from an average of 12 to more than 20 years. This conflated two separate changes: imprisonment for public protection, and an increase in minimum terms for mandatory life sentences. It was the latter that was the intended reference, and this has been clarified.

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The politics sketchPolitics

Urgent question on railways chaos sends the Tories running for the hills

John Crace



As frustration builds over failing services, the government accepted something must be done. They just don't know what



Junior transport minister Huw Merriman, pictured here launching the west London spoil conveyor at HS2's Old Oak Common site, had few answers to Labour's urgent question over the state of the UK's rail service. Photograph: HS2/PA

Thu 1 Dec 2022 12.38 ESTFirst published on Thu 1 Dec 2022 12.21 EST

Turning up at any station on the Avanti west coast line is an article of faith, a triumph of hope over experience. The timetable is just wishful thinking. Trains are cancelled, delayed or disappeared seemingly at will. And if you do find one going in your general direction, you're expected to be so grateful that you don't notice there are no seats left. Much the same goes with the ironically named TransPennine Express. You'd hate to take the non-Express service. It might be quicker to walk.

So it was no surprise that on Thursday Labour was granted an urgent question to see if there was any chance that the performance of these two rail franchises might improve anytime soon. Similar UQs about the railways get asked at least once a month and we were now long overdue. Not that anyone was expecting any more enlightening answers. But it was important to let everyone know that someone was bothered about it.

This time it was junior transport minister, Huw Merriman, who was left with the unenviable job of trying to explain why the government still hadn't been able to make the trains run. Not just on time, but at all.

And, to his credit, Merriman made a better fist of it than other useful idiots, AKA ministerial sacrifices, sent out to defend the indefensible in the Commons while the secretary for state runs for cover in Whitehall. He didn't just plead stupidity for 45 minutes while trying to wind down the clock, as most do. Not only did he actually appear to know something about trains, he also appeared to care. Unheard of. It won't catch on.

He started by making no excuses. The services were completely unacceptable. Something must be done, though he wasn't quite sure what. The thing was, it was all a bit of a mess. There had been more people than usual who had called in sick over the past six months. And those who normally volunteered to do overtime had chosen instead just to work their regular hours. How very inconsiderate of them.

Sadly though, Merriman was unable to join the dots. Perhaps Avanti and the TransPennine Express should rethink a business model that depended on only a few people going off sick and the rest filling in for them on overtime. How about actually employing a few more people to fill the vacancies? Heaven forbid. Or how about even accepting that Avanti and TPE had had their day in the sun and getting someone else in to run the franchises?

The shadow transport secretary, Louise Haigh, had some sympathy for Merriman. But not much. Businesses in the north were suffering with people unable to get in to work. The number of cancellations was actually even higher than the published rate, because as long as Avanti cancelled a service by 10pm the night before it was scheduled, it wasn't officially cancelled – it was just a train that never ran. The vanished. And, she hated to point out, the rail companies had promised to increase their staffing levels six years earlier when the trains were screwed up and, amazingly, nothing had happened.

Merriman looked agonised. It was all terrible. He briefly tried to blame the unions for not agreeing to change their working practices faster. Like coming in to work when they were sick. Or working 24-hour shifts. That kind of thing.

But he didn't even sound as if he had convinced himself. Especially when Tory MP after Tory MP weighed in to say that train services were in a terrible state all across the country and that they wanted something done about it. Merriman ran his fingers through his hair and promised everyone a one to one meeting with him to discuss what they weren't going to do to make things better. He won't have a lot of spare time between now and Christmas.

The railways, along with Royal Mail, the NHS and schools, were also up for grabs on Sky News, where Kay Burley was talking to union leaders – or union barons as the Tories insist on calling them – about the forthcoming strike action. In the studio were Eddie Dempsey of the RMT, Dave Ward of the CWU and Mary Bousted of the National Education Union. Up in Manchester – either because she hadn't been able to get a train or there just wasn't enough room in Sky HQ with Ward and Dempsey's manspreading – was Emma Runswick of the British Medical Association.

For the most part it was fairly gentle, undemanding stuff. There seems to be a recognition that people have been pushed far enough in the current cost of living crisis and the union demands are no more than fair. Most workers have taken a real terms pay cut over the past 12 years and a pay rise in line with or above inflation is hard to argue against. Why should people carry on working for less and less? The education secretary, Gillian Keegan, didn't exactly help the government's cause by saying people in work only needed to use food banks if their boiler broke or a relationship ended. As if it was their fault for not leading perfect lives.

Only once did it threaten to get nasty, when Dempsey thought he detected ongoing class war with Burley as an establishment mouthpiece. Burley had to point out that she also made life awkward for government ministers and, besides, she was only asking questions that viewers had asked. Dempsey relaxed a little at this. Runswick drily observed that it was just as well there was coordinated strike action across the NHS, otherwise patients' safety really would be in jeopardy. Not that it wasn't already with existing levels of pay and funding.

“We just want to be able to negotiate with government,” they all pleaded at the end. Their frustration was all too evident. But ministers don't want to be

negotiated with. They don't know how to manage the crisis and have run for the hills. Either that or they're lost in the Avanti black hole.

[A year in Westminster with John Crace, Marina Hyde and Armando Iannucci](#)

Join John Crace, Marina Hyde and Armando Iannucci for a look back at another chaotic year in Westminster, live at Kings Place in London, or via the livestream.

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[Opinion](#)Monarchy

We didn't ask for Lady Hussey to resign. But, really, the monarchy must do better on race

[Mandu Reid](#)



I witnessed the racist remarks, but blaming one person alone distracts from the depth and breadth of racism in that institution



Ngozi Fulani (rear left) and Camilla, the Queen Consort, at the Buckingham Palace reception. Photograph: RT/Pool-Francis Dias/Newspix International
Thu 1 Dec 2022 13.31 EST Last modified on Fri 2 Dec 2022 23.50 EST

I generally avoid news about the royals. So it was a real eye-opener to find myself at the centre of a royal story. At a reception on Tuesday to honour those working to end violence against women and girls, I witnessed racist remarks from a member of the royal household directed at my friend and fellow activist, [Ngozi Fulani](#). Lady Hussey’s prolonged interrogation about where Ngozi was *really from*, what her *nationality* was and where her *people were from*, was not – as many people have insisted to me over the past 24 hours – the kind of well-meaning curiosity that all of us experience from time to time (though it’s possible that Hussey believed that it was).

“Hackney” was Ngozi’s answer, but Hussey refused to accept this. Her response implied that Black and brown people couldn’t really be British. It implied that we were trespassing – and it made me reflect on the [increasingly hostile environment](#) of this disunited kingdom.

Even so, the media furore feels disproportionate, given the avalanche of huge stories you might expect to be dominating the news cycle. It’s not that this one isn’t serious. Racism always is, which is why I’ve spoken out. But

something about this media frenzy feels ... off. Even as I write this, interview requests are coming in faster than I can say no to (in one case my refusal was countered with the offer of a huge fee). If you have seen the [emergency appeal](#) that the Women's Equality party launched this week, you will understand how hard that particular refusal was, though it confirmed why my decision had been right in the first place.

The initial calls I received were from journalists not looking for my account, but my *corroboration*. It took some time to realise that it was the very fact that the incident had been “witnessed” that made it significant, and forced the palace to respond swiftly (and in my view, unsatisfactorily). Unlike when the Duchess of Sussex made her accounts of royal racism, such as the “concerns” that were expressed over [how dark her son's skin might be](#), the palace wasn't able to deny or deflect this time. It couldn't rerun the famous line that “recollections may vary”, because three of us have identical, and identically uncomfortable, recollections of that encounter.

Soon after the first media reports were published, the palace announced that Hussey had resigned. This is a gambit that I have become increasingly familiar with since the Women's Equality party started [campaigning against police misogyny](#). What I've learned is that the “bad apple” narrative is potent not only because it masquerades as taking responsibility without the institution having to do any such thing, but also because it often helps drive a backlash against the “woke brigade” for cancelling yet another innocent. I see that “She's 83” is now trending on Twitter, imploring us to leave this nice old lady alone, a stance that adds a dash of ageism to the racism that has pervaded much of the commentary.

The funny thing is, neither Ngozi nor I wanted Hussey to receive the grand order of the boot. Ngozi didn't even name her publicly; it was social media that did this, immediately seizing on the story as another chance to form into polarised rival camps. Instead of stepping down, Hussey should be encouraged to step up, along with senior members of the royal household. This is much bigger than one individual: blaming Hussey risks minimising and distracting from the depth and breadth of racism that is enshrined in an institution that carries the heritage of empire, slavery and inequality (we are their subjects, after all).

Buckingham Palace trumpets its commitment to diversity and inclusion on its website. In a statement on Wednesday, it promised to remind staff of its policies. That's a big ask when its own [annual reports](#) show a lack of diversity among the upper echelons of its staff. The palace's history is dotted with [failures of inclusion](#). Still, it's not the worst of the royal courts. Anecdotal evidence suggests that honour falls to Kensington Palace, which [didn't even release this data](#) in its last annual report.

Perhaps a starting point for an institution where staff think it's OK to touch a Black woman's hair or question her belonging would be signing up to cultural competence training. I know just the organisation to provide that. Sistah Space, the charity Ngozi runs to support African and Caribbean heritage women affected by domestic and sexual abuse, offers such courses to institutions that don't know where to begin.

Wouldn't it be something if Buckingham Palace asked for their help? It would certainly chime with the [Queen Consort's speech](#) at the reception, in which she said that the starting point for responding to survivors of abuse was listening to them and believing them. Perhaps, one day, that principle could extend to Meghan too.

- Mandu Reid is leader of the Women's Equality party

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[Donald Trump](#)

US court strikes down appointment of special master to review Trump records

Decision marks decisive defeat as judges opine the request should never have been granted in the first place



The FBI seized documents from Trump's Florida home. Photograph: Marco Bello/Reuters

[Hugo Lowell](#) in Washington

[@hugolowell](#)

Thu 1 Dec 2022 18.06 ESTLast modified on Fri 2 Dec 2022 13.34 EST

A federal appeals court on Thursday terminated the special master review of documents seized from [Donald Trump](#) at his Mar-a-Lago property, paving the way for the justice department to regain access to the entirety of the materials for use in the criminal investigation surrounding the former president.

The decision by the US court of appeals for the 11th circuit marked a decisive defeat for Trump in a ruling that said a lower-court judge should never have granted his request for an independent arbiter in the first place and is unlikely to be overturned in the event of appeal.

“The law is clear,” the appeals court wrote in an [unanimous 23-page opinion](#). “We cannot write a rule that allows any subject of a search warrant to block government investigations after the execution of the warrant. Nor can we write a rule that allows only former presidents to do so.”

The ruling removed the lower-court judge’s order, allowing federal prosecutors to use the unclassified documents – in addition to the documents marked classified they previously regained in an earlier appeal – in the criminal investigation [examining Trump’s mishandling](#) of national security materials.

Trump can only appeal to the US supreme court, according to local rules in the 11th circuit, though it was not immediately clear whether he would do so. The former president has lost multiple cases before the supreme court, most recently including whether Congress can get access to his tax returns.

In a statement, a Trump spokesman said: “The decision does not address the merits that clearly demonstrate the impropriety of the unprecedented, illegal and unwarranted raid on Mar-a-Lago. President Donald J Trump will continue to fight against the weaponized Department of ‘Justice.’”

The decision handed down by the 11th circuit was not surprising given the extent of skepticism expressed by the three-judge panel led by the chief appellate judge William Pryor about the legality of the extraordinary injunction against the department during oral arguments last week.

Trump sought the appointment of a special master to examine the documents seized from [Mar-a-Lago](#) – including 103 bearing classified markings – shortly after the FBI searched the resort on the basis that some of the materials could be subject to potential privilege protections.

The [requests were granted](#) by US judge Aileen Cannon, a Trump appointee, who gave exceptional deference to Trump on account of his status as a

former president and decided he satisfied elements of the four-part Richey test used to determine whether to intervene in a criminal investigation.

But the 11th circuit ruled that Cannon should never have appointed a special master, writing that she did not have the authority to prevent the department from using the seized materials – a move that is also without legal precedent.

The only instance in which US district courts could restrain an executive branch criminal investigation, the 11th circuit wrote, was if there was some exceptional circumstance that satisfied the [four-part Richey test](#) to justify the intervention.

Trump did not meet any of the four tests under Richey, particularly the first test about whether he suffered “callous disregard” to his constitutional rights as a result of the FBI’s search of Mar-a-Lago, which the 11th circuit ruled was the most important of the Richey standards.

Cannon herself had found that Trump did not meet the “callous disregard” threshold, but intervened after deciding he had satisfied other tests. But the 11th circuit pointedly disagreed.

Trump did not meet the second “possessory interest” test in the seized materials because he could not articulate which documents he needed, the 11th circuit said, and Trump did not meet the third test about whether he would be irreparably harmed if the materials were not returned.

“Plaintiff’s task was to show why he needed the documents, not why the government did not,” the 11th circuit wrote.

Trump also failed to meet the fourth test about whether he could seek recourse besides judicial intervention, the 11th circuit wrote, rejecting his argument that he needed the injunction because some of the seized materials might have been outside the scope of the search warrant.

“The status of a document as personal or presidential does not alter the authority of the government to seize it under a warrant supported by probable cause. The Department of Justice has the documents because they were seized with a search warrant,” the three-judge panel wrote.

Throughout the ruling, the 11th circuit repeatedly emphasized that US district courts should intervene in criminal investigations before charges have even been filed only if there is some exceptional circumstance given the separation of powers between the judicial and executive branches.

Trump's lawyers had [suggested in court](#) that it was Trump's status as a former president that made the case unique, but the 11th circuit disagreed with that argument, saying there was no such precedent and it would not create new precedent for former presidents to receive special treatment.

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[Saudi Arabia](#)

Saudi film festival claim of ‘zero censorship’ fails to win over critics

Organisers say accusation Red Sea event is a ‘reputation laundering tool’ for Riyadh smacks of western hypocrisy



The director Guy Ritchie, centre left, and his wife, the actor Jacqui Ainsley, right, joins the festival’s CEO, Mohammed Al Turki, centre right, on opening night. Photograph: Tim P Whitby/Getty Images

[Oliver Holmes](#)

Fri 2 Dec 2022 00.00 ESTLast modified on Fri 2 Dec 2022 13.20 EST

A glitzy international film festival in [Saudi Arabia](#) has laid out the red carpet for a host of famed actors and directors, promising a “zero-censorship” event that will feature LGBTQ+ themes despite being held in a country where homosexuality is criminalised.

Only five years since the hardline Gulf monarchy [lifted a decades-old ban](#) on cinemas, the Red Sea international film festival launched 10 days of screenings on Thursday. Guests include the Lebanese actor and director Nadine Labaki, as well as fellow directors Guy Ritchie and the Oscar winner Spike Lee.

Now in its second year, the festival [debuted in 2021](#) to accusations that the Saudi Arabian government was using culture to whitewash its poor human rights record.

Despite reforms of social laws including [allowing women to drive](#), the country's crown prince and de facto ruler, Mohammed bin Salman, has overseen a [surge in executions](#) and [crushed political dissent](#). He has also been [widely condemned](#) for directing Saudi Arabia's intervention in the civil war in Yemen and, according to US intelligence, is likely to have ordered the murder of the journalist [Jamal Khashoggi](#).

Michael Page, the deputy director of the [Middle East and north Africa](#) division at Human Rights Watch, accused the Saudi Arabian authorities of using "festivals as a reputation laundering tool, in the same way that they have used previous celebrity and sporting events to try to whitewash their quite terrible image".

Mohammed Al Turki, a film producer and chief executive of the festival, said there was "a bit of western hypocrisy" when it came to criticism of holding a film festival in Saudi Arabia, adding that he was excited to host an event in his home country that would have been impossible just a few years ago.

Asked by the film industry news website [Deadline Hollywood](#) about LGBTQ+ rights, Turki said: "The festival has a zero censorship policy ... I don't think you can have an international film festival if you're going to have censorship – that doesn't go hand in hand."

One of the films being screened, [The Blue Caftan](#), is a story centring on a secretly gay Moroccan tailor who is forced to confront his sexuality when a male apprentice joins his workshop. The festival website credits the director,

Maryam Touzani, for covering “a complex subject with sensitivity and courage, pointing the way to a society where tradition and tolerance can flourish together”.

Allowing such films at the festival creates a paradox where the Ritz Carlton hotel in Jeddah in effect becomes temporarily exempt from Saudi Arabia’s homophobic practices. Other guests include Luca Guadagnino, who directed the Oscar-winning *Call Me By Your Name*, a gay love story that would certainly never make it past the [Saudi Arabian censors](#).

Kaleem Aftab, the director of international programming at the festival, has said there are no mandated government restrictions on the films he can select.

Speaking to the industry magazine [Screen International](#), Aftab said: “Looking at Saudi Arabia as a monolithic whole is a huge mistake – it would be like me saying that everyone in England is a white British Brexiteer.

“Look at America today, with [Roe v Wade](#) being overturned. Things can go backwards and forwards. Every society has imperfections, every society deals with it.”

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While the festival describes itself as independent, the organisation relies on state funds and sponsorship from government-linked companies, and is seen as a way for the kingdom to drive investment in its embryonic film and television industry.

This year, Riyadh announced a 40% cash rebate on film production, and alongside the screenings the festival will operate a conference to promote the sector, named the Red Sea Souk.

Organisers hope Middle Eastern and global south productions that might get overlooked and underpromoted at other international festivals will be given a chance to shine. Last year's festival was attended by Haifaa al-Mansour, an award-winning female Saudi Arabian director, whose 2012 film *Wadjda* was the first feature film shot entirely in the Gulf country.

However, Dana Ahmed, a Middle East researcher at Amnesty International, said the festival must be seen within the context of authorities having “no tolerance for freedom of expression”.

She said: “It’s important to note in the midst of Saudi Arabia’s reformist drive that the authorities’ continued crackdown on freedom of expression means that everyone is at risk of decades in prison for their free speech.”

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Twitter

#ClimateScam: denialism claims flooding Twitter have scientists worried

Many researchers are fleeing the platform, unnerved by the surge in climate misinformation since Musk's chaotic takeover



The term #ClimateScam now regularly the first result that appears on Twitter when 'climate' is searched on the site. Photograph: Twitter

[*Oliver Milman*](#)

[*@olliemilman*](#)

Fri 2 Dec 2022 02.00 ESTLast modified on Fri 2 Dec 2022 13.46 EST

Twitter has proved a cherished forum for climate scientists to share research, as well as for activists seeking to rally action to halt oil pipelines or decry politicians' failure to cut pollution. But many are now fleeing [Twitter](#) due to a surge in climate misinformation, spam and even threats that have upended their relationship with the platform.

Scientists and advocates have told the Guardian they have become unnerved by a recent resurgence of debunked climate change denialist talking points and memes on Twitter, with the term #ClimateScam now regularly the first result that appears when “climate” is searched on the site.

Under the often chaotic leadership of Elon Musk, Twitter has [fired](#) content management teams, dismantled the platform’s [sustainability arm](#) and [lifted bans](#) on several prominent users with millions of followers, such as Donald Trump and the rightwing commentator Jordan Peterson, who has espoused falsities about the climate crisis. The changes have been too much to bear for some climate experts.

“Since Musk’s takeover I have ramped down my own use of Twitter, using it less both to look for news and to share science,” said Twila Moon, a scientist at the National Snow and Ice Data Center who said she was worried that years of connections formed between scientists could “crumble” if trust in Twitter collapses.

“Folks noticing a rise in climate denialism and disinformation is particularly worrying and I am concerned that it could slow climate action in ways that are devastating to economies, communities and health,” she said.

Michael Mann, a prominent climate scientist at University of Pennsylvania, said he has no immediate plans to depart Twitter but he’s noticed that climate disinformation has “become a bit more on the nose, with climate deniers who had been deactivated making a reappearance, and climate denial getting somewhat more traction”.

Mann has created a profile on Mastodon, a new social media site seen as an alternative to Twitter, and has been joined by a cadre of other climate scientists dismayed by Musk’s tenure. “I don’t think I’m getting much value from being on Twitter now, there are more interesting conversations [happening at Mastodon](#),” said Bob Kopp, a Rutgers University climate scientist who expressed alarm at Twitter [ending its policy](#) on Covid-19 misinformation, which he said “tends to go hand in hand” with climate denialism.



Demonstrators at the Chevron headquarters in San Ramon, California.
Photograph: Paul Sakuma/AP

Musk, a self-proclaimed defender of free speech and previously lauded by environmentalists due to his leadership of the electric car firm Tesla, has said that Twitter “obviously cannot become a free-for-all hellscape”. But his recent actions suggest “that he is interested in creating a massive, worldwide cage fight. If it comes to that, we’ll take a pass,” according to Ed Maibach, an expert in climate communications at George Mason University who claimed that many people in the climate community have discussed leaving the site.

There has been an uptick in Twitter content referencing #ClimateScam, “climate scam” or “climate is a scam” since July, three months before Musk’s \$44bn takeover of the site, with more than 500,000 mentions of these terms since then, [according to an analysis](#) by the Climate Action Against Disinformation [coalition](#). The opaque nature of Twitter’s algorithm makes it unclear why this has happened, the coalition said.

“There’s no evidence there are more posts with ‘climate scam’ than ‘climate emergency’ or other terms, or that they are getting more engagement, so it’s a bit perplexing why it’s the top search term, we are scratching our heads at

it,” said Jennie King, head of civic action at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, part of the coalition.

“I can understand climate scientists saying this is not a productive place for conversations with each other any more. They’ve become lightening rods for hate speech and death threats, we are seeing a real escalation of threats against them, intended to drive them off the platform.”

King said there was a “renewed energy” coursing through the effort to spread baseless claims about the climate crisis on Twitter, particularly by high-profile accounts that fold the issue into other major clashes, such as over abortion or LGBTQ+ rights.

Peterson, the Canadian psychologist and media personality who was reinstated to Twitter by Musk following a ban, has recently become [fixated](#) upon climate change, often firing off a dozen tweets or more in a single day on the issue to his 3.5 million followers.

The rightwinger has shared debunked theories that excess carbon dioxide is beneficial to the world, that “automotive freedom” is under threat from efforts to reduce pollution from cars and that climate campaigners want to “wreak envious and narcissistic havoc”.

“Peterson is a big one because his brand extends beyond the environment but now he’s doubling down on climate,” said King. “We’ve seen time and again these accounts that espouse climate denial and delay also spread misinformation on other topics, such as electoral fraud, racial politics or reproductive rights.”

While false claims about the climate crisis have been deployed for decades by the fossil fuel industry and various conservative figures, there is some evidence there has been a rise in polarization over climate on social media over the past two years. [A recent study](#) by researchers in the UK and Italy found there was a fourfold increase in “contrarian” rightwing climate conversations on Twitter during the UN Cop26 climate talks last year, compared with the same summit held in 2015.

The increase in minority voices on climate, who make claims such as that people favoring climate action are somehow hypocrites or that reducing emissions is pointless or expensive, is being fueled by well-known rightwing politicians in the US and Europe turning their fire on climate activists who have become more prominent in recent years, the researchers said.

“We’ve entered a new era of conversation around climate change, where there is diminished trust and no interaction between groups who disagree,” said Andrea Baronchelli, co-author of the study and a researcher at City University London. “If you’re in one camp, you aren’t necessarily exposed to the views of the other camp, other than to mock them.”

For climate scientists, this breakdown has raised fears that previously mainstream online spaces like Twitter will be ceded to conspiracy theorists and others without any expertise of global heating. Kim Cobb, a climate scientist at Brown University, has moved to Mastodon, too, but lamented that it feels “fairly tame and pretty nerdy” compared with Twitter.

“As someone who followed lots of women scientists, and scientists of color, I’m noticing the absence of these treasured voices,” she said.

“Maybe they’ve left Twitter, or maybe they’ve fallen silent, or maybe the network has deteriorated to the point that I’m just not seeing them being retweeted by mutuals. Twitter is a shadow of its former self when it comes to climate change.”

- This article was amended on 2 December 2022 to correctly identify Michael Mann’s place of work.

[Joe Biden](#)

Biden and Macron seek to heal trade rift and present united front on Ukraine

US president promises ‘tweaks’ to Inflation Reduction Act that has led to French and European concern over state subsidies



Joe Biden and President Emmanuel Macron of France attend a press conference in the East Room of the White House in Washington. Photograph: Chris Kleponis/EPA

[David Smith](#) in Washington

[@smithinamerica](#)

Thu 1 Dec 2022 15.32 EST First published on Thu 1 Dec 2022 14.51 EST

Joe Biden has sought to heal a rift with France’s President [Emmanuel Macron](#) and other European leaders over trade, admitting there are “glitches” in \$739bn legislation that he says can be fixed.

The US president was speaking on Thursday while hosting Macron for the first state visit of his presidency. The leaders expressed unity on support for Ukraine's war against Russia but faced questions about their differences on trade.

America's Inflation Reduction Act, or IRA, is set to pour billions of dollars into environmentally friendly industries, with strong backing for American-based manufacturers. The White House touts the IRA as a groundbreaking effort to restart domestic manufacturing and promote renewable technologies while challenging Chinese dominance.

But European Union governments have cried foul at the "Made in America" emphasis and threatened to launch a trade war by subsidising their own green economy sector.

In a joint press conference, Biden said of the legislation: "There's obviously going to be glitches in it and need to reconcile changes in it." He promised that "tweaks" would be made, adding that the US "never intended to exclude folks that were cooperating with us".

The president added: "My point is we're back in business and we're going to continue to create manufacturing jobs but not at the expense of Europe."

Speaking through an interpreter, Macron said he had explained to Biden that the legislation's subsidies could kill off some green energy projects but he accepted these were unintended consequences.

He added: "We have no alternative but to work together. We need to resynchronise together." Macron said [France](#), like America, wanted to rebuild its manufacturing base after 50 years of industrial decline. "We want to succeed together, not one at the expense of the other."

Some regard Macron's pomp-filled visit as a lavish apology from Washington after last year's [bitter spat over the way Australia pulled out of a French submarine deal](#) in favour of acquiring US nuclear subs instead, leaving Paris blindsided.

Speaking in the East Room amid gold curtains, crystal chandeliers and Christmas trees decorated with fairy lights, fake icicles and snow, Biden said: “Emmanuel has also become a friend. Occasionally we have some slight differences, but never in a fundamental way.”

The president and his wife Jill had greeted Macron and his wife Brigitte with hugs, kisses and broad smiles at a South Lawn ceremony where Macron, 44, repeatedly placed his hand on 80-year-old Biden’s back as the men walked together and pledged to uphold the “unwavering” US-French alliance ahead of talks on Ukraine, China and a looming trade dispute.

Service members from the marines, army, air force and even a detachment of soldiers in 18th-century revolutionary war garb paraded in front of the White House. Artillery fired off a 21-gun salute, sending puffs of white smoke into the sunny but chilly December sky.

Biden praised Macron as “not just the leader of France” and for being “very outspoken and very, very commanding in Europe”.



Macron departs with Joe Biden after their joint news conference.
Photograph: Jonathan Ernst/Reuters

The state visit is a boost to Macron diplomatically that he can leverage back in Europe. It could burnish his image as the EU’s most visible and vocal

leader, at a time when Europe is increasingly concerned that its economy will be indelibly weakened by the Ukraine war and resulting energy and inflation crises.

At the East Room press conference, Biden said he had been shocked by Russia's brutality in Ukraine but insisted that Vladimir Putin was "not going to succeed", adding: "President Macron and I have resolved that we're going to continue working together to hold Russia accountable for their actions and to mitigate the global impacts of Putin's war on the rest of the world."

Taking questions from reporters, Biden added: "There's one way for this war to end – the rational way. Putin to pull out of Ukraine ... it's sick, what he's doing ... I'm prepared to speak with Mr Putin if in fact there is an interest in him deciding he's looking for a way to end the war."

Macron said they discussed initiatives "to keep supporting and strengthen our support to the Ukrainian troops and enable them to resist".

Most of the visit has revolved around refreshing the long, if often slightly prickly, US-French diplomatic relationship.

Macron and his wife came to the US bearing gifts including a vinyl and CD of the original soundtrack from the 1966 film *Un Homme et une Femme*, which the Bidens went to see on their first date. The Bidens presented Macron with a custom mirror made of fallen wood from the White House grounds and a custom vinyl record collection of great American musicians.

The state dinner at the White House will return grand-scale entertainment to Washington in a way not seen since the Covid-19 pandemic shut it down.

The Grammy-award-winning American musician Jon Batiste will perform at the banquet, which the White House said will kick off with butter-poached Maine lobster, paired with caviar, delicata squash raviolo and tarragon sauce.

The main course features beef and triple-cooked butter potatoes, before leading to the cheese course of award-winning US brands, and finally orange chiffon cake, roasted pears with citrus sauce and creme fraiche ice cream. There will be also be [three wines from American vineyards](#).

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[Internet safety](#)

UK minister defends U-turn over removing harmful online content

Michelle Donelan rejects claim by father of Molly Russell that online safety bill has been watered down

- [UK politics live – latest news updates](#)



Ministers scrapped the provision on regulating ‘legal but harmful’ material after MPs raised free speech concerns. Photograph: Dominic Lipinski/PA

[Jessica Elgot](#) *Deputy political editor*

[@jessicaelgot](#)

Tue 29 Nov 2022 04.29 EST Last modified on Wed 30 Nov 2022 00.14 EST

The UK culture secretary, [Michelle Donelan](#), has defended removing a provision in the online safety bill to regulate “legal but harmful” online

material, after the father of teenager Molly Russell said it was a “watering down” of the bill.

Ministers have scrapped the provision after MPs raised free speech concerns. It would have included offensive content that does not constitute a criminal offence, but instead Donelan said platforms would be required to enforce their terms and conditions.

If those terms explicitly prohibit content that falls below the threshold of criminality – such as some forms of abuse – Ofcom will then have the power to ensure they police them adequately.

The bill, which returns to parliament on 5 December after being paused in July, also contains new provisions on protecting children. Overall, the legislation imposes a duty of care on tech firms to shield children from harmful content.

Other changes to the bill include [criminalising encouragement of committing self-harm](#), a change that was introduced after the inquest into the death of 14-year-old Molly Russell, who died after viewing extensive amounts of harmful material on Instagram and Pinterest in 2017. It will also [criminalise nonconsensual “deepfake” pornography and “downblousing”](#).

Molly’s father, Ian, told Radio 4’s Today programme on Tuesday that it was wrong to remove a duty on social media companies to curb legal but harmful content.

“I don’t think you can see the removal of a whole clause as anything other than watering down,” he said.

Donelan said she would defend the removal of the clause, which she said was preventing the bill from progressing.

“It had very, very concerning impact, potentially, on free speech,” she told Sky News. “There were unintended consequences associated with it. It was really the anchor that was preventing this bill from getting off the ground.

“It was a creation of a quasi-legal category between illegal and legal. That’s not what a government should be doing. It’s confusing. It would create a different kind of set of rules online to offline in the legal sphere.”

But Donelan said it would not have consequences for the kind of material children would see online. “The whole point around this bill fundamentally is about protecting children,” she told the Today programme.

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“That’s why the first thing that I did when I became secretary of state is defy what everybody said was impossible and actually strengthen this bill for children. We’re going further when it comes to children. I also said, look, if we all agree things should be illegal, let’s let’s make them illegal.

“And now in this bill, the promotion of self-harm is illegal, the promotion of intimate images including deepfakes are illegal. But I did also recognise, as did a number of my colleagues, that there is a deep concern about freedom of speech on the legal but harmful aspect.

“It was the government saying yes, this is legal. You can say it to one another, but you can’t type it online ... That is a shocking place for us to end up.”

She said the content that Russell had viewed would no longer be legal. “The content that Molly Russell saw will not be allowed as a result of this bill. And there will no longer be cases like that coming forward because we’re preventing that from happening,” she said. “And I want to be really clear on that. Because that is fundamentally what this bill is about.”

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Russia-Ukraine war: Ukraine first lady urges UK to support special tribunal for Russian war crimes – as it happened

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China

China police move to deter zero-Covid demonstrations and trace protesters

One arrested as police reportedly demand information from Beijing protester, while show of force largely prevents fresh demonstrations

China: police crackdown on anti-lockdown protests – video

[Helen Davidson](#) in Taipei

[@heldavidson](#)

Tue 29 Nov 2022 04.32 EST First published on Mon 28 Nov 2022 21.40 EST

Police have been out in force in China to stamp out zero-Covid protests and at least one person was arrested, according to social media videos, after a show of civil disobedience unprecedented since president [Xi Jinping](#) assumed power a decade ago.

There were also reports some demonstrators have been interrogated by authorities over the phone after attending the rare street gatherings in cities across the country.

The arrest was reportedly made in the city of Hangzhou late on Monday. Videos on social media, which could not be independently verified, showed hundreds of police occupying a large public square on Monday night, preventing people from congregating.

One video showed police, surrounded by a small crowd of people holding smartphones, making an arrest while others tried to pull back the person being detained. Hangzhou police did not immediately reply to a request for comment.

In Shanghai and Beijing, police could be seen on Tuesday morning still patrolling areas of the cities where some groups on the Telegram social media app had suggested people should gather again. Their presence on Monday evening and throughout the night ensured no more gatherings took place.

There were [reports of police asking people for their phones](#) to check if they had virtual private networks (VPNs) and the Telegram app, which has been used by weekend protesters. VPNs are illegal for most people in China, while the Telegram app is blocked from China's internet.

People were also sharing instructions on Telegram about how to keep phone data safe from random police checks, including apps or settings to quickly clear data. "What to do if your phone is stolen or taken by the police - this little guide may prevent unpleasant situations down the road," one message read.

In Shanghai, near a site of weekend protests, bar staff told news agency AFP they had been ordered to close at 10:00pm local time for "disease control". Small clusters of officers stood outside each metro exit.

Throughout the day AFP journalists saw officers detaining four people, later releasing one.

"The atmosphere tonight is nervy. There are so many police around," a man in his early 30s said as evening fell.

In Beijing, hundreds of mostly young people braved icy temperatures to gather near a riverbank in the capital on Sunday evening, as a vigil for victims of a deadly apartment blaze in north-western China's Xinjiang region turned into calls to end zero-Covid.

A woman protester told AFP that by Monday evening she and five of her friends who attended the protest had received phone calls from Beijing police, demanding information about their movements.

In one case, a police officer visited her friend's home after they refused to answer their phone.

“He said my name and asked me whether I went to the Liangma river last night ... he asked very specifically how many people were there, what time I went, how I heard about it,” she told AFP, asking to stay anonymous.

“The police stressed that last night’s protest was an illegal assembly, and if we had demands then we could submit them through the regular channels.”



Police officers stand guard during a protest against zero-Covid policies in Beijing on Sunday. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

She said that the police officer was mostly “even-toned” during the brief call and urged her not to attend future events.

“I had previously prepared for this, but of course I was still agitated,” she said, adding she would “try her best to continue” attending similar protests in the future, and “prepare better” next time. “I never thought that this kind of civil society activity could ever happen in China,” she said.

It is not clear how police discovered the identities of some protesters and the vast majority of those at Sunday’s rally did not have their ID documents checked by police, an AFP journalist saw.

Asked about widespread anger over China’s zero-Covid policy, foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told reporters: “What you mentioned does

not reflect what actually happened.

“We believe that with the leadership of the Communist party of China, and cooperation and support of the Chinese people, our fight against Covid-19 will be successful.”

Inside China, the government and state media have maintained silence on the protests but their awareness is apparent. Tuesday’s newspapers carried several items on zero-Covid, including an editorial in Xinhua acknowledging that the pandemic “has had some impact on social production and life”.

“In the face of complex changes in the pandemic, all localities and departments must be more patient and relieve the emotions of the people,” it said.

On Monday, smaller demonstrations spilled over outside mainland China. Dozens of protesters gathered in Hong Kong’s central business district, the scene of sometimes-violent anti-government demonstrations in 2019. Expatriate dissidents and students staged small-scale vigils and protests in cities around the world including London, Paris, Tokyo and Sydney.

US president Joe Biden is closely monitoring unrest in China by protesters, the White House said on Monday. National security council spokesman John Kirby would not describe Biden’s reaction to the protesters’ demands but said the president supported their rights.

“People should be allowed the right to assemble and to peacefully protest policies or laws or dictates that they take issue with,” Kirby said.

Britain’s prime minister Rishi Sunak warned that [China posed a “systemic challenge” to UK values and interests](#), as his government condemned the reported beating of the BBC reporter.

Sunak said the so-called “golden era” of UK-China relations trumpeted by former prime minister David Cameron was “over, along with the naive idea that trade would automatically lead to social and political reform.”

Since Friday, a wave of protests [spread across multiple cities](#) in China, prompted by the death of 10 people in a building fire in Urumqi in Xinjiang. Much of the region had been under lockdown for more than three months, and people blamed the lockdown for the deaths.

The protests have demonstrated a growing frustration and scepticism with the ruling Communist party's commitment to zero-Covid. Xi's government has pursued a policy of lockdowns, repeated testing of millions of people and lengthy quarantines for overseas arrivals in an attempt to limit spread.

A series of incidents related to the enforcement of the policy, including a bus crash that killed 27 people being taken to quarantine, and numerous suicides and other deaths linked to lockdowns and restrictions, have tested people's tolerance.

Agence France-Presse and Reuters contributed to this report

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Zero-Covid policy: why is China still having severe lockdowns?



China's strict zero-Covid policy has led to an outpouring of public protest. Photograph: Kevin Frayer/Getty Images

Strict measures that continue almost three years into pandemic are prompting widespread protests. Here are the factors

[*Jonathan Yerushalmy*](#) and agencies

Mon 28 Nov 2022 22.40 EST Last modified on Tue 29 Nov 2022 07.08 EST

China's strategy of controlling Covid-19 with lockdowns, mass testing and quarantines has provoked the [greatest show of public dissent](#) against the ruling Communist party in decades.

Initially, [China](#) succeeded in suppressing the virus, but then more transmissible variants emerged, and in recent weeks the outbreak has grown with record numbers of cases reported.

Global health experts have criticised China's methods as unsustainable, so with both cases and public discontent rising, why is China still pursuing its zero-Covid strategy?

Vaccines

Almost three years on from when Covid-19 was first detected in Wuhan, China's case numbers remain far lower than in most other countries.

However, this means the population has had very little exposure to the virus and the vaccination rate remains lower than in many similar countries.

China refused to import international vaccines and is using only domestically developed vaccines that have been found to be less effective than those widely used elsewhere.

[Restrictive lockdown measures continue in China, nearly three years into the pandemic](#)

“Unfortunately, the vaccines in China were not very good,” says Dr Paul Hunter, a professor of medicine at Britain’s University of East Anglia, adding that the vaccination levels of China’s most vulnerable people is low and much of the protection provided by the shots has now faded for those immunised long ago.

Many infectious disease experts say China should now import the mRNA vaccines made by Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna, despite the obvious political challenges from acknowledging the shortcomings of its homegrown shots.

Vaccine scepticism and fatigue are also factors. [Writing in the Guardian](#), Prof Devi Sridhar, chair of global public health at the University of Edinburgh, says reports suggest only about 40% of over-80s have received a booster shot, and millions remain unvaccinated.

“[China] didn’t promote the vaccine to elderly groups until November 2021, but by this time considerable vaccine scepticism had built up ... the low effectiveness of the non-mRNA Chinese vaccines were also a concern: studies indicated that protection faded fast and was undetectable after six months.”

Healthcare capacity

China has reported far fewer deaths compared with other large nations and has one of the lowest deaths per capita in the world, but it will eventually have to open its borders, a step that will inevitably bring a surge of disease, says Dr Hunter.

Restrictions should be lifted incrementally to avoid hospitals being overwhelmed and other restrictions, like mask-wearing, could be held in place to reduce spread as much as possible, Dr Hunter says.

[chart](#)

“The surge will peak very quickly and also fade rather quickly. But while they are going through it, it will be dreadful.”

The health analytics firm Airfinity released projections on Monday estimating that up to two million people in China could be at risk of death if the country were to lift its zero-Covid policy, given its low vaccination rates and the lack of natural immunity among its population.

China's preparations for life after zero-Covid have also been called into question by analysts. While many nations used the time given to them by lockdowns to increase intensive care capacity, China still lags behind many other Asian nations.

[Recent data shows](#) China has fewer than five critical care beds per 100,000 people, compared to almost 30 in Taiwan and more than 10 in South Korea and Thailand.

In what could be read as a rare criticism of the country's health system, a recent [comment article published in China's state-run People's Daily](#) quoted a pharmaceuticals analyst as saying that a full reopening might "threaten a health system that currently has far fewer ICU beds than those of other developed countries".

There is a general view that these factors, combined with an unequal access to healthcare, would probably see a huge death toll if the virus were allowed to sweep through the population of 1.4 billion people.

What's next?

The consensus among global health experts is that zero-Covid is unsustainable in the long term.

But in the face of unprecedented public opposition, there's little evidence that authorities are willing to diverge from the path they are currently on.

A recent editorial on the front page of China's state-run newspaper, the Global Times, claimed that "compared with the past two years, China is facing a much tougher battle against the virus". The authors of the article quote an unnamed expert who warns that authorities may have to take "excessive measures".

However, in what could be seen as a nod to growing public discontent, the influential former Global Times editor, Hu Xijin has acknowledged the protests taking place and said that, “With the relaxation of the epidemic prevention and control measures, public sentiment will soon calm down.”

“Most Chinese people are no longer afraid of being infected. China may walk out of the shadow of Covid-19 sooner than expected.”

Associated Press contributed to this report

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**'There's nowhere else for them to go':
what next for 100,000 Ukrainians and
the Britons who took them in?**



Clare Birkbeck, right, is hosting Katya Zaikhchuk and her son Sasha, 15, under Homes for Ukraine. Photograph: Andy Hall/The Observer

People all over the UK welcomed refugees into their homes under a government scheme. The children got school places; the adults found jobs. But the commitment was for just six months – and time is up



[Amelia Gentleman](#)

[@ameliagentleman](#)

Tue 29 Nov 2022 01.00 EST

Most evenings, while Katya Zaikhchuk was waiting in Poland for the Home Office to grant her and her 15-year-old son, Sasha, a visa to come to England, she would get a video call from her host, Clare Birkbeck, as she cooked supper at home in [Essex](#). “I’d walk around the house, showing her the kitchen and the bedrooms, trying to make her feel comfortable, showing her what living in our house would be like. I was more worried for them than nervous for us,” Birkbeck remembers.

She and her husband bought a Ukrainian flag from Amazon, and their daughter made a poster decorated with yellow and blue curled ribbons and carefully transcribed a welcome message from Google Translate, which they

took to the airport when they went to meet their guests in April. “You could see they were both very nervous. When they saw us, they hugged us and cried.”

Birkbeck, a landscape architect, and her husband deliberated for only a couple of days in early March before resolving to host Ukrainian refugees. There was a community of people in and around the Essex town of Saffron Walden who were coming together to offer rooms, and it felt as though there would be a lot of support for both the hosts and the guests.

“It felt very easy to decide. People were in awful situations,” she says. They had the space: three of their four children had left home – two were at university and the third was working in London. “So far it has been a very positive experience. We’ve been really lucky because we’ve got on so well.” But eight months on, Birkbeck and her Ukrainian guests are beginning to think longer term, and realising that an agreement that they envisaged lasting at most a year may be challenging to move on from.



More than 104,100 Ukrainians have arrived in the UK under the government sponsorship scheme. Photograph: Ben Birchall/PA

There is much to celebrate about the Homes for [Ukraine](#) scheme, which was set up very rapidly in the weeks that followed the Russian invasion, but the

next few months will test whether it can survive as a model.

More than 104,100 Ukrainians have arrived in the UK under the sponsorship scheme, while another 40,000 came to stay with relatives. “We have never done anything on this scale. The Kindertransport brought around 10,000 children here in 1939. This is 144,000 people in just over six months – it’s unbelievable,” says Krish Kandiah, who this year launched the Sanctuary Foundation, which became one of the matching organisations helping hosts to find refugees in need of homes. “This is a global gamechanger in terms of refugee sponsorship schemes.”



‘It hasn’t been easy for them’ ... Clare Birkbeck. Photograph: Andy Hall/The Guardian

Many of those who signed up to the scheme in Saffron Walden feel very glad to have been involved, but they also say they may need more support if they are to continue hosting. At the moment the government pays them a “thank you” payment of £350 a month, regardless of the number of people they host. “It’s awkward to moan about it, but it feels like we’re a bargain,” says one host, who has given rooms to four people and is conscious of rising bills.

When the scheme was launched in March, hosts were asked to make a commitment for a minimum of six months. That period has expired for those who were quickly granted visas in March and April, and while most hosts are happy to extend the invitation for another six months or a year, some are beginning to feel uneasy about an emergency arrangement becoming permanent.

Records for the district council of Uttlesford, the rural Essex area that includes Saffron Walden, show that in September, 126 hosts were looking after 198 people from Ukraine, with 25 host families in the medieval town itself. Local primary and secondary schools have been welcoming to children, offering places quickly and giving out vouchers for shoes and free uniforms. Volunteers have helped out by donating clothes, free ballet lessons for children, organising English classes and putting on welcome picnics.

There is no exit strategy and that feels difficult for all of us. We all plunged in without knowing how it was going to pan out

When the end of the initial period approached, Uttlesford council wrote to hosts asking if they wanted to extend the agreement for another six months. So far, 18 households have told the council they need help to find somewhere new for the refugees they are hosting. Nationally, 2,175 Ukrainian households have had to register as homeless (about a half of these of had been living with Homes for Ukraine hosts).

“The main problem is that there’s nowhere else for them to go,” said one host (asking not to be named, to avoid upsetting the people living with her). “There is no exit strategy and that feels difficult for all of us. We all plunged in without knowing how it was going to pan out and our lives quickly became emotionally entangled.”

While in theory Ukrainians can claim housing benefit and rent their own places, most were invited to stay in relatively well-off areas where households have the time, money and space to devote to hosting refugees, but which are difficult places in which to find affordable housing to rent. One host worries that a refugee in the town is jumping prematurely into a

relationship with a man she hardly knows in order to secure somewhere to live longer-term. “You see people making very stark choices,” she says.

In September, Uttlesford council held a meeting for hosts and guests to set out their options if they wanted to move on; about 70 people turned up for what turned out to be a bleak evening. Council officials made it clear there was almost no social housing available locally, and renting privately would be difficult too because of high rents; they set out how Ukrainians who wanted or needed to move might have better options in cities such as Peterborough or Colchester where rents are lower. “It was a hard message and people were freaked out,” says a host who attended the meeting.

“They said you need to have £50,000 income if you want to rent here. I cried afterwards. I’ve got a job here, my son’s in school here,” says Zaikhchuk.

“You’ve had one big upheaval and you don’t want another,” says Birkbeck, but they both know the current situation is probably not sustainable. A few months after Katya and Sasha arrived, her mother followed (bringing the family cat). Her mother is being hosted by nearby family, but owing to that host’s illness she must find somewhere new to live by December, and ideally they would all like to live together.



‘The school is really friendly but my daughter doesn’t have homework’ ...
Hanna Sukhanova and Taya, eight. Photograph: Anna Gordon/The Guardian

“She has one month to find somewhere. It’s really tough,” says Katya Zaikhchuk.

“Katya wants to live her own life, and my children would quite like to be able to visit home again. It hasn’t been very easy for them,” says Birkbeck. They have searched property websites, but found that landlords want tenants with a good credit rating and are nervous about renting to people from Ukraine.

Hosts here point to schemes launched elsewhere: in Bristol, a rent guarantee has been offered to Ukrainians, and a £1,000 thank-you payment promised to landlords; in Wiltshire, the council will put down a deposit and a month’s rent on behalf of Ukrainian refugees. Why, they ask, isn’t a similar approach being rolled out nationally?

I don’t want to ask what their plans are. It’s a very delicate issue – it feels like we’re involved in a huge experiment

Everyone finds the question of what comes next an uncomfortable subject to broach. “I don’t want to ask directly what their plans are. It’s a very delicate issue to talk about,” says another host from Saffron Walden.

She remains broadly positive about the experience, but is honest about how completely it has overwhelmed her life. “It feels like we’re involved in a huge experiment. It’s like we’re walking across a cartoon bridge which is being built ahead of us as we go along. Everyone is making everything up all the time.”

Her neighbour, who is hosting a Ukrainian grandmother, acknowledges that most of the hosts didn’t allow themselves much time to decide. “I knew other people who were doing it – it was a bit: ‘If you’re in, I’m in,’” she says. A local piano teacher, who is originally from Ukraine, put several people in touch with people she knew needed help. “It was impulsive and at that time there was a feeling that this would be done and dusted within a few

months. If I'd thought too hard about all the reasons not to do it, I wouldn't have done it. It was reckless, but my guest has been a delight and so far it has worked well."

The government created the Home for Ukraine scheme partly in recognition of the fact that its recent Afghan refugee resettlement programme was a disaster. Long-term housing had still not been found for those airlifted out of Kabul and £1.2m a day was being spent on housing thousands of people in hotels. (The cost of hotel bills for all asylum seekers is now running at £7m a day.) There was a desire to find a solution by getting volunteers to step up.

"Never again will we have people arrive in the UK and go into hotels without a plan, as happened with those coming from Afghanistan," said Lord Harrington, the former refugees minister, in September.

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Newspapers have printed the occasional dramatic story of hosting arrangements going wrong – marriages breaking down when the British husband falls in love with the Ukrainian guest, cruel hosts ordering refugees to leave immediately. In Saffron Walden, the strains have been more mundane: friction over the unexpected shock of gas bills when soaring energy prices (triggered by the same conflict that created more than 7 million refugees) coincided with the extra cost of more people in the house having long showers.

Both guests and hosts have been startled by cultural differences. Much of this is trivial – surprise from the hosts at the guests' desire to eat [borscht](#) for

breakfast and dismay from the Ukrainians at the coldness of English houses, and the suggestion that they put on an extra jumper or fill a hot water bottle rather than turning up the heating (unusual advice for people used to living in Soviet-built blocks with centrally controlled, generous heating). Some Ukrainians are disturbed by the warm November weather, unimpressed by meals of vegetarian pasta and say they find the taste of the water in England different (not in a good way).

Some English hosts have been disconcerted to find striking differences in what is considered polite behaviour. “They think we are crazily polite and they laugh about it sometimes,” one host says. Another asked a teenage boy to help with the cooking, and was told: “It’s women’s work. At home women look after men. When I’m older my wife will cook for me.”

Most Ukrainian parents with school-age children are surprised at British schools’ focus on wellbeing and at the leisurely pace of teaching maths and science compared with the pressure put on children in Ukraine. “The school is really friendly, but the levels in maths are lower,” says Hanna Sukhanova, who is staying in Saffron Walden with her eight-year-old daughter, Taya. “In Ukraine, she was doing homework until 11 o’clock at night. Here she doesn’t have any homework. She’s happy – I’m worried.”

Sukhanova, an accountant, speaks good English and recently started work with a local firm. She hopes to take the British accountancy exams and to be able to rent a home. “I have a job here, my daughter is at school. I don’t want to move.”

I’m more used to working with spreadsheets. Working in a cafe is hard.
Now I’m very good at talking about bread

Some other Ukrainian guests have also found work (nationally, about 56% of those who arrived earlier this year are now working), but many have been obliged to take jobs below their professional qualifications, in order to start earning money and improve their English. Zaikhchuk, who was an accountant with a railway company at home in Poltava, in central Ukraine, has a job in a cafe. “I’m more used to working with spreadsheets. This is not my career, so it’s hard. Now I’m very good at talking about bread,” she says.

More unexpected for hosts than the costs and the cultural differences is the all-consuming sensation of absorbing some of the stress of people traumatised by war. Recent refugee programmes for those leaving Afghanistan and Syria have aimed to permanently resettle people here, but Ukrainians have been given three-year visas and expect to return home, which makes decisions very difficult.

“No one is in a position to know what is going to happen with the war. Living without certainty is hard and you become caught up in the uncertainty of their lives,” says one host. “That definitely has an impact on you as a host. You feel a huge sense of responsibility for other people’s lives without really being able to help them.”

Sukhanova is enormously relieved to have been able to create a sense of temporary calm in this quiet, pretty market town for herself and her daughter, but she recognises that it is a fragile stability, disturbed every time she looks at her phone. She is still getting air-raid alerts for her home town, so she can track the daily dangers faced by her parents and 19-year-old son. “I have to know what’s happening there – I don’t want to switch it off.”



‘My mother told me to leave. I’m studying all the time’ ... Sergiy, 18, is sitting A-levels and working towards the law degree he started in Ukraine. Photograph: Andy Hall/The Observer

Nicola McCahill, who is looking after two boys, Zhenya, 17, and Sergiy, 18, knew she was making a longer-term commitment because she realised the adolescents would need the option of staying at her village home, a 15-minute drive from Saffron Walden, for at least two years.

Sergiy was sent by his mother when she discovered that he planned to start military training. “She told me to leave. It was a smart decision. Now that I’m here, I don’t want to be fighting,” he says. He is trying to combine continuing the law degree he started in Ukraine with A-levels in maths, Russian and business studies. “I’m studying all the time,” he says. Zhenya hopes to apply for a computer science degree. Both have had very positive half-term reports from the school.

They have pulled through the first difficult weeks of extreme homesickness and are starting to make new friends but, inevitably, thinking about their Ukrainian school mates makes them depressed. “Eighty per cent of them have left,” says Sergiy. Zhenya opens Snapchat on his phone, which shows the faces of his friends dotted across [Europe](#). “Most of them are in Poland or the Czech Republic. Two are in UK, five are in Germany, one in Kazakhstan, in America and Ireland.”

“I’m glad that my friends are in a safe place, but most of them will never go back. We’re seeing a better life now we’re away from Ukraine,” says Sergiy.

Like most of the other hosts, McCahill has spent a huge amount of time helping her guests to settle in – organising school places, discussing A-level choices and university applications, and registering them with a GP, a dentist and social services. She has helped with the time-consuming administration involved in recording the existence of new arrivals in Britain’s many bureaucratic databases, and tried to console one of them when friends in Ukraine were killed in the fighting. But she shrugs it off as nothing.

“It’s hard to say why it’s been good without sounding bonkers. People in Ukraine are fighting for a wider set of people than their own – it’s the least we can do to support these boys and make them feel welcome,” she says, adding that she is anxious not to sound sanctimonious. “I think a lot of people roll their eyes a bit at the idea of do-gooding meddling, but it just felt like the obvious thing to do. It’s hard giving up your personal space. Even if

our best friends in the world had come to live with us it would have been hard at times. They have slotted into our family quite well. The main thing is that they are here, not fighting.”

Most hosts seem reluctant to acknowledge that they have done something good. “It’s made me very unromantic about the notion of refugees. They are just normal people with different motivations about coming here – not everyone was fleeing immediate attack. You are constantly asking yourself, have you really made things better by helping them come?” says one host. “Your job is just to give them space and maybe a springboard to the next thing, and try not to judge them – although sometimes you do.”

The sense that hosts might have done something palpably positive is not something anyone wants to dwell on. “Occasionally,” she adds, “when I see the two girls jumping on the trampoline and playing in the garden with our dogs, I feel glad they are here and not in Ukraine. Nothing matters more than that.”

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Books

Do the write thing: do authors use autopen?

They may have to sign thousands of books individually, but it seems writers wouldn't dream of using a robot pen



Dylan issued an apology for using a machine to autograph copies of his book *Photograph*: Brooks Kraft/Corbis/Getty Images

[Sarah Shaffi](#)

Tue 29 Nov 2022 04.47 EST Last modified on Tue 29 Nov 2022 04.49 EST

A signature in a book may seem like a few seconds of work, but – as evidenced by Bob Dylan's recent use of an autopen – it's a big endeavour when hundreds of books need to be signed.

[Dylan has issued an apology](#) after admitting using a machine to autograph 900 limited “hand-signed” editions of his book [The Philosophy of Modern Song](#), which sold for \$599 (£498) each. But he's not the first person to make

use of the technology. Autopens have been openly used by politicians for a number of years, with Barack Obama becoming the first US president to pass legislation with an autopen signature. They've not been without controversy, however; in 2004 then US defence secretary [Donald Rumsfeld](#) [was criticised](#) for using a mechanical signature to sign letters of condolence to relatives of soldiers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Autopens seem to be less common when it comes to the literary world. This might not be too surprising given that signings often take place at live events such as festivals. There, books are signed in front of readers and sometimes personally dedicated, so there's no way to use an autopen without everyone seeing. But even behind closed doors, many authors say they would never use an autopen, even when the number of books to be signed is in the thousands.

Author [Juno Dawson](#) says she “wouldn't dream of using a robot pen because I feel they'd make the signed editions less special”. She adds: “People treasure signed copies because they've been personally signed by the author and it's a bond of trust between me and my readers.”

[Laura Bates](#), who once signed around 1,000 books in one go, is equally against the autopen, stating that “signing books is the absolute cherry on the top of the luckiest job in the world”. Instead, she uses “hot sugary tea” as signing fuel.

[Janice Hallett](#), who recently signed 9,000 books over the course of six days, said callouses, blisters and paper-cuts were par for the course. But while using an autopen would save her from injuries, she wouldn't because “nothing beats knowing readers can have a book that's signed”.

Big signing sessions can require almost military preparation. Crime author Louise Candlish once signed 6,000 books in one day, which “involved a team of five people each doing different jobs” such as “opening the book to the title page, sliding the book towards me, taking the signed book and stacking” and so on. The endeavour was “exhausting” and Candlish burned

through eight to 10 pens. She says she had to take regular breaks “to do hand exercises, stretching and squeezing and waggling”.

Dawson signed 5,000 copies of her novel [Her Majesty's Royal Coven](#) in one day at the printers, but even more difficult was signing more than 10,000 endpapers for her Fairyloot special edition. “They came to my flat in 17 huge boxes and I suddenly felt the magnitude of the task as I’d agreed to do them all over three weeks,” she says. “In the end it became a nine-to-five job. I set up a desk in front of the TV and binged on all three seasons of The Boys and much of The Crown, too. Due to bad posture I ended up with a spasm in my right shoulder which wasn’t ideal.”

Sometimes an author’s habits can influence their signing style. Sarah Vaughan spent a couple of days putting her name to 1,500 copies of her latest novel Reputation after her publisher sent her boxes of printed endpapers to sign, which were then added to the finished hardbacks of the novel. “Because I used shorthand for 15 years as a journalist, and still use it if I’m interviewing someone, my signature can get pretty illegible if I don’t concentrate, so I was conscious of needing of focus,” she says. “But your hand also aches if you sign too many on the trot and I found it impossible to do more than about 30 without taking a quick break. No ice packs – but much wiggling of fingers and wrist rotation. No one wants RSI.”

She believes it was worth the effort: “I know, as a customer, just how extra special a signed hardback feels. I have a signed Elizabeth Strout and very much wish I had a signed Hilary Mantel.”

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One thing authors must consider when signing is exactly what name to sign, something that can have a dramatic effect on their workload. Candlish says that for her big signing she made the “fatal mistake” of deciding to write her whole name, Louise Candlish. Ever since then, she’s made sure to shorten it to L Candlish for larger signings.

There can be pitfalls at signings and some authors have learned a few useful tricks of the trade. Bates says she gets worried about making mistakes or misspelling names when signing. “So I always take a spare copy of my book with me to signing events because this allays my anxiety.”

It might irritate the wrist joints and induce a strange sense of mania in the signee, but when it comes to the autopen, Dylan seems to be a rarity. In fact you won’t hear too many authors complain about signing books. “Before I was successful, I had several books out that I only signed for family members and even then they were probably just being kind,” says Candlish. “It’s a joy to sign for thousands of readers. And as a reader, I love knowing the author has held the book before me.”

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Tesla

‘Rude drivers will swerve in my lane’: are Tesla owners paying the price for Musk hate?

US owners say they’ve been on the receiving end of road rage, but it may be more about EVs than the CEO himself



Politics seems to be a driving force behind Tesla hate. Photograph: Jade Gao/AFP/Getty Images

[Alaina Demopoulos](#)

Tue 29 Nov 2022 01.00 ESTLast modified on Tue 29 Nov 2022 01.39 EST

Tesla lost at least one customer this weekend, after Alyssa Milano [tweeted](#) that she had returned her model for a Volkswagen electric vehicle, prompting [jokes](#) from Elon Musk and conservative commentators about the German manufacturer’s Nazi origin story. Milano said she had ditched Tesla due to Musk’s ownership of Twitter.

I gave back my Tesla.

I bought the VW ev.

I love it.

I'm not sure how advertisers can buy space on Twitter. Publicly traded company's products being pushed in alignment with hate and white supremacy doesn't seem to be a winning business model.

— Alyssa Milano (@Alyssa_Milano) [November 26, 2022](#)

While [Tesla](#) owners do not seem to be following the actor's move en masse, some note that they have been on the receiving end of road rage directed toward their vehicle choice.

Although there's no official data to prove that Tesla drivers get more hate, an Axios [report](#) from August found that Iowa's "Tesla drivers are routinely heckled, cut off in traffic, and blocked from charging stations." Many put the blame on the company's CEO, Elon Musk, and the never-ending news cycle devoted to his [frenzied Twitter takeover](#). A July [poll](#) from the research analytics firm OpinionScience found that 54% of respondents viewed Musk "negatively" – and some Tesla drivers believe they are suffering the impact of his reputation.

Tesla drivers interviewed by the Guardian say they have experienced anti-Tesla sentiment, but mostly from those who hate electric vehicles rather than Musk specifically. "Random rude drivers will swerve in my lane to yell at me, or turn on a heavy diesel exhaust that blows black smoke," Paul Albertson, who lives in Beaverton, Oregon, told the Guardian. It never happens when he drives his two other cars, a vintage 1948 Chevy and a 2014 Traverse. The culprits are most often men driving "larger pick-up trucks", he said.

John Shevelew doesn't notice too much road rage at home in York, Pennsylvania, where he is president of the state's Tesla Owners Club. Things

change when he drives through the south. “I go to Texas a lot to see my daughter in Austin, and in Arkansas, Mississippi, those places, I run into, let’s say, less-than-friendly looks,” he said. “You get someone in a big diesel pickup truck who likes to express their dissatisfaction with the idea of an electric car.”

Laura Kennedy, who also lives in Pennsylvania, agrees. “It’s almost always a guy in a pickup truck [who does something],” she said. “I don’t think I’ve ever been flipped off in my life as much as I have in the past year or so.”



Theresa Ramsdell with her two Teslas. Photograph: Theresa Ramsdell

Teslas are common in the Bellevue, Washington, area, where Theresa Ramsdell lives and has owned two models since 2016. “People cut us off on the freeway, give us the finger, yell at me through the windows,” she said. “A couple of people have not exactly tried to push me off the road, but drive real close to the side of my car and smile. It’s happened to me twice going at 65 mph and it’s scary.”

Marc Geller, spokesperson for the Electric Vehicle Association and a Tesla owner himself, has owned a battery-powered car of some sort since 2000. He said that road rage traditionally came from rightwingers who see the electric vehicle drivers as crunchy liberals.

But now that Musk has become something of a conservative hero – telling his followers to vote Republican in the midterms and reinstating Donald Trump’s [Twitter](#) account – he’s a foe to many electric vehicle fans, too.

“There’s an irony here in that Teslas have long been a hate magnet for various reasons,” Geller said. “They were the subject of road rage because they represented the environment and were perceived as the vehicular embodiment of that culture war. But now here we are, and some folks on the left are having a knee-jerk reaction because [Elon Musk](#) has taken this ominous turn to the political right, so now they’re throwing the same bricks.”

One 22-year-old man who spoke to the Guardian and just co-signed with his parents on a Tesla calls the car “the best purchase” he’s ever made. Minus one caveat: people keep cutting him off.

“I noticed the road rage within the first week I got it,” said the man, who lives in Thousand Oaks, California, and didn’t want to be publicly outed as a Tesla driver. “I’ll just be driving the same speed I had in my old Ford Fusion, but they’ll cut in front of me and drive really slow, or prevent me from switching lanes. On city streets I’ll go the speed limit and cars leaving parking lots will decide to cut in, making me stomp on the brakes. That’s happened eight times this month.”

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2022.11.29 - Opinion

- Democracy is at risk. We can't let oligarchs exploit British courts to silence their critics
- Starmer is leading a slow march towards a softer Brexit — he just won't say it out loud
- Yes, teenagers on the bus are annoying — but things could be worse
- Avoid high energy bills by turning off electricity? Tell that to a disabled person on a ventilator

[OpinionLaw](#)

Democracy is at risk. We can't let oligarchs exploit British courts to silence their critics

[David Davis](#)

The super-rich are menacing those who seek to scrutinise with Slapps: expensive, lengthy and often bogus lawsuits

[Report: Senior media figures call for law to stop oligarchs silencing UK journalists](#)



‘The risk is not losing the case – which is often unlikely – but the sheer cost of the vexatious process.’ The Royal Courts of Justice, London. Photograph: James Veysey/REX/Shutterstock

Tue 29 Nov 2022 00.56 EST Last modified on Tue 29 Nov 2022 02.41 EST

Free speech is the fundamental basis upon which democratic life is built. Many of our other precious freedoms stem from it. In the UK, we naturally take it very seriously. But it is now under threat, from oligarchs and crooks who are abusing our world-renowned legal system in order to silence their critics.

There is an epidemic of so-called lawfare cases in the UK. The world's super-rich are hitting journalists, writers, whistleblowers and anyone else who scrutinises them with [Slapps](#) – strategic lawsuits against public participation. These are defamation accusations, often with a spurious basis (if they have any basis at all), brought with the intention of terrifying those who question them.

That is why I am pleased to help launch the Anti-Slapp Coalition's campaign for a model Slapp law to tackle this huge problem at the heart of our democracy.

Just as London has become a prime location for oligarchs' money laundering, so has the UK become the ideal site for them to sue their critics. Britain is home to some of the fairest and best courts in the world. But the sheer cost and time required to defend such cases gives the rich and powerful an unfair advantage, and leaves the system open to abuse.

Imagine being an independent journalist who investigates and exposes acts of corruption by a prominent overseas businessman or politician. Now imagine being told that if you do not retract the claims, you will be sued and have to defend yourself against the most expensive lawyers around. Your choice is simple: withdraw your reporting and apologise, or have your life ruined and go bankrupt fighting the Slapp.

The risk is not losing the case – which is often unlikely – but the sheer cost of the vexatious process. And the oligarchs know this. They can afford to fight and potentially lose the cases in the courts; even if a judge rules eventually against them, their critics will have run out of cash by then.

It is a horrible scenario to imagine. But it is happening regularly, here in the UK. Our courts are facilitating it not by their rulings, but by the cost and complexity of the process. And British law firms are making huge sums of money out of it by representing the accusers. As a result of it all, free speech is suffering.

These cases pose a problem for all of us – not just for those directly targeted by lawfare. This kind of authoritarian tactic undermines the fairness of our legal system. Oligarchs use Slapps to make an example of what will happen to anyone who dares question them, meaning people avoid applying scrutiny altogether for fear of retribution.

The health of our democracy as a whole relies on journalists and investigators having the freedom to criticise the powers that be. The work they do provides one of the only forms of scrutiny of the behaviour of the world's richest people. So we all pay a price when it becomes harder and harder for them to do that work, as those who should be facing justice are able to evade it. Indeed, [a government report](#) this year found that some journalists “no longer publish information on certain individuals or topics – such as exposing serious wrongdoing or corruption – because of potential legal costs”. This is a tragedy for democracy.

I held a debate on this in the House of Commons in January this year, at which colleagues from across the political divide united to air their concerns and call for action. The government then picked up the problem, and I am glad that ministers have committed to act. But this is growing more and more urgent with every passing day. The longer ministers sit on their hands, the more people will suffer and the further our legal system will be corrupted by those with malicious intent.

What we need most of all is a commitment from ministers to bring forward, at the earliest opportunity, a free-standing Slapps bill that limits oligarchs' ability to wage lawfare. It is absolutely clear that the existing legal landscape is not right and that new legislation is urgently needed to stop the rot. Our friends in the US and Europe are taking action; we must not be left behind.

As a starting point, we must change the law to allow the courts to reject the most egregious cases at an early stage. We must force those who bring Slapp

cases and lose to pay significant damages, to deter them from launching their cases at all. And we must ensure that those unfairly targeted by Slapps are not lumped with crippling costs. This is what the [Coalition Against Slapps in Europe](#) is calling for, and it is what our democracy demands.

In the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the urgency of defending our democratic values has gained a new clarity. We acted swiftly and firmly to sanction Russian oligarchs and others linked to Vladimir Putin's barbarous regime earlier this year. It is high time that we acted against oligarchs' abuse of our courts and our values.

Britons are rightly proud that our legal system is a model for the world. If we are to ensure that that remains the case, we must protect it from those who pose such a dire threat to it.

- David Davis is the Conservative MP for Haltemprice and Howden
- ***Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please [click here](#).***

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[OpinionLabour](#)

Starmer is leading a slow march towards a softer Brexit — he just won't say it out loud

[Gaby Hinsliff](#)



The Labour leader is shouting through a megaphone at leave voters but dropping discreet, missable hints for remainers



Keir Starmer during prime minister's questions, 9 November. Photograph: Andy Bailey/Reuters

Tue 29 Nov 2022 02.00 EST Last modified on Tue 29 Nov 2022 09.18 EST

Brexit isn't working.

You know it, I know it, and so do a third of leavers, according to recent polling. Yet still the leaders of both Britain's major parties can't quite bring themselves to say it.

Rishi Sunak couldn't retreat fast enough from reports that he might be pondering a [Swiss-style relationship with the EU](#). Now Keir Starmer has followed suit, insisting Swiss-style freedom of movement is "[a red line for me](#)", despite arguing the opposite when running for Labour leader. The reality is that whoever is in government after 2024 will almost certainly seek to unravel aspects of Boris Johnson's deal, which is due for review in 2025, but neither really wants to say so. So instead they're playing a nervous game of grandmother's footsteps with the public, creeping a step or two closer to reality-based politics when they think they can get away with it, but freezing the minute they're spotted. It's farcical in both cases, but somehow more depressing when it comes from the Labour leader, once the great hero of the pro-remain resistance.

Even some loyal Starmer supporters, resolved to do whatever it takes to win this time, struggle with watching him hold the Brexit line just as public opinion seems to be shifting against it, with a new [Redfield and Wilton poll](#) showing 57% would now vote to rejoin the EU. It's dispiriting, too, to watch business make the case for more immigration while a Labour party that prides itself on being serious and honest about the big challenges hides behind its skirt.

Those close to him make no secret of the fact that his overriding priority is not to jeopardise the victory within reach. He sees "red wall" voters who have swung back from the Tories to Labour as volatile, capable of swinging again. (Nigel Farage certainly thinks so, or he wouldn't be trying frantically to [get back in on the action](#).) Even without Brexit, by now we would have been entering that dismally familiar stage of the electoral cycle where Ed Milband's Labour party started selling "[controls on immigration](#)" mugs, knowing full well that part of its base wanted to hear it even if another part was outraged and alienated. But if it's a depressingly familiar story on immigration, on Brexit something slightly subtler is going on.

Thrilling as that poll majority for rejoining the EU looks, it's almost certainly a majority for something that isn't on offer, which is going back to 2015. (Watch it vanish if voters are told that the price of rejoining might be adopting the euro.) And even leavers who have turned against Brexit don't want to be made to feel stupid for having supported it. But if they aren't yet ready to let go of the idea completely, there is at least solid support now for a form of Brexit that doesn't leave us so broke. Two-thirds of voters overall favour closer future ties with the EU, according to polling from the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, which this week [published a blueprint](#) for sidling in that direction.

First, the paper argues, the government should build goodwill with our neighbours – something Sunak is in fairness now attempting – and seek a workable solution to the flaws in the Northern Ireland protocol. Then it should adopt high standards on food, labour and the environment to show that Britain isn't trying to undercut its neighbours. Only then should it try negotiating a better deal, although still one that stops short of joining the single market. The overall idea is to insist that Brexit is now a reality but start moving the public towards a softer version of it, without ever quite

calling it that. If there is a sense, hanging unspoken in the air, that eventually Britain could move back towards EU membership, then it's nowhere to be found in this report.

But it's a plan, at least, and it's what Starmer has effectively been doing for a while, by simultaneously ruling out freedom of movement while also talking – as he did again at the weekend – about a stronger trading relationship with the EU and reducing red tape for business. The problem is that the remain-friendly bit comes across as technical, dull and vague by comparison with the leave-friendly bit. Starmer is shouting through a megaphone at leave voters but dropping discreet, eminently missable hints for remainers. What it's lacking is something to make the miserable slog ahead come alive for them.

For it's a long, long haul from here to anything like the relationship with [Europe](#) we once had, assuming that it will be 2028 at least before any major party dares to stand on a remain-friendly platform of pointing out the bleeding obvious. By then we will have had 12 wasted years of missed opportunities, and the EU may have moved on far enough without us that rejoining no longer seems realistic.

But those of us who have endured three failed versions of Brexit already – under Theresa May, Johnson and Liz Truss respectively – are still being asked to sit patiently through at least a couple more, just to prove definitively that the thing we always said would be a disaster is in fact a disaster. If he's lucky, Starmer will find most [Labour](#) remainers are now desperate enough to get rid of this current government that they'll grit their teeth and fall in behind him, hoping he'll be bolder in power than in opposition. But he shouldn't take that goodwill for granted.

Gaby Hinsliff is a Guardian columnist

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[Opinion](#) [Young people](#)

Yes, teenagers on the bus are annoying – but things could be worse

[Zoe Williams](#)



Sure, their conversations are inane, they're loud and their phones are even louder – but this is about claiming territory. At least there's no scent-marking involved



‘I remember what it’s like to *be* the annoying teenager’ ... a packed bus in London. Photograph: Toby Melville/Reuters

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If you’re the kind of person who gets annoyed by teenagers on buses, you just shouldn’t get a bus at 3.15pm, especially if you live next door to a secondary school. And I know all that, but there I was, on a bus at exactly the wrong time, getting annoyed.

The sharper-eyed reader will know I have teenagers of my own, so I should lean towards infinite love and forgiveness for the whole generation. I also remember what it’s like to *be* the annoying teenager, against all the odds because I can’t remember much else from the 80s. My sister and I got a coach once from London to Leighton Buzzard – we were about 13 and 15 – and as we were getting off, this guy exploded: “Thank God! I couldn’t have taken one more minute – they’re like a pair of chipmunks.” We didn’t even realise he was talking about us until our mum said: “Try living with them.” We were just thinking, ooh, where are there chipmunks?

It’s never just chatting with young people, though, is it? They’re extremely loud and very sudden, liable at any moment to exclaim with a vehemence that would only be warranted if they were on fire, and instead is because

someone dropped a receipt near them. They are enemies of the headphone and need to blare [TikTok](#) content out of their phones that is, somehow, even more inane than the conversation they're having. There's a lot of fake reaction: pretending to cry, pretending to fight, pretending to scream, and this creates a constant war of adult responsibilities, where you half want to check the crying-not-crying one is OK, and half want to mind your own business in the time-honoured way of the person on the Clapham omnibus.

I did once read something useful, though, about the condition of adolescence – that as you grow into your adult skin, you are driven to annex public space, stamp yourself on it and make it your own. This is not just natural – it is essential. Far from minding the noise, we should be pleased. If they weren't doing that, they'd be doing something worse: marking their territory with urine.

Zoe Williams is a Guardian columnist

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[OpinionDisability.](#)

Disabled children can't afford to use their ventilators this winter. Politicians need to face reality

[Frances Ryan](#)



It's not fearmongering to suggest that in the absence of proper government support this winter, people are going to die



Chancellor Jeremy Hunt making his autumn statement in the House of Commons, 17 November. Photograph: Jessica Taylor/UK Parliament/AFP/Getty Images

Tue 29 Nov 2022 03.00 EST Last modified on Tue 29 Nov 2022 06.47 EST

As the winter chill hits and the energy crisis starts to become very real, it is hard to shake off the feeling that not only is suffering becoming normalised in this country, but those in power have an ever-decreasing interest in easing it.

Few examples are starker than the news that the NHS is trialling “[heating prescriptions](#)” to give to people who can’t pay their soaring energy bills. Some patients need electricity for disability equipment, such as ventilators, wheelchairs and feeding tube pumps. Others need to put the heating on to ward off stiff arthritic joints or to ease breathing. Warmth and electricity used to be human rights – now they’re medicine.

In his autumn statement earlier this month, the chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, pledged to target cost of living support to “the most vulnerable”. “British compassion”, he said, would be at the heart of government policy during these difficult times. Reality is turning out to be quite different. Those who rely on the state pension or benefits may have been given a reprieve with

their payments being uprated with inflation, but they must get through a cold winter before the 10.1% rise [kicks in next April](#). Even when it does arrive, thanks to historically low benefit rates, the increase won't come close to covering the essentials.

Meanwhile, the government has promised additional energy [help next year](#) in the form of a cost of living payment of £900 for households on means-tested benefits, but only £150 for people on disability benefits. According to the money saving expert Martin Lewis, these [unequal rules](#) mean that thousands of disabled people and carers on particular benefits will miss out on £650.

That the government has chosen to tighten eligibility for the warm home discount, so that half a million households – many of which will include disabled people – could [lose this support](#), just as energy costs spiral, is an insight into how much their pledge to protect “the vulnerable” is worth.

Talk to community groups and charities, and the impact of mounting bills is already showing. Over a third of families with seriously ill and disabled children have [cut back or stopped](#) using life-saving disability equipment because of rising energy costs, according to the charity Contact. Of those, 40% say this is making their child's health worse.

Meanwhile, the Royal National Institute of Blind People reports that blind and partially sighted people are not turning on their specialist lighting, despite needing it to move around the home safely. The disability charity Scope tells me it has heard from disabled people who are considering turning off the personal alarms that are meant to trigger help if they fall, as they can no longer afford to run them. Many are already cutting back on showers; their disability means it takes longer for them to wash and each minute costs more money. Others have been forced to give up their personal assistants who help them get dressed and go out, as they had to choose between electricity and independence. Some admit they are feeling suicidal.

If this is ministers protecting “the most vulnerable”, we can only imagine what hurting them would look like. Just like when George Osborne utilised the term during the 2010 era of austerity, the “most vulnerable” narrative has never been about the government helping people in need – but excusing the

fact that they aren't. The myth is perpetuated that some people in life are inevitably vulnerable, a stagnant group created by nature rather than a government's political choices. It conveniently shifts responsibility away from ministers, suggesting that, say, a wheelchair user is unable to live a full life because of their disability, not because the government is withholding necessary support.

Away from Westminster, the truth is that millions of people in the UK don't know how they are going to make it through winter. The news that the poorest people will end up shelling out nearly [a third of their income](#) by next spring just to pay fuel bills shows how unsustainable all of this is. A GP's prescription pad will not patch up the holes in the welfare state.

It is not fearmongering to suggest that without sufficient support this winter, people are going to die. Even without energy bills rising, nearly 10,000 people in the UK perish every year from living in a cold home; human beings [frozen in their own front rooms](#).

An upcoming [Christmas campaign](#) to encourage the public to switch off their energy to save cash will help some families be more energy efficient, but it is little use for disabled families. If you use a ventilator 24/7, "cutting back on energy" is not an option.

It is only real action from ministers that will make a difference. There are solutions, such as an [energy social tariff](#) that provides a discounted rate for disabled and low-income customers, or bringing forward the one-off energy payments to this winter, and increasing the support given to those on disability benefits. The recent story of [Kate Winslet donating £17,000](#) to pay for the electricity for a little girl's life-support equipment reveals the alternative: energy companies collecting bloated profits, while desperate families beg for help.

Every disabled child should be able to keep their oxygen running through Christmas. No one should have to skip dinner to keep their wheelchair charged. These are hardly radical claims, nor ambitious ideals. They are the bare minimum that any wealthy society should be striving for, and a threshold Britain is bleakly failing to meet. This is the truth no minister will

admit: if anyone is “vulnerable” this winter, it will be because this government has failed to help them.

Frances Ryan is a Guardian columnist

Comments on this piece are premoderated to ensure discussion remains on topics raised by the writer. Please be aware there may be a short delay in comments appearing on the site.

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[Rail industry](#)

Biden asks US Congress to block railroad strike that could ‘devastate economy’

With 9 December deadline fast approaching, business groups also push US government to intervene in labor dispute before holidays



Containers are stored and stacked on trains at a rail yard in Los Angeles, California, on 22 November. Photograph: Étienne Laurent/EPA

[Dominic Rushe](#) and agencies

Mon 28 Nov 2022 20.24 EST Last modified on Tue 29 Nov 2022 08.56 EST

Joe Biden called on Congress to intervene and block a railroad strike before next month’s deadline in the stalled contract talks, saying a strike would “devastate our economy”.

Biden's move comes as business groups have warned that the looming strike would hit just before the holiday season and worsen the US's inflation problems.

"Let me be clear: a rail shutdown would devastate our economy," Biden said in a statement. "Without freight rail, many US industries would shut down."

The strike comes after long-running negotiations reached an impasse and both sides agreed to a cooling-off period that ends next week.

Congress has the power to impose contract terms on the workers, but it's not clear what lawmakers might include if they do. They could also force the negotiations to continue into the new year.

Both the unions and railroads have been lobbying Congress while contract talks continue. Four rail unions that represent more than half of the 115,000 workers in the industry have rejected the deals that Biden helped broker before the original strike deadline in September and are back at the table trying to work out new agreements. Eight other unions have approved their five-year deals with the railroads and are in the process of getting back pay for their workers for the 24% raises that are retroactive to 2020.

Last month the [Biden administration](#) said it was up to unions and the rail companies to reach an agreement. In his statement Biden said that as "a proud pro-labor president" he was reluctant to override the views of people who voted against the agreement. "But in this case – where the economic impact of a shutdown would hurt millions of other working people and families – I believe Congress must use its powers to adopt this deal."

Biden's remarks came after a coalition of more than 400 business groups sent a letter to congressional leaders on Monday urging them to step into the stalled talks because of fears about the devastating potential impact of a strike that could force many businesses to shut down if they cannot get the rail deliveries they need. Commuter railroads and Amtrak would also be affected in a strike because many of them use tracks owned by the freight railroads.

The business groups, led by the US Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers and the National Retail Federation, said even a short-term strike would have a tremendous impact and the economic pain would start to be felt even before the 9 December strike deadline. They said the railroads would stop hauling hazardous chemicals, fertilizers and perishable goods up to a week beforehand to keep those products from being stranded somewhere along the tracks.

“A potential rail strike only adds to the headwinds facing the US economy,” the businesses wrote. “A rail stoppage would immediately lead to supply shortages and higher prices. The cessation of Amtrak and commuter rail services would disrupt up to 7 million travelers a day. Many businesses would see their sales disrupted right in the middle of the critical holiday shopping season.”

On Monday, the Association of American Railroads (AAR) trade group praised Biden’s action. “No one benefits from a rail work stoppage – not our customers, not rail employees and not the American economy,” said the AAR’s president and chief executive, Ian Jefferies. “Now is the appropriate time for Congress to pass legislation to implement the agreements already ratified by eight of the 12 unions.”

The unions have asked the railroads to consider adding paid sick time to what they already offered to address some of the workers’ quality-of-life concerns. But so far, the railroads, which include Union Pacific, BNSF, Norfolk Southern, CSX and Kansas City Southern, have refused to consider that.

The railroads want any deal to closely follow the recommendations a Biden-appointed special board of arbitrators made this summer that called for the 24% raises and \$5,000 in bonuses but did not resolve workers’ concerns about demanding schedules they say make it hard to take a day off and other working conditions.

The Associated Press contributed reporting

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[Connecticut](#)

Five officers charged after man paralysed in Connecticut police van

Officers charged with cruelty and endangerment after Randy Cox fractured neck when vehicle braked



The civil rights attorney Benjamin Crump takes part in a Justice for Randy Cox march in July. Photograph: Arnold Gold/AP

Associated Press in New Haven

Tue 29 Nov 2022 03.42 EST Last modified on Tue 29 Nov 2022 03.58 EST

Five [Connecticut](#) police officers have been charged with cruelly neglecting a Black man after he was partially paralysed in the back of a police van, despite his repeated and desperate pleas for help.

Randy Cox, 36, was being driven to a New Haven police station on 19 June for processing on a weapons charge when the driver braked hard at an

intersection to avoid a collision, causing Cox to fly headfirst into a metal partition in the van.

“I can’t move. I’m going to die like this. Please, please, please help me,” Cox said minutes after the crash.

As Cox pleaded for help, some of the officers at the detention centre mocked him and accused him of being drunk and faking his injuries, according to dialogue captured by surveillance and body-worn camera footage. Officers dragged Cox by his feet from the van and placed him in a holding cell prior to his eventual transfer to a hospital.

“I think I cracked my neck,” Cox said after the van arrived at the detention centre.

“You didn’t crack it, no, you drank too much ... Sit up,” said Sgt Betsy Segui, one of the five officers charged.

Cox was later found to have a fractured neck and was paralysed.

The five New Haven police officers were charged with second-degree reckless endangerment and cruelty, both misdemeanors. The others charged were Oscar Diaz, Ronald Pressley, Jocelyn Lavandier and Luis Rivera.

All have been on administrative leave since last summer.

Messages seeking comment were sent to attorneys for the officers.

Though each officer faces the same charges, some seemed to take Cox’s pleas more seriously than others. Diaz, who drove the transport van, pulled over after Cox complained of his injury, spoke to him and requested that an ambulance meet them at the detention centre. However, Diaz did not render medical attention to Cox as he lay face-down on the floor.

The officers turned themselves in at a state police barracks on Monday. Each was processed, posted a \$25,000 bond and are due back in court on 8 December, according to a news release from state police.

New Haven's police chief, speaking to reporters on Monday along with the city's mayor, said it was important for the department to be transparent and accountable.

“You can make mistakes, but you can't treat people poorly, period. You cannot treat people the way Mr Cox was treated,” said New Haven's police chief, Karl Jacobson.

The case has drawn outrage from civil rights advocates like the NAACP, along with comparisons to the Freddie Gray case in Baltimore. Gray, who was also Black, died in 2015 after he suffered a spinal injury while handcuffed and shackled in a city police van.

An attorney for Cox's family, Ben Crump, said on Monday that the New Haven officers need to be held accountable.

“It is important – when you see that video of how they treated Randy Cox and the actions and inactions that led to him being paralysed from his chest down – that those police officers should be held to the full extent of the law,” Crump said.

Cox was arrested on 19 June after police said they found him in possession of a handgun at a block party. [The charges against him were later dropped.](#)

Cox's family filed a federal lawsuit against the city of New Haven and the five officers in September. The lawsuit alleges negligence, exceeding the speed limit and failure to have proper restraints in the police van.

Four of the officers filed motions last week claiming qualified immunity from the lawsuit, arguing that their actions in the case did not violate any “clearly established” legal standard.

New Haven officials announced a series of police reforms this summer stemming from the case, including eliminating the use of police vans for most prisoner transports and using marked police vehicles instead. They also require officers to immediately call for an ambulance to respond to their location if the prisoner requests or appears to need medical aid.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/nov/29/five-officers-charged-after-man-paralysed-in-connecticut-police-van-randy-cox>

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[Business live](#)Business

Bulb's takeover by Octopus 'faces fresh delay'; Bank of England blindsided by 'extraordinary' mini-budget – as it happened

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US midterm elections 2022

Arizona secretary of state sues after Republican officials refuse to certify county election results

Cochise county officials have endorsed claims of voter fraud despite no evidence of any problems



Katie Hobbs, Arizona's secretary of state, was elected its next governor this month. Photograph: Ross D Franklin/AP

[Gloria Oladipo](#) and agencies

Mon 28 Nov 2022 22.22 ESTFirst published on Mon 28 Nov 2022 19.04 EST

Republican officials in a rural Arizona county refused on Monday to certify the results of the [2022 midterm election](#), despite no evidence of anything wrong with the count from earlier this month.

Some officials who have embraced voter fraud theories held out, defying a state deadline and setting the stage for a legal battle.

The move came amid pressure from prominent Republicans to reject results showing Democrats winning top races, and the county was holding out in the afternoon of a nail-biting day that was the deadline for several counties to confirm results.

In a lawsuit on Monday, the secretary of state, Katie Hobbs, a Democrat who narrowly won the race for governor, asked a judge to order county officials to canvass the election, which she said was an obligation under [Arizona](#) law. Lawyers representing a Cochise county voter and a group of retirees filed a similar lawsuit on Monday, the deadline for counties to approve the official tally of votes, known as the canvass.

The two Republican county supervisors delayed the canvass vote until hearing once more about concerns over the certification of ballot tabulators, though election officials have repeatedly said the equipment is properly approved.

The state elections director, Kori Lorick, wrote in a letter last week that Hobbs was required by law to approve the statewide canvass by next week and would have to exclude Cochise county's votes if they were not received in time.

That would threaten to flip the victor in at least two close races, a US House seat and state schools chief, from a Republican to a Democrat.

Hobbs's lawsuit asks the Cochise county superior court to order officials to certify the results by Thursday. Failing to certify them would undermine the will of the county's voters "and sow further confusion and doubt about the integrity of Arizona's election system", lawyers for Hobbs wrote.

"The board of supervisors had all of the information they needed to certify this election and failed to uphold their responsibility for Cochise voters," Sophia Solis, a spokeswoman for Hobbs, said in an email.

A Democratic election attorney, Marc Elias, also pledged, via Twitter, to sue the county.

Elsewhere, Republican supervisors in Mohave county postponed a certification vote until later on Monday after hearing comments from residents angry about problems with ballot printers in Maricopa county.

Officials in Maricopa county, the state's largest, where the state capital, Phoenix, is located, said everyone had a chance to vote and all legal ballots were counted.

Election results have largely been certified without issue in jurisdictions across the nation despite tub-thumping by rightwingers during their campaigns who sought to undermine public faith in US democracy. Many of the most extreme candidates lost.

But it has been a rockier road in Arizona, which became a focal point for efforts by Trump and his allies to overturn the 2020 election and push false narratives of fraud, following Joe Biden's surprise win in the state – a result that was first called by Fox News, another fact that infuriated Trump as he railed against losing the White House.

Arizona was long a GOP stronghold, but this month Democrats won most of the highest-profile races over Trumpist Republicans.

Lake, who lost the governor's race to Hobbs, and Mark Finchem, the candidate for secretary of state, have refused to acknowledge their midterm election losses, however. They blame Republican election officials in Maricopa county for a problem with some ballot printers.

David Becker, executive director of the non-partisan Center for Election Innovation and Research, said the officials delaying certification were breeding an illegitimate distrust in elections and disenfranchising voters.

“In the last year, it's become an unprecedented dereliction of duty for county officials to violate their oaths of office and refuse to certify election results, citing ‘gut feelings’ or alleged problems in [other] jurisdictions,” Becker said.

Navajo, a rural Republican-leaning county, conservative Yavapai county and Coconino, which is staunchly Democratic, voted to certify on Monday.

In Cochise county, GOP supervisors demanded last week that the secretary of state prove vote-counting machines were legally certified before they would approve the election results.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/nov/28/republicans-arizona-county-refuse-to-certify-midterm-election-results>

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[South Korea](#)

New Zealand 'suitcase' murders: South Korea hands over 42-year-old suspect

Seoul says unidentified woman was transferred to New Zealand authorities on Monday evening



New Zealand police investigators work at a scene in Auckland on 11 August 2022 after two bodies were discovered in suitcases. A suspect has been handed over by South Korean authorities. Photograph: Dean Purcell/AP

Associated Press

Mon 28 Nov 2022 19.20 EST

South Korea has extradited a 42-year-old murder suspect to New Zealand, two months after she was arrested over her possible connection to the discovery of the bodies of two long-dead children in abandoned suitcases in August.

South Korea's justice ministry said on Tuesday the unidentified woman was handed over to New Zealand authorities on Monday evening at Incheon international airport near Seoul. The ministry said it also has provided New Zealand with unspecified "important evidence" on the case.

"With the extradition, we hope that the truth of the case, which has garnered worldwide attention, will be revealed through the fair and strict judicial process of New Zealand," the South Korean ministry said in a statement.

South Korea's justice minister, Han Dong-hoon, this month [issued an order for the woman's extradition](#). The Seoul high court had earlier granted approval of her extradition after she expressed her consent in writing.

South Korean police arrested the woman at a southern port city in September, based on a domestic court warrant issued after New Zealand requested her provisional arrest. New Zealand's justice ministry then submitted a formal request for her extradition.

New Zealand police said the South Korean warrant for the suspect's arrest was in connection with two murder charges. The children's bodies were discovered in August after a New Zealand family bought abandoned goods, including two suitcases, from a storage unit in an online auction.

The children were between five and 10 years old, had been dead for years, and the suitcases had been in storage in Auckland for at least three or four years, according to police.

South Korean police say the woman was born in South Korea and later moved to New Zealand where she gained citizenship. Immigration records show she returned to South Korea in 2018.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/nov/29/new-zealand-suitcase-murders-south-korea-hands-over-42-year-old-suspect>

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[China](#)

Clashes in Shanghai as protests over zero-Covid policy grip China

Beijing, Chengdu and Wuhan see demonstrations as anger over Xi Jinping's strict Covid policies builds, in a test for the Communist party

Why blank sheets of white paper have become a symbol of dissent in China – video

[Helen Davidson](#) in Taipei and [Verna Yu](#)

Sun 27 Nov 2022 19.08 EST Last modified on Mon 28 Nov 2022 05.51 EST

Hundreds of demonstrators and police have clashed in Shanghai as protests over China's stringent Covid restrictions flared for a third day and spread to several cities, in the biggest test for president Xi Jinping since he [secured a historic third term in power](#).

The wave of civil disobedience is unprecedented in mainland China in the past decade, as frustration mounts over Xi's signature [zero-Covid policy](#) nearly three years into the pandemic.

Protests triggered by a [deadly apartment fire in the far west of the country](#) last week took place on Sunday in cities including Shanghai, Beijing, Chengdu, Wuhan and Guangzhou.

On Monday [China](#) reported a new daily record of new Covid-19 infections, with 40,347 cases. The cities of Guangzhou and Chongqing, with thousands of cases, are struggling to contain outbreaks. Hundreds of infections were also recorded in several other cities across the country.

Chinese stocks fell sharply as investors raised concerns over the impact of the protests on the world's second-largest economy.

In the early hours of Monday in Beijing, two groups of protesters totalling at least 1,000 people were gathered along the Chinese capital's 3rd Ring Road near the Liangma River, refusing to disperse.

On Sunday in Shanghai, police kept a heavy presence on Wulumuqi Road, which is named after Urumqi, and where a candlelight vigil the day before turned into protests.

"We just want our basic human rights. We can't leave our homes without getting a test. It was the accident in Xinjiang that pushed people too far," said a 26-year-old protester in Shanghai who declined to be identified.

"The people here aren't violent, but the police are arresting them for no reason. They tried to grab me but the people all around me grabbed my arms so hard and pulled me back so I could escape."

By Sunday evening, hundreds of people gathered in the area. Some jostled with police trying to disperse them. People held up blank sheets of paper as an expression of protest.

On Saturday, [people in Shanghai had chanted](#) "No PCR tests, we want freedom!" followed by rounds of repeated calls for "Freedom! Freedom!"

[map of shanghai](#)

[The protests erupted on Friday in Urumqi](#), the regional capital of the far west Xinjiang region, after footage of a fire in a residential building that killed at least 10 people the day before led to accusations that a Covid lockdown was a factor in the death toll.

Urumqi officials abruptly held a news conference in the early hours of Saturday to deny Covid measures had hampered escape and rescue. Many of Urumqi's 4 million residents have been under some of the country's longest lockdowns, barred from leaving their homes for as long as 100 days.

Late on Sunday, a BBC journalist was seen on camera being "beaten and kicked by police" [before being arrested in Shanghai](#). Footage on social media showed Edward Lawrence being dragged to the ground in handcuffs, while he was seen saying in another video: "Call the consulate now".

China: Video shows BBC journalist's arrest during Covid protest – video

A BBC spokesperson said: “The BBC is extremely concerned about the treatment of our journalist Ed Lawrence, who was arrested and handcuffed while covering the protests in Shanghai.

“He was held for several hours before being released,” the spokesperson said, adding that he had been covering the protests as an accredited journalist.

Lawrence, a senior journalist and camera operator for the BBC’s China bureau, was tweeting from the scene of the protest in Shanghai on Sunday morning UK time.

He wrote: “I’m at the scene of last night’s extraordinary anti Covid-zero protest in Shanghai. Many people are gathered here quietly watching. Lots of cops.”

In the central city of Wuhan, where the pandemic began three years ago, videos on social media showed hundreds of residents take to the streets, smashing through metal barricades, overturning Covid testing tents and demanding an end to lockdowns.

Other cities that have seen public dissent include Lanzhou in the north-west, where residents on Saturday overturned Covid staff tents and smashed testing booths, posts on social media appear to show.

Widespread public protest is rare in China, where room for dissent has been all but eliminated under Xi, forcing citizens mostly to vent their frustration on social media, where they play cat-and-mouse with censors.



In Beijing, people hold white sheets of paper – a symbolic protest against censorship – at a demonstration against Covid restrictions. Photograph: Thomas Peter/Reuters

China has stuck with Xi's zero-Covid policy even as much of the world has lifted most restrictions. While low by global standards, China's case numbers have hit record highs for days, with nearly 40,000 new infections on Saturday, prompting yet more lockdowns in cities across the country. Beijing has defended the policy as life-saving and necessary to prevent overwhelming the healthcare system.

Frustration is boiling just over a month after Xi secured a third term at the helm of China's Communist party, and much of the anger is being directed at China's leader.

In a video on social media, a protester accused Xi of locking people up and confining them to their homes.

"Xi Jinping step down, Communist Party step down", he says in the post that has been widely shared.

"This will put serious pressure on the party to respond. There is a good chance that one response will be repression, and they will arrest and

prosecute some protesters,” said Dan Mattingly, assistant professor of political science at Yale University.

Still, he said, the unrest is far from that seen in 1989, when protests culminated in the bloody crackdown in Tiananmen Square.

He added that as long as Xi had China’s elite and the military on his side, he would not face any meaningful risk to his grip on power.

Reuters contributed to this report

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[China](#)

BBC says Chinese police assaulted and detained its reporter at Shanghai protest

Journalist Ed Lawrence was beaten after being arrested at a protest against China's strict Covid restrictions, broadcaster says

China: Video shows BBC journalist's arrest during Covid protest – video

Staff and agencies

Mon 28 Nov 2022 06.30 ESTFirst published on Sun 27 Nov 2022 19.10 EST

Chinese police assaulted and detained a BBC journalist covering [a protest in Shanghai on Sunday](#), releasing him after several hours, the broadcaster has said.

“The [BBC](#) is extremely concerned about the treatment of our journalist Ed Lawrence, who was arrested and handcuffed while covering the protests in Shanghai,” a spokesperson for the British public service broadcaster said.

“He was held for several hours before being released. During his arrest, he was beaten and kicked by the police. This happened while he was working as an accredited journalist.”

Lawrence later shared the statement from the BBC on social media and said he understood at least one local national was arrested after trying to stop police from beating him.

Speaking in Beijing, the Chinese foreign ministry spokesman, Zhao Lijian, said the BBC's statement did not reflect what had happened, and that he did not identify himself as a reporter or show his press credentials.

“According to our understanding, the BBC’s statement is not true. According to authorities in Shanghai the journalist in question did not reveal his journalist identity at the time, he did not openly show his foreign press card,” Zhao said.

“When the incident happened, law enforcement personnel asked people to leave, and when certain people did not cooperate they were taken away from the scene.”

Foreign reporters in [China](#) are required to carry a government-issued card identifying themselves as accredited journalists when covering news events.

Shanghai is one of a number of Chinese cities that have seen protests over stringent Covid restrictions. Protests flared in recent days after a deadly fire in China’s far west.

Footage on social media showed a man whom other journalists identified as Lawrence being arrested by men in police uniforms.

The BBC said it had not been given a credible explanation for Lawrence’s detention.

“We have had no official explanation or apology from the Chinese authorities, beyond a claim by the officials who later released him that they had arrested him for his own good in case he caught Covid from the crowd.”

After his release, Lawrence tweeted on Monday to thank his followers, adding he believed “at least one local national was arrested after trying to stop the police from beating me”.

The UK foreign secretary, James Cleverly, called the incident “deeply disturbing”.

“Media freedom and freedom to protest must be respected. No country is exempt,” he tweeted. “Journalists must be able to do their job without intimidation.”

A spokesperson for the British prime minister called Lawrence’s arrest “shocking and unacceptable”. But the spokesperson also said the

government would not “conflate” its stance on human rights issues like this with its desire to have a constructive relationship with China on other issues.

China’s embassy in London has been approached for comment.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/nov/28/bbc-says-chinese-police-assaulted-and-detained-its-reporter-at-shanghai-protest>

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China Covid protests explained: why are people demonstrating and what will happen next?



A protester shouts slogans against China's strict zero-Covid measures in Beijing. Photograph: Kevin Frayer/Getty Images

Growing frustration with Beijing's strict zero-Covid policy sparks a wave of protests, with blank pieces of white A4 paper becoming a symbol of the movement

[Helen Davidson](#) in Taipei

[@heldavidson](#)

Mon 28 Nov 2022 01.10 EST Last modified on Tue 29 Nov 2022 00.09 EST

What is happening?

In an extraordinary wave of civil disobedience, dozens of protests broke out across Chinese cities over the weekend as frustrations with the government's stringent Covid policies boiled over.

Groups of people numbering from single digits to about 1,000 have gathered for candlelit vigils and peaceful street protests. In some places, like Wuhan, they have pushed over pandemic barriers, and in Shanghai, clashed with police. Holding candles, phone lights, and blank pieces of paper,

demonstrators have called for the end of lockdowns and frequent mass testing.

Others protests have heard demands for democracy and press freedom, and an end to online censorship. There have also been reported chants echoing the slogans displayed by [the Beijing bridge protester](#) on the eve of last month's Communist party congress political meeting.

How did we get here?

Frustrations with the zero-Covid policy have been rumbling for a while. As the rest of the world returns to something resembling normal life, China's population is still being subjected to sudden harsh lockdowns of areas ranging from individual shops to entire counties, often over just a few cases.

In September, a bus carrying people to a Guizhou quarantine centre at night crashed, killing 27 people. The death toll dwarfed the two Covid-related deaths reported by the province since the pandemic began. Last month in Zhengzhou thousands of workers in [an Apple iPhone factory](#) clashed with riot police and tore down barricades, in part due to Covid restrictions. Across locked down cities, residents also shared rumours and reports of suicides and other deaths they linked to the enforcement of zero-Covid, including a baby and a three-year-old child.

As the list of incidents grew, so too did people's impatience and skepticism, despite authorities' attempts to censor information and dissent.

Then last week at least 10 people were killed in a building fire in Urumqi, Xinjiang, which had been under lockdown for about 100 days. People blamed the lockdown for the deaths. Their anger was exacerbated by an official's response, which appeared to blame the residents for not rescuing themselves, and on Friday the first protests of the weekend were held in the city. Videos showed people in a plaza singing China's national anthem with its lyric: "Rise up, those who refuse to be slaves".

On Saturday crowds gathered in Shanghai at Middle Urumqi Road – named after the Xinjiang capital. At extraordinary risk, crowds chanted for the

Chinese Communist party and leader Xi Jinping to step down. By Sunday a wave of demonstrations expressing both solidarity with Urumqi and local frustrations had spread to cities including capital Beijing, Shanghai again, Chengdu, Wuhan, Lanzhou, Nanjing, and dozens of university campuses.

[Restrictive lockdown measures continue in China, nearly three years into the pandemic](#)

What are the blank pieces of white A4 paper?

The blank pieces of paper have become a symbol of the burgeoning protests. Space to safely express dissent has been effectively eliminated under the authoritarian rule of Xi and is incredibly risky. The white sheets papers are a nod to the denial of free speech and rampant censorship. A protest at the elite Tsinghua university in Beijing began with one student holding a single sheet near the campus canteen. It was taken away by staff, but she remained in position, according to reports, and was soon joined by dozens, and then hundreds of others.

“The white paper represent everything we want to say but cannot say,” one young protester at Beijing’s Liangma River told Reuters.

In a video purportedly filmed in Liangmaqiao, Beijing, a woman criticised the state media coverage of the “man-made” tragedy in Urumqi.

“It’s all lies, it’s all silence”, she said.

“We launched the blank paper remembrance movement. Do we say anything on the paper? No. All accusations are in our hearts. All thoughts are in our hearts.”



Protesters hold up pieces of paper at a demonstration in Beijing on Sunday.
Photograph: Kevin Frayer/Getty Images

What is happening to protesters?

Police have detained unknown numbers of protesters, including at least one foreign journalist. The second night of protests in Shanghai was met with a heavy police response, and the BBC said its Shanghai-based cameraman, [Edward Lawrence](#), was detained and beaten before being released. Police said only that they detained him for his own good, in case he caught Covid from the crowd, the BBC said.

In Beijing two groups of protesters, totalling at least 1,000 people, were gathered along the Chinese capital's 3rd Ring Road near the Liangma River on Sunday night, refusing to disperse. Crowds near Tiananmen Square demanded democracy and rule of law, and decried dictatorships and "personality cults".

[Protests spread across China on Sunday.](#)

Why are these protests significant?

Observers have said these protests are unlike anything they have seen in decades, perhaps back to the deadly crackdown on student rallies in Beijing's Tiananmen Square in 1989.

“Because they are so synchronised in terms of scope and the size of the crowds across these cities, it's truly a remarkable development,” says Prof Dali Yang, a political scientist at the University of Chicago. Yang says everyone is relating to incidents like the Urumqi fire and bus crash, because it could happen to any of them.

“All those people have been sharing the same situations – lockdowns, anxieties about jobs and businesses, and various forms of frustrations with medical care, and deaths.”

[China: number of new coronavirus cases per day](#)

A modern element of these protests is the pushback against online censorship. China's internet firewall and armies of information moderators is extraordinarily effective, but has perhaps reached the limits of people's patience. Citizens are playing cat and mouse with censors, finding creative ways to share videos and posts about the protests, express solidarity, or complain about authorities.

In Beijing protesters called for a return of free expression. “Give movies back, we want cinema freedom. We want free expression. Give media back, give us journalism back.”

As all this is going on, hundreds of thousands of people have been gathering in Qatari stadiums to watch the football World Cup. The throngs of tightly packed, maskless crowds have not gone unnoticed by Chinese fans, [despite broadcasters deliberately avoiding crowd shots](#). Observers have noted that Chinese broadcasters [traditionally prepare to “pre-censor”](#) international sports matches, avoiding crowd shots in case someone is holding a politically sensitive flag or similar, but in the current context this practice is now receiving a lot more attention and criticism.

Attempt to control information also spread beyond the firewall, with protest-related hashtags and search topics on Twitter flooded with irrelevant posts

containing tourism, advertising, and pornography.

Much of the information sharing has moved away from public networks like Weibo, and into more private – and harder to censor – personal communications like WeChat.

[China: number of coronavirus deaths per day](#)

What will happen next?

Protests in China are not rare, but the scale and spread of these ones certainly are. And the demand – an end to stringent zero-Covid – is not something the government is willing to meet right now.

China's zero-Covid policy was extremely successful in the early period of the pandemic, but has been challenged by the highly transmissible newer variants.

There are also concerns about the efficacy of China's domestically-produced vaccines compared to foreign options the government had refused to import, and the rates of full immunisation – particularly among the elderly – are lower than health experts would like.

There is a general consensus that these factors, combined with inequitably distributed access to healthcare, would likely see a huge death toll if the virus were allowed to sweep through the population of 1.4 billion people. However without any plan for moving away from the current playbook of lockdowns and travel restrictions, people have grown frustrated.

Eyes now are on whether the protests continue, or even grow, during the week, and how authorities will respond. There will probably be heavy consequences for those identified as protesters.

State media has been silent on the protests but instead has published strongly worded calls to “unswervingly adhere” to zero-Covid.

Yang notes a variation in local authorities' response to protests so far, with coincidental loosening of restrictions in some areas, and heavy handed

police action in others. He also says there are some changes the central government could make to appease people, or they could ease pressure by scapegoating local officials or private companies involved in the pandemic response.

“They could provide much clearer guidance, for example how and when China could exit zero Covid. To this point the messaging has been frustrating and confusing, even to officials,” he says.

“The challenge is this virus is not going away.”

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China

How Chinese media have – and haven't – covered widespread protests against zero-Covid

State-run media outlets largely ignore nationwide protests, but continue to push the importance of Covid restrictions



Composite image of The Global Times and China Daily on Monday, 28 November. Composite: The Global Times / China Daily

[Jonathan Yerushalmy](#)

Mon 28 Nov 2022 01.31 EST Last modified on Mon 28 Nov 2022 10.59 EST

Chinese media have largely ignored [widespread protests across the country](#), with prominent state newspaper front pages instead choosing to focus on Taiwan's local elections, a Chinese-built solar plant in Qatar and the rising number of Chinese women choosing to get tanned in beauty salons.

Protests [flared across Chinese cities over the weekend](#), with calls for political freedoms and an end to Covid lockdowns.

Some demonstrators have even demanded the resignation of China's president, [Xi Jinping](#), in a wave of civil disobedience that has been unprecedented in mainland China over the past decade.

However, none of that was evident on the front pages of some of the country's most prominent newspapers, or on broadcast channels on Monday. After a night of unrest, CCTV spent most of the morning covering the announcement of the planned launch of the Shenzhou-15 spacecraft to China's space station on Tuesday. The English language Global Times' main headline focused on the weekend's local elections in Taiwan, while Shanghai media reported on the latest industrial revenue figures.

The Shenzhou-15 crewed [#spaceship](#) will be launched at 11:08 p.m. Tuesday ([#Beijing](#) Time) from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwest [#China](#), announced the China Manned [#Space](#) Agency on Monday. pic.twitter.com/Pnb4o70OAK

— Beijing Daily (@DailyBeijing) [November 28, 2022](#)

The country's efforts to contain Covid were, however, heavily featured across the news, analysis and editorial pages of the country's papers.

Most of Hong Kong's mainstream media, normally fast to respond to news on mainland China, meanwhile delayed the reporting of the ubiquitous protests across China by one day and led the stories from the official angle. Most led with the Covid case numbers, or official insistence of the Covid control and played down on the details and colour of the protests themselves.

Promises to fine-tune the zero-Covid strategy to limit the disruption caused by lockdowns featured in a number of mainland media outlets on Monday, in what some analysts interpreted as a subtle nod to the protests. Multiple outlets, including Communist party mouthpiece the People's Daily, ran

editorials urging “unswerving adherence” to the zero-Covid policies, which they said was the only correct path.

A front page story on the Global Times warned of “[an extremely challenging winter](#)” as the country “fine tunes” its Covid measures.

Acknowledging some problems in China’s response, the report urged readers to think beyond the two “polarized yet erroneous tendencies” to infection control: “either a complete lockdown or a ‘lying flat’, meaning no pandemic precautions at all.”

The outlook, though, remains gloomy, as the paper reports that, “compared with the past two years, China is facing a much tougher battle against the virus”. The authors of the article quote an unnamed expert who warns that authorities may have to take “excessive measures”.

[Restrictive lockdown measures continue in China, nearly three years into the pandemic](#)

The supposed need for these measures is demonstrated in a comment piece published by news agency Xinhua.

“China has pulled out all the stops to put the people and their lives above everything else, managing to keep the death rates and the number of serious cases low,” the opinion article reads.

“Without those resolute measures, the consequence could be disastrous for a country with 1.4 billion people, including 267 million aged 60 or above and more than 250 million children.”

Starting from November 28, Urumqi, capital of Northwest China’s Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, will resume urban public transport including railways, civil aviation, buses and taxis gradually, in line with epidemic prevention and control requirement.
pic.twitter.com/3E44Scf3Qo

— Global Times (@globaltimesnews) [November 27, 2022](#)

In what could be read as a rare criticism of China's health system, the article quotes a pharmaceuticals analyst as saying that a full reopening of China may "threaten a health system that currently has far fewer ICU beds than those of other developed countries".

The catalyst for this weekend's public anger was a deadly fire in a building in the western city of Urumqi last week, which was reported to be under Covid restrictions.

State newspaper China Daily reported a statement from a government official that Covid restrictions weren't, in fact, related to the fire deaths.

[Protests spread across China on Sunday.](#)

While acknowledging public anger over the fire, the report quoted an unnamed local official as claiming without evidence that videos circulating online showing sealed up doors were filmed elsewhere and "put together with footage of the accident with ill intention".

Other state media also covered the decision to lift some Covid restrictions in Urumqi on Monday, without mentioning public anger over the fire.

Additional reporting by Chi Hui Lin and Verna Yu

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/nov/28/how-chinese-media-have-and-havent-covered-widespread-protests-against-zero-covid>

2022.11.28 - Spotlight

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‘There was one prima donna on Star Trek’: George Takei on William Shatner, love and life as an ‘enemy alien’

[Simon Hattenstone](#)



‘At five years old I was an enemy’ ... George Takei. Photograph: Luke Fontana

TV made him a star, but activism turned him into a hero. Now 85 and still going strong, the actor remembers his friendships and feuds, and his shameful treatment in the second world war



Mon 28 Nov 2022 01.00 ESTLast modified on Wed 30 Nov 2022 07.12 EST

George Takei is on a mission. But this time the [Star Trek](#) actor is not boldly going where no man has gone before. Now he's boldly going where too many men went before, to ensure history does not forget them.

Takei is about to star in the British production of the musical *Allegiance*, inspired by his childhood as one of more than 120,000 Japanese Americans forced into internment camps after [Japan](#) attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941. Now a youthful 85, he says it remains the defining experience of his life – one that shaped him as an actor and an activist.

It's 31 years since he played Sulu in the last of his six *Star Trek* movies, yet Takei is as prominent as ever. He is outspoken, has a huge social media following, and may be even better known these days as an author (in 2019 he published *They Called Us Enemy*, a beautifully illustrated graphic novel about his internment) and an LGBTQ+/anti-racist campaigner than he is for *Star Trek*.

We meet in the penthouse of a London hotel overlooking the city's landmarks. Takei, who is here with his husband, Brad, is slight, smartly dressed and bright as a sunny day – even when talking about such a bleak subject. He grew up in Los Angeles, one of three children born to a Japanese American mother from California and a father who grew up in Japan. Takei's father became a successful businessman, running a high-end dry-cleaning store in LA. The family were looking forward to a happy and prosperous future. But that all changed with Pearl Harbor and the designation of Japanese Americans as “enemy aliens”.



George (right) and his brother, Henry, with their father. Photograph: Handout

It was three weeks after George's fifth birthday, in 1942, that the military came for the Takeis. "My father came into the bedroom I shared with my younger brother, Henry, and dressed us hurriedly and told us to wait in the living room while they did last-minute packing. Henry and I had nothing to do, so we gazed out of the window and saw two soldiers march up our driveway. They carried rifles with shining bayonets on them and banged on the front door. We were petrified. I can never forget that terror of their banging." You sense that every time he talks about it he experiences the terror anew. "My father came out of the bedroom and answered the door and they pointed the bayonets at him. Henry and I were frozen. My father gave us each a box tied with twine to carry. He had two heavy suitcases and we followed him out on to the driveway and stood there waiting for our mother to come out. When she finally came out, escorted, she had our baby sister in one arm, a huge duffel bag in the other and tears were streaming down her cheek."

What Takei didn't realise at the time was that the terror had been going on for months. Like other Japanese Americans, the members of his family had not been allowed to leave their home between 8pm and 6am. The day after the curfew was introduced his father discovered their bank account had been

frozen. “My parents were spat on in the street and yelled at. My father’s car was graffitied with three letters – JAP.”

To take innocent people who had nothing to do with Pearl Harbor and categorise them as enemy aliens was outrageous

The Takeis were transported more than 1,600 miles to an internment camp in Arkansas and forced to live in a converted stable. “To take innocent people who had nothing to do with Pearl Harbor and categorise them as enemy aliens was outrageous. At five years old I was an enemy.”

Takei’s father spoke fluent Japanese and English and was elected a block manager in what was the US’s largest internment camp. In 1943, internees were asked to swear their loyalty to the US and forswear allegiance to the emperor of Japan. Takei’s parents refused to do so because the question wrongly assumed their loyalty was to Japan, while demanding allegiance to a nation that had horrifically mistreated them. The family were then sent to the harsher Tule Lake segregation centre in California for “disloyals”. It was here that many prisoners were radicalised, Takei says. Allegiance, in which he stars, explores how internment and the oath of allegiance divided families such as his.

The story of racism and radicalisation has so many echoes with recent times, Takei says. He mentions [Donald Trump’s executive order banning people from certain Muslim-majority countries](#) entering the US. “At least we had made progress by the time Trump got into office, because when he signed that executive order, [acting attorney general Sally Yates refused](#) to enforce it. When Roosevelt signed the executive order nobody stood up to him.”

He talks about how Trump incited hatred towards the Chinese American population by labelling Covid the Chinese virus. “After he racialised the virus, elderly Asian Americans were physically attacked. In Oakland, California, a young man ran to an old Thai man and smacked him down on the sidewalk. His head hit the concrete and he died.” Takei has astonishing recall of names, events and dates. On the rare occasion he does forget, Brad, a former journalist, fills in.

When the Takeis were released from internment they had nothing left. Japanese Americans were given \$25 and a one-way train ticket to re-establish their lives. The family ended up living on Skid Row in downtown Los Angeles. As a child, Takei says, it was terrifying. “That was the worst place. Smelly, scary people with eyes like this.” He mimes a zombified junkie. “This guy was staggering towards us one day. And he got closer and closer and he just collapsed in front of us and barfed. My baby sister was four or five and she said: ‘Mama, let’s go back home.’” He pauses. “She meant ‘home’ behind a barbed-wire fence.”



The Takei family, with George on the far right, in 1947 or 1948.

Takei often refers to his parents – the strength of his mother and wisdom of his father. To his great shame, he says, he never appreciated their courage at the time. As a young man, he criticised his father for refusing to sign the oath of allegiance. “I was an arrogant, self-centred teenager. I must have been 13, 14. I said to my dad: ‘You led us like sheep to slaughter back into the camps.’ He had been through the anguish and horror and sense of rage, the whole burden of it, and this young punk was saying to him: ‘You led us like sheep to slaughter.’” Those words still haunt him today. “After I said that my father was silent. I felt terrible. Then he looked up and said: ‘Well, maybe you’re right,’ and he got up and walked into his bedroom and closed the door.”

Takei wanted to apologise, but it felt too awkward, so he told himself he'd do it the following day. It still felt awkward the following day, so he left it another day. He never did apologise to his father. "That's one of the painful regrets I have."

Takei went on to study architecture at the University of California, Berkeley, but quit his course after two years to follow his passion – acting. He transferred to the University of California, Los Angeles, where he graduated with a degree and master's in theatre. In the 1960s, he performed in the civil rights musical *Fly Blackbird*. The cast sang at civil rights rallies and marched with Martin Luther King. On one occasion, he met King after performing at an event where the church leader was a keynote speaker. "At the end we were ushered down to the basement dressing room to meet Dr King, and this hand shook Dr King's hand." He looks downwards and smiles. "This hand didn't get washed for about three days till my mother put her foot down and said: 'You must wash.'"



L-R: Leonard Nimoy, Walter Koenig, William Shatner, Nichelle Nichols, George Takei and James Doohan in the original Star Trek, 1968. Photograph: CBS Photo Archive/Getty Images

In 1966, Takei was cast as Hikaru Sulu in the original Star Trek TV series. What he loved about the show was its idealism – all nations, races and

extraterrestrial humanoid species working together for a better future. When I accidentally refer to it as Star Wars, he quickly corrects me. “We don’t make war – we make peace.” While the show was ostensibly pure entertainment, its originator, Gene Roddenberry, used its storylines to shine a light on contemporary realities such as racism, the cold war and the war in Vietnam.

Was the camaraderie on board the Starship Enterprise reflected on set? “Yes. Yes. *YES*,” Takei says passionately. “Except for one, who was a prima donna.” He is alluding to the show’s star, [William Shatner, who played Captain Kirk](#). “But the rest of us shared a great camaraderie. One of the gifts from Star Trek was not just longevity but colleagues that became lasting friends. My colleagues were part of my wedding party in 2008. Walter Koenig, who played Chekov, was my best man. We asked Nichelle [Nichols, communications officer Uhura] to be our matron of honour but she said: ‘I am not a matron! If Walter can be the best man, why can’t I be the best lady?’ So she became the best lady.”

[Leonard Nimoy, who played Spock](#), was his great campaigning ally. “Leonard was another politically engaged person. We had wonderful discussions.” Did they see themselves as socialists? “No, liberals. I didn’t realise what a loyal friend Leonard was till the latter part of our lives.” He cites the 2014 premiere of the documentary *To Be Takei* as an example. He had invited Nimoy, but assumed he would not make it because he was so ill. “Leonard came in a wheelchair. He was suffering from COPD [chronic obstructive pulmonary disease], and had a tank of oxygen to breathe in, and he parked in the back of the theatre and watched it. I was so touched. I went to thank him, but he was gone by the time I got there. This was just months before he died.”

James Doohan, who played Scotty, was another great friend. “Jim was my favourite drinking buddy. He was a great drinker.” Did he drink Scotch? “He was an Irishman and a Canadian, but he drank enough Scotch to qualify playing a Scotsman!”

Did any of the cast get on with Shatner? He shakes his head. “No, none of us.” Earlier this month, Shatner told the Times that he was astonished that 60

years on cast members were still moaning about him. “Don’t you think that’s a little weird? It’s like a sickness,” Shatner said, adding that Takei had “never stopped blackening my name”.

Today, Takei is reluctant to talk about Shatner. “I know he came to London to promote his book and talked about me wanting publicity by using his name. So I decided I don’t need his name to get publicity. I have much more substantial subject matter that I want to get publicity for, so I’m not going to refer to Bill in this interview at all.” He grins. “Although I just did. He’s just a cantankerous old man and I’m going to leave him to his devices. I’m not going to play his game.”

One question, I say: was he a cantankerous younger man? “He was self-involved. He enjoyed being the centre of attention. He wanted everyone to kowtow to him.”

Star Trek made Takei a household name, and he used his fame to remind people what had happened to Japanese Americans in the war. He testified at hearings to push for reparations and in 1988 President Reagan signed the Civil Liberties Act, apologising for the US unjustly locking up a whole generation of Japanese Americans and granting surviving internees \$20,000 each in compensation. Takei received his cheque three years later. “It was a massive thing. My cheque was signed by George HW Bush, in 1991. That whole amount went into the founding of the Japanese American National Museum.” Takei is a former chair of the museum.



Takei and his husband Brad Altman at the Seattle Pride parade in 2014. Photograph: Suzi Pratt/FilmMagic

Although Takei has been with Brad for the best part of 40 years, he didn't come out until 2005. Ever since, he has campaigned on LGBTQ+ issues. He remembers first feeling attracted to boys when he was nine, had his first sexual relationship at 14 and found it exhilarating, and then for many years denied himself. He says it was hard enough being a Japanese American without being a gay Japanese American. "I knew that because we looked different we were punished and I didn't want to be punished again for what I was feeling inside. I could hide it. So I started taking girls out for dates. I went out on double dates, but I was more interested in my buddy than my date."

Takei adored the actor Tab Hunter, who was outed in the 1950s. "He was a matinee idol. Blond and beautiful, always taking his shirt off. He was my heartthrob. One of the scandal sheets exposed him as gay, and a torrent of abuse was thrown at him. I didn't want to be like that. I must have been in my late teens. I ducked all these things." Was he celibate? "Occasionally I went to gay baths and had very anonymous sex."

Is it true that he met Brad at a running club? "Yes," chimes in Brad, "and I was the most gorgeous member of the club. Drop-dead gorgeous!"

“He was!” Takei says. “Lean and taut.”

“When I first met George, there was a huge age difference,” Brad says. “I was in my early 30s, in the prime of my life. George was in his later 40s, almost over the hill! So he got my best years.”

“He was your toyboy?” I ask Takei.

“I was!” Brad says proudly.

Takei laughs. “No no no, I wouldn’t use that word. He was ...” He looks for a suitable description. “My trainer for my first marathon.”



Takei (centre) with Lea Salonga and Telly Leung in the Broadway production of Allegiance. Photograph: Matthew Murphy

Takei says he worries that many of the gains in LGBTQ+ rights are now in danger of being reversed. In 2011, Tennessee senator Stacey Campfield introduced what became known as the “Don’t say gay” bill to ban teachers discussing homosexuality in classrooms. At the time, an appalled Takei suggested that they should substitute the name Takei for gay because it rhymed. “Now Ron DeSantis, the governor of Florida, is coming up with the same issue again.”

Takei is a busy man. He says he can't see his activism easing up in the current climate. And he is writing more memoirs. Then there is the acting, of course – he can't wait to be back on stage in London with *Allegiance*.

Before leaving, I ask for a photo with Takei. Brad asks if I can do the Vulcan salute – a raised hand with the palm forward and the thumb extended, while the fingers are parted between the middle and ring finger. I struggle, and ask if he can. “Oh yes! George wouldn't let me be his husband till I could do this.” And now the pair are enjoying themselves. Takei shows me another trick. He wiggles his ears.

“He hasn't done that for years!” Brad says. “Simon, you're a very special person! To bring out George's ear wiggle is very special.” He looks at Takei. “Go on, George – do the George Takei funny face to camera.” And now Takei scrunches his face into a magnificent gurn and the two of them roar with laughter.

Perhaps it's not surprising that Takei is still so boyish. His grandmother lived until she was 104, and he says her favourite hobby was collecting birthdays. Does he hope to be around that long? He nods. “Rather than celebrate birthdays, I celebrate every day. Each day is a gift.” He looks down over London from the penthouse, taking in the old and the new on a wet and windy day. “Ah, this *wonderful* English greyness!” he hymns. “This city is dynamic. It's constantly changing. It's alive.” The same could be said of George Takei.

Allegiance is at [Charing Cross theatre, London, from 7 January to 8 April](#)

This article was amended on 28 November 2022. Takei received his compensation cheque from George HW Bush in 1991, not 1981 as we had it due to a mistranscription error.

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I'm a Celebrity final review – at least Matt the rat didn't win



Matt Hancock and toad on the I'm a Celebrity final. Photograph: James Gourley/ITV/REX/Shutterstock

Matt Hancock's interminable 21 days in the jungle is over – and he was intolerable to the last. Who was voting for this self-serving rodent?



[Stuart Jeffries](#)

Sun 27 Nov 2022 19.17 EST Last modified on Mon 28 Nov 2022 03.40 EST

‘Oh my God!’ shouted footballer Jill Scott halfway through her last bushtucker trial. “I’ve got a rat on my face!” On the plus side, the rat wasn’t the one who quit the sinking ship of the Conservative party before jumping on board a 20-year-old TV franchise that, if not sinking, then like Matt Hancock’s political career has a negligible future.

In the end, the slimiest thing in the jungle did not win. The disgraced former health secretary and MP who opted to be covered in toads, spiders and eels, rather than do the well-remunerated job he was elected to do, was not crowned king of the jungle but only came third in the final of I’m a Celebrity ... Get Me Out of Here!

Hancock lasted 21 days in the jungle camp, survived eight eliminations, 1,700 complaints to the broadcast regulator, Ofcom, a statement from the

[Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice](#) group accusing him of “cashing in on his terrible legacy”, metabolised a cow’s anus and, most incredibly of all, was beaten by a Hollyoaks star. After eating a witchetty grub in this final instalment, second-placed Owen Warner told Ant and Dec proudly: “It’s going down my windpipe.” It wasn’t, of course, nor was the bull’s penis, the fermented duck egg, nor the camel’s testicle and eye he ate. Had they done so, Hollyoaks might have had to start casting for a new hunk.

The majority of more than 12 million public votes went to Scott, the actual lioness who was part of England’s Euro-winning football team this summer. She was indeed, as Warner described her, a “sweet soul” and one who from the first episode showed a steeliness of spirit. She, along with TV presenter Charlene White, walked a plank on top of a skyscraper before dangling above the human splatter zone for one long minute, while another contestant, comedian Babatunde Aleshe, understandably bottled it.

Scott’s achievement is more striking since, as Tanita Tikaram tweeted yesterday: “We are so lucky in the UK to have a whole industry of people working to make sure the least deserving in our society succeed.” What could the former pop star mean? She meant that, as the Observer reported, members of Hancock’s PR team were lobbying for votes on the I’m a Celebrity app – encouraging people to vote for him repeatedly and giving them step-by-step instructions how to do it, often using TikTok videos to court a younger demographic.

None of this, apparently, is against the show’s rules – but it’s clear that neither of the other finalists had PR machines behind them, so this was hardly a level playing field. Another intolerable truth about this year’s I’m a Celebrity is how contestants of colour were the first to be voted out. As in a Hollywood blockbuster (I’m thinking Ice Cube asphyxiated by the eponymous Anaconda) their fate was not to make it to the finale. A comparison with the recent finale of The Great British Bake off is salutary: the three finalists in that show were immigrants, one from Pakistan, another from Angola and the winner from Malaysia – all selected not by public vote but by TV judges. On I’m a Celebrity, all three finalists were white Britons. I’m not saying the voting public is racist, but it clearly doesn’t value diversity much.

Nor am I saying that those who voted to keep Hancock in the jungle were morons with more disposable income than sense who witlessly endorsed a terrible politician trying to sanitise his toxic brand. Well, not entirely. Some, no doubt, voted for him to stay in order that he be punished through a series of grisly bushtucker trials, which, though I'm no sadist, I think incommensurate with his awfulness.

After he was voted out, Hancock crossed the rope bridge to a well-deserved glass of champagne and a post-match interview with Ant and Dec. "We are normal people!" he said of himself and his fellow celebrities after watching his highlights video. Even Ant found that hard to take, given that the video consisted mainly of necking the viscera of local fauna and performing bad karaoke. (Hancock's unsurprisingly self-serving choice of karaoke number? I Want to Break Free, by Queen.)

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You can't have it both ways, Mr Hancock. Either you're normal or a celebrity. Or maybe the truth is you're neither normal nor a celebrity, just another weak man who ran away from his responsibilities and expected to be forgiven for doing so.

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A catalogue of losses: what chronic fatigue syndrome took away from my life

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Beaten, jailed, exiled and still taunting Putin: inside Pussy Riot's filthy, furious show



‘A seven-year sentence isn’t enough – give us 18!’ ...members of the collective are attacked by Cossack militia in Sochi, Russia, during the 2014 winter Olympics. Photograph: Morry Gash/AP

They fled Russia disguised as food couriers. Now a major exhibition is celebrating the collective’s punky protest art, from a urine-splattered portrait of Putin to the cathedral gig that landed them in prison



[Stuart Jeffries](#)

Mon 28 Nov 2022 03.00 ESTLast modified on Mon 28 Nov 2022 11.03 EST

The first thing you see is a framed portrait of Vladimir Putin propped against a table. The Russian leader looks like a secular icon, like Lenin in his mausoleum, seemingly incapable of human expression. But this being a video installation, there is more. Standing on the table is figure in a long gown and orange balaclava, like Rasputin in women’s clothes, or a very unorthodox priest. The figure raises their skirts and a jet of urine spurts over the portrait.

Welcome to Reykjavík and to Velvet Terrorism, an exhibition tracing the decade-long history of Russian art collective [Pussy Riot](#). “Is that you?” I ask Maria Alyokhina, AKA Masha, pointing at the masked urinator? The Pussy Riot co-founder has been showing me, over a video conferencing app,

around the exhibition she and members of Icelandic art collective Kling & Bang (Dorothee Kirch, Ingibjörg Sigurjónsdóttir and Ragnar Kjartansson) are installing. Kjartansson, who earlier this year helped Alyokhina flee Russia, holds the phone and gives me a view of Alyokhina at work.

“It’s not me,” says Alyokhina, thin smile below intense eyes. “It’s a new member of Pussy Riot who joined earlier this year.” By way of context, she adds: “Putin’s Russia has no women in power. Putin surrounds himself with men. The women are to stay at home and accept their role, which is to be protected. I don’t want to be protected by him. I’d rather piss on him.” Kjartansson, unseen, chips in: “It’s such a great take down of the patriarchy. We were assembling a very slick exhibition, tracing the history of Pussy Riot in the past decade. Then Masha arrived and made it very rock’n’roll.”



‘The Orthodox religion is a hardened penis’ ... Pussy Riot singer Maria Alyokhina at The Junction in Cambridge this month. Photograph: Chris Radburn/Reuters

Photos are stuck to the wall with coloured electrical tape. TV monitors howl footage of the various performances and beatings the collective have undergone, such as the time in 2014 when Alyokhina and other members were [whipped and pepper-sprayed by Cossacks](#) for protesting at the Winter

Olympics in Sochi. The look of the show now has a punk sensibility fitting for a collective whose first songs, 2011's Ubey Seksista (Kill the Sexist) and Osvobodi Bruschatku (Release the Cobblestones), sampled two late 70s British punk classics: the Cockney Rejects' I'm Not a Fool and the Angelic Upstarts' Police Oppression.

When I first meet Alyokhina, she is scribbling text on the gallery wall with what looks like a sharpie. She is writing, in English, an explanation of video footage showing Pussy Riot's breakthrough performance in January 2012 in Moscow's Red Square. That day they played a song called Putin Zassal (here rendered as Putin Pissed His Pants), which included the lines: "The Orthodox religion is a hardened penis / Coercing its subjects to accept conformity."

The next exhibit documents what happened the following month inside Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Saviour. Russia was then embroiled in the so-called "snow revolution" against electoral fraud. Alyokhina and four other women smuggled a guitar and amp into the cathedral, donned balaclavas and coloured tights, and performed their Punk Prayer, with lyrics including "Virgin Mary, Mother of God, chase Putin out", and "Virgin Mary, Mother of God, become a feminist".

Alyokhina and other members of the collective were later jailed for inciting religious hatred after the prosecution – incredibly yet successfully – argued that feminism when proclaimed inside a church is heretical.

During Alyokhina's 21-month incarceration in a penal colony in the Ural mountains, Putin's ally and head of the Russian Orthodox church, Patriarch Kirill, explained what was expected of women in Putin's Russia. "Man has his gaze turned outward – he must work, make money – and woman must be focused inwards, where her children are, where her home is. If this incredibly important function of women is destroyed then everything will be destroyed – the family and, if you wish, the motherland." The message was clear: difficult women like Pussy Riot needed silencing to save the Russian motherland.

Alyokhina won't be silenced, though she balks when I suggest that western artists aren't as tough nor as political as she. This is a woman, after all, who

while awaiting sentence released a single defiantly proclaiming: “Seven years isn’t enough – give us 18!” Later, while in jail, she organised impromptu uprisings and would go on to say: “This is what protest should be: desperate, sudden and joyous.”

This spring, after being arrested six times since last summer for protesting against Putin and suspecting another spell in jail was likely, Alyokhina, with girlfriend Lucy Shtein and other members of Pussy Riot, fled Russia disguised as food couriers. Shtein is now in Israel, while Alyokhina and other collective members are nomadic, and have spent much of their time since leaving Russia touring [Europe](#) to raise money to support Ukraine and sanctions on Russian oil and gas.



‘I miss my home’ ... Alyokhina in Porto, Portugal, in June. Photograph: Estela Silva/EPA

Kjartansson calls me later and we speak alone. “I couldn’t say all I wanted about how great Masha is,” he says. “It’s like talking about Elvis in the presence of Elvis.” A longtime Pussy Riot fan, Kjartansson met Alyokhina last December at the grand opening of billionaire Leonid Mikhelson’s GES-2 art space in Moscow, which for a few months was hailed as a symbol of a new Russia.

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Kjartansson's recreation of the US soap Santa Barbara was the gallery's inaugural attraction. It was a project inspired by the idea that Santa Barbara, the first US soap opera to be screened in Russia, had a powerful impact on post-Soviet culture. To that end, working with a professional film crew, he planned to stage, shoot and release about 100 episodes of the soap in Russian, on an insanely tight schedule of one episode a day performed in the gallery.

"But then the invasion of Ukraine started," he explains, "and I didn't want any part of what Russia was doing. So I withdrew." He wasn't alone. Teresa Iarocci Mavica quit as director of GES-2.

Kjartansson has since put his energies into this Pussy Riot exhibition. He wants to show the chutzpah of the collective in turning the power of the oppressors against them, making Putin's thugs and lackeys part of their work. "Be it prison, novichok, whips, ankle tags or exile," says the show's publicity material, "Pussy Riot turn every violent action of the state into art material, shifting the power balance."

I ask Alyokhina when she will go home. "A good question," she smiles sadly. "I don't know. I would like to be there. I miss my home. But not what Putin has done to it."

- [Velvet Terrorism](#) runs until 15 January
-

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OpinionTwitter

Elon Musk's Twitter is fast proving that free speech at all costs is a dangerous fantasy

[Nesrine Malik](#)



Reinstating the likes of Donald Trump and Kanye West looks likely to turn the social media site into an extremist ghetto



‘Elon Musk believes Twitter has a leftwing and liberal bias that should be corrected.’ Photograph: Olivier Douliery/AFP/Getty Images

Mon 28 Nov 2022 01.00 EST Last modified on Mon 28 Nov 2022 02.45 EST

Free speech absolutists are like the cocky audience of a spectator sport – they think they could do better than the players, if they were just allowed a crack at it. To them, speech should be as free as possible, period. Nowhere is their oversimplification of the issue more evident than on social media, where abuse and disinformation have created a new frontier of regulation – and with it a cohort of disingenuous free speech warriors.

These absolutists are so unaccustomed to facing consequences for their actions that they have pushed the idea that a censoring “woke” orthodoxy now prevails, and is a threat to freedom of expression. Elon Musk is among them, but since his [takeover of Twitter](#) he is having to learn quickly that free speech is not simply about saying whatever you want, unchecked, but about negotiating complicated compromises.

Musk arrived at Twitter with an approach that I am sure he thinks is pretty straightforward. The site, he believes, has a [leftwing bias](#) that should be corrected by allowing suspended users back on to the platform. The accounts

of [Donald Trump](#), [Kanye West](#) and [Jordan Peterson](#) have been reinstated, along with [nearly all](#) those that were suspended for falling foul of old Twitter's rules on abuse and hate speech.

This means that [Twitter](#) is about to turn into a far more unpleasant and potentially dangerous experience. Little of this appears to have anything to do with a political strategy on Musk's part. Like Trump, Musk has become the tribune of fascists and racists by way of adolescent contrarianism, an insatiable need to flaunt his control and a radicalising inability to cope with being told he's wrong on the internet. For him, "free speech" seems merely a vehicle for his delusional plan to make Twitter into a fawning "digital town square" that he presides over.

But not even the richest man in the world can pull that sort of free speech arena off. Twitter isn't sustained by previously suspended users, but by the millions of people for whom the platform feels (most of the time) like a political and cultural slipstream. Twitter has an odd social media profile. It is both extremely influential and also often quite trivial, and the coexistence of the two is what makes the site viable. Twitter is a window into the soul of politicians and opinion-makers – its style of interactive rolling commentary works well in drawing them out to post their views or engage with others, revealing personalities and politics that otherwise would be suppressed or closely edited. And it is the first resort of citizen journalists and those marshalling political protest. It also remains the only social media platform where people with little clout or profile can challenge elites directly.

But Twitter is also a solipsistic place, where even small users can become protagonists in spats that are then amplified both by the site's algorithms and a rightwing media that trawls it for telltale signs of "wokeness" or "cancel culture". For better or worse, it is Twitter's adjacency to current affairs and general political and cultural discourse that makes it, uniquely among platforms, feel *relevant*.

If you're not on Twitter, chances are that you have come across stories that started out or were precipitated there, whether it's a debate on trans rights that swirls around JK Rowling's tweets, or calls to organise street protests against dictators in the Arab world. For all these things to be possible on the same site, robust content moderation is necessary to ensure conversations

don't descend into doxing (maliciously publishing someone's personal information) and hateful conduct, and that news and journalism is verifiable. In the absence of moderation, or at least the appearance of it, things fall apart pretty quickly. When a place is not fun or hospitable or truthful to users, it also becomes commercially pointless for advertisers. Since Musk took over, [half of Twitter's top 100 advertisers](#) are reported to have left the site. If things continue as they are, it is hard to see a future for the company.

The ultimate cause of that demise will be the failure of Musk to understand that for some speech to be free, other speech has to be limited. It is generally true that if a service is free then it is by definition exploitative of its users – if you are not paying for a product, the axiom goes, then you *are* the product. But in the case of social media, the regulation of your speech is the product. If a platform becomes too toxic, then it is useless for anyone except those who want an extremist ghetto of agitators. In that sense, social media is very much like society in general. Political and legal authorities are in the business of content moderation, in order to make our shared space as stable and safe as possible for a majority of people. The public and other stakeholders, such as the press, businesses and social media companies themselves, are in constant negotiations with these authorities on what those limits should be – for instance, whether [religious](#) dress is protected speech, or what [constitutes](#) incitement to violence.

Old Twitter was far from perfect, and by its own [admission](#) its algorithms favoured rightwing accounts. But it was improving because of the drag that advertisers, regulators and users were putting on its algorithmic urge to encourage antagonistic activity. The high-speed destabilisation of Musk's Twitter should be a warning to free speech absolutists. The set of curbs they object to are those that make users' experience of social media, and life in general, possible; they protect against, among other jeopardies, libel, impersonation, plagiarism, misinformation and grooming. In essence, all our free speech arguments are about finessing, rather than obliterating a system of functional restrictions.

Those with power have more leeway to define what free speech is, but they can rarely do so without limitation. Twitter's chance of survival is dependent

on whether Musk chooses to accept that, like freedom of speech, his power is not absolute.

- Nesrine Malik is a Guardian columnist
- ***Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please [click here](#).***

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OpinionGlobal development

Action is needed right now to end sexual violence in conflict

[Angelina Jolie](#)

Despite pledges from governments worldwide, not nearly enough has been done over the past decade to help survivors and deter perpetrators



A demonstration in Bengaluru, India on the [International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women](#) on 25 November. Photograph: Manjunath Kiran/AFP/Getty Images

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[About this content](#)

Mon 28 Nov 2022 01.30 EST Last modified on Tue 29 Nov 2022 07.44 EST

Almost a decade ago, more than 150 countries joined the [global declaration of commitment to end sexual violence in conflict](#). They promised to bring perpetrators to justice, to put survivors' needs first, and to take other practical steps to end impunity.

These were lofty goals and there has been some progress, including a few prosecutions at the national level, the adoption of the [Murad Code](#) and the [establishment of the Global Survivors Fund](#). But it has not been nearly enough to meet the needs of survivors, or to deter perpetrators from using rape as a weapon of war in almost every new conflict in the past decade.

Despite the commitments governments made, we have not seen significant, lasting action at the global level. This is deeply painful and frustrating. Conflict-related sexual violence has been [reported](#) in at least 18 countries in the past year alone, from the Americas to Asia and from Europe to Africa.

We are speaking about crimes of extreme brutality. Assaults on women and men in front of their families. The gang-rape of children – who were the victims in nearly half of all the cases the UN verified last year. [Sexual violence](#) in conflict makes peace harder to achieve – and less stable. It

increases the risk of domestic violence. It drives displacement. It stops girls going to school. It leaves scars of trauma and stigma that affect whole societies and cross generations.

We meet and discuss these horrors and agree that they should never be allowed to happen again. We promise to draw – and to hold – that line. But when it comes to hard choices about how to implement these promises, we run into the same problems time and again. We run into some security council members abusing [their veto power](#), such as in the case of Syria. We run into economic and political interests being put first, treating some conflicts as more important than others. And we run into a lack of political will, meaning that governments in recent years have downgraded the importance of efforts to combat war-zone sexual violence, despite the direct link to international peace and security.

For all our awareness of these crimes, less than 1% of humanitarian relief is spent on preventing or responding to sexual and gender-based violence, even though sexual violence is endemic in situations where people are displaced by conflict or disaster.

Survivors and advocates have highlighted this funding gap for years, and addressing it was one of the promises of the global declaration. The creation of a permanent international body that can help fill the accountability gap has also been discussed for years without any progress. A new, permanent, international commission to document and investigate sexual violence in conflict could support national and international investigators, prosecutors, and accountability and justice mechanisms in their work. It could act as a professional body, a repository of knowledge and data, and provide training for people involved in investigating atrocities and war crimes.

Survivors should not have to come forward to explain their pain and suffering again

When human beings are physically assaulted in this way, there has to be a decisive global response. When there isn't, a message is sent to both the

victim and the perpetrator that we don't truly regard this as a significant crime that has to be punished and prevented.

Over the next two days, government ministers, academics, civil society practitioners and survivors will [come together in London for a conference](#) to renew global political will to prevent sexual violence in conflict. It should take a hard look at what has succeeded – and what has not.

At the last conference, in London in 2014, survivors and NGOs came forward with information and solutions to impunity, from reforming militaries to developing local capacity and ensuring medical care, trauma care, livelihood support and reparations for survivors.

The conference should not be another moment when survivors have to come forward to explain their pain and suffering again, and to show their willingness to work with governments, only for countries to be unwilling to act on their commitments over the long term.

Governments and international efforts come and go. Those who remain and who fight and struggle for decades are local people – in this case, the survivors of rape, and people such as the Congolese gynaecologist and Nobel prizewinner [Dr Denis Mukwege](#). He has treated tens of thousands of survivors of rape, despite attacks on his life, for decades.

If global leaders were willing to be even a fraction as brave and committed as Dr Mukwege – and as survivors are – then we could perhaps finally find a way to meet this crime with the response it deserves.

- Angelina Jolie is an actor, co-founder of the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative and a special envoy of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
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OpinionWater

I always knew guzzling two litres of water a day was over the top. Now science is on my side

[Emma Beddington](#)



A new study cuts the traditional public health target down to size. What a relief: it's never pleasant to drink a cold, flavourless glass of nothing



‘Fully hydrated, I might spring into exuberant life!’ (Picture posed by model.) Photograph: d3sign/Getty Images

Mon 28 Nov 2022 02.00 ESTLast modified on Mon 28 Nov 2022 07.10 EST

Finally – finally! – the scientific breakthrough I’ve been waiting for. Not the incredible recent [progress on Alzheimer’s](#) or the huge strides towards [eliminating HIV](#), though, sure, that stuff is good, I suppose. It’s the paper suggesting public health guidelines to drink two litres of water a day are [probably over the top](#). “The current recommendation is not supported scientifically at all,” according to my new hero, Yosuke Yamada of Japan’s National Institute of Biomedical Innovation, one of the study’s authors.

Having grown up before Big Hydration got its unpleasantly moist claws into the world, I don’t get on with water, never have. Days go by without me feeling compelled to drink any: I find my thirst is adequately quenched by imagining how unpleasant it would be to drink a cold, flavourless glass of nothing.

My optician told me I had the driest eyeballs she had ever seen. I imagine them like little bundles of tumbleweed

I can't, in good conscience, claim it's never done me any harm. A nutritionist recently told me that fatigue, brain fog and headaches – all regular events – are usually signs of dehydration; I always assumed they were just facets of my delightful personality. My optician told me I had the driest eyeballs she had ever seen, a fact I have been relating with misplaced pride ever since: I imagine them like little bundles of tumbleweed, rolling dustily around my sockets (no wonder they itch).

On some weird level, I like the thought that things could be better if I drank. Water is my “in case of emergency, break glass” last resort. Fully hydrated, I might spring into exuberant life like [those desiccated desert frogs](#) that survive years without moisture do when it rains. It's nice to pretend that's an option.

My self-sabotage is slightly vindicated by the study's conclusion that (a frankly still excessive) 1.5 to 1.8 litres is probably sufficient for most. “You can get about 50% of your water needs from food,” Yamada added, as long as your diet isn't solely bacon, bread and eggs (did a full English hurt him?). The study also highlighted the cost of producing all that unnecessary drinking water: by eschewing it, I'm actually doing everyone a favour. You're welcome.

- Emma Beddington is a Guardian columnist

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[Cryptocurrencies](#)

Crypto will survive the FTX collapse – but more scandals will follow

[Kenneth Rogoff](#)

Bitcoin and ethereum prices have plummeted, but it is unlikely the US will ban cryptocurrencies soon



The collapse of Sam Bankman-Fried's FTX looks set to go down as one of the great financial debacles of all time. Photograph: Stefani Reynolds/AFP/Getty Images

Mon 28 Nov 2022 02.00 EST

The epic collapse of wunderkind Sam Bankman-Fried's \$32bn (£27bn) crypto empire, FTX, looks set to go down as one of the [great financial debacles](#) of all time. With a storyline full of [celebrities](#), politicians, sex and drugs, the future looks bright for producers of feature films and

documentaries. But, to paraphrase Mark Twain, rumours of the death of crypto itself have been much exaggerated.

True, the loss of confidence in “exchanges” such as FTX – essentially crypto financial intermediaries – almost surely means a sustained steep drop in prices for the underlying assets. The vast majority of bitcoin transactions are done “off-chain” in exchanges, not in the bitcoin blockchain itself. These financial intermediaries are vastly more convenient, require much less sophistication to use and do not waste nearly as much energy.

The emergence of exchanges was a major factor fuelling cryptocurrencies’ price growth and if regulators come down hard on them, the price of the underlying tokens will fall. Accordingly, [bitcoin](#) and ethereum prices have plummeted.

But a price adjustment alone is not the end of the world. The pertinent question is whether crypto lobbyists will be able to contain the damage. Until now, their money has been speaking volumes; Bankman-Fried reportedly gave [\\$40m](#) to support the Democrats in the US, and his FTX colleague Ryan Salame reportedly gave \$23m to Republicans. Such largesse surely helped persuade regulators around the world to follow a wait-and-see approach to crypto regulation, rather than be perceived to be stifling innovation. Well, they waited, and with the FTX crash, we must hope that they saw.

But what will they conclude? The most likely path is to improve regulation of the [centralised exchanges](#) – the firms that help individuals store and trade cryptocurrencies “off chain”. The fact that a multibillion-dollar financial intermediary was not subject to normal record-keeping requirements is stupefying, no matter what one thinks about the future of crypto.

Firms would face compliance costs, but effective regulation could restore confidence, benefiting firms aiming to operate honestly, which are surely the majority, at least if one weights these exchanges by size. Greater confidence in the remaining exchanges could even lead to higher crypto prices, though much would depend on the extent to which regulatory demands, particularly

on individual identities, ultimately undermined demand. After all, the major transactions currently conducted with crypto may be remittances from rich countries to developing economies and emerging markets, and capital flight in the other direction. In both cases, the parties' desire to avoid exchange controls and taxes implies a premium on anonymity.

On the other hand, Vitalik Buterin, the co-founder of the ethereum blockchain and one of the crypto industry's most influential thinkers, [has argued](#) that the real lesson of FTX's collapse is that crypto needs to return to its decentralised roots. Centralised exchanges such as FTX make holding and trading cryptocurrencies much more convenient, but at the expense of opening the door to managerial corruption, just as in any conventional financial firm. Decentralisation can mean greater vulnerability to attack, but so far the largest cryptocurrencies, such as bitcoin and ethereum, have proven resilient.

The problem with having only decentralised exchanges is their inefficiency compared with, say, Visa and Mastercard, or normal bank transactions in advanced economies. Centralised exchanges such as FTX democratised the crypto domain, allowing ordinary people without technical skill to invest and conduct transactions. It is certainly possible that ways to duplicate the speed and cost advantages of centralised exchanges eventually will be found. But this seems unlikely in the foreseeable future, making it hard to see why anyone not engaged in tax and regulatory evasion (not to mention crime) would use crypto, a point I have [long emphasised](#).

Perhaps regulators should push toward decentralised equilibrium by requiring that exchanges know the identity of *anyone* with whom they transact, including on the blockchain. Although this may sound innocent, it would make it rather difficult to trade on the anonymous blockchain on behalf of an exchange's customers.

True, there are alternatives involving "chain analysis", whereby transactions in and out of a bitcoin wallet (account) can be algorithmically examined, allowing the underlying identity to be revealed in some cases. But if this approach was always enough, and all semblance of anonymity could always be obliterated, it is hard to see how crypto could compete with more efficient financial intermediation options.

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Finally, rather than simply banning crypto intermediaries, many countries may ultimately try to ban all crypto transactions, as China and a handful of developing economies have already done. Making it illegal to transact in bitcoin, ethereum and most other crypto would not stop everyone, but it would certainly constrain the system. Just because China was among the first does not make the strategy wrong, especially if one suspects that the main transactions relate to tax evasion and crime, akin to large denomination paper currency notes such as the \$100 bill.

Eventually, many other countries are likely to follow China's lead. But it is unlikely that the most important player, the US, with its weak and fragmented crypto regulation, will undertake a bold strategy any time soon. FTX may be the biggest scandal in crypto so far; sadly, it is unlikely to be the last.

Kenneth Rogoff is professor of economics and public policy at Harvard University. He was the IMF's chief economist from 2001-03.

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Ending sexual violence in conflict

Angelina Jolie criticises governments over inaction on wartime sexual violence

The UN special envoy bemoaned a lack of progress in deterring perpetrators from using rape as a weapon of war and for failing to meet the needs of survivors

Angelina Jolie criticises inaction on wartime sexual violence

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[About this content](#)

[Sarah Johnson](#)

Mon 28 Nov 2022 01.30 EST Last modified on Mon 28 Nov 2022 16.10 EST

Angelina Jolie has decried the lack of action by governments to support survivors of wartime rape as “deeply painful and frustrating”.

The actor and UN special envoy for refugees, who launched the [Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative](#) (PSVI) with the then foreign secretary William Hague in 2012, said there had not been “nearly enough” progress on bringing perpetrators to justice, prioritising survivors’ needs or ending impunity.

[Writing in the Guardian today](#), she said: “There has been some progress ... but it has not been nearly enough to meet the needs of survivors, or to deter perpetrators from using rape as a weapon of war in almost every new conflict in the past decade.

“Despite the commitments governments made, we have not seen significant, lasting action at the global level. This is deeply painful and frustrating.”

As the British government marks the 10th anniversary of PSVI with a [conference in London](#), Jolie said: “We meet and discuss these horrors and agree that they should never be allowed to happen again. We promise to draw – and to hold – that line.

“But when it comes to hard choices about how to implement these promises, we run into the same problems time and again. We run into some security council members abusing their veto power, such as in the case of Syria. We run into economic and political interests being put first, treating some conflicts as more important than others. And we run into a lack of political will, meaning that governments in recent years have downgraded the importance of efforts to combat war-zone sexual violence, despite the direct link to international peace and security.”

Ministers and representatives from 70 countries are expected to attend the two-day PSVI summit, which begins on Monday. They will be joined by survivors of violence and [Nobel laureates Nadia Murad and Denis Mukwege](#).

Tariq Ahmad, the UK prime minister’s special representative for PSVI, said the conference will “drive new action”, secure new commitments (including funding) and “discuss how to strengthen the global response to these crimes

and how to address some of the real root causes, including gender discrimination”.

The UK government announced on Monday £12.5m of new funding over three years to tackle violence. Most of the money will be used to support survivors.

The foreign secretary, James Cleverly, said: “The very threat of rape and sexual violence as a weapon of war should bring immediate international condemnation and swift action to stop those attacks before they start.

“So today, we stand in solidarity to support survivors and to bring justice. But also to send an unequivocal message to those who order, allow or perpetrate sexual violence: we will not tolerate it and we will push for perpetrators to be prosecuted.”

But Nimco Ali, the chief executive of [the Five Foundation](#), an organisation working for women and girls around the world, said pledging money was not enough.

“It is not enough that we see renewed commitments,” she said. “It has been proven they are not sufficient or reliable. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office needs to embed change at its core and update its own systemic priorities by putting the principles of gender equality at the heart of its aid and diplomacy policies.”

Ali added that money must be given to local women’s organisations. “Unless international aid and foreign diplomacy strategies include unshakeable and specific financial commitments for women and girls at grassroots level – in countries where the specific instances of violence are happening – we will be back here again in 10 years’ time,” she said.

Eva Tabbasam, the director of Gender Action for Peace and Security, said £12.5m was “a drop in the ocean compared to the amount of money that has been cut from gender equality programming”.

Last year [saw a £3bn reduction in the overseas aid budget](#), with further cuts estimated in the next few years. An [analysis of UK aid](#) between 2019 and

2022 showed the cuts had a significant detrimental impact on women and girls' lives.

Yasmin Sooka, the chair of the UN commission on human rights in South Sudan, said the war in Ukraine meant that the organisations that survivors of sexual violence depend on in South Sudan and other countries had seen their funds cut in recent years.

“The international community needs to stop these violations in South Sudan, but in the absence of peace at least we should be able to patch up the victims,” she said.

A PSVI summit held in London in 2014 – attended by 1,700 politicians, celebrities, and survivors – was criticised for costing more than [five times](#) the 2015 UK budget for tackling rape in war zones.

In 2020, a [damning report](#) by the aid watchdog said PSVI had “not fully delivered on its ambitions and is at risk of letting survivors down”.

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[Donald Trump](#)

Donald Trump ‘shied away from criticising Nick Fuentes’

Advisers wanted ex-president to distance himself from white supremacist with whom he dined but Trump feared alienating supporters – insiders



Nick Fuentes, shown in November 2020, had dinner at Mar-a-Lago with Donald Trump and Kanye West. Fuentes has since said the future of the country ‘isn’t Donald Trump’. Photograph: Nicole Hester/AP

[Hugo Lowell](#) in Washington

[@hugolowell](#)

Mon 28 Nov 2022 16.53 ESTFirst published on Mon 28 Nov 2022 02.00 EST

Donald Trump repeatedly refused to disavow the outspoken antisemite and white supremacist Nick Fuentes after they spoke over dinner at his Mar-a-Lago resort, rejecting the advice from advisers over fears he might alienate a section of his base, two people familiar with the situation said.

The [former US president](#) was urged publicly and privately to denounce Fuentes [in the aftermath of the dinner](#), which included the performer Ye, previously known as Kanye West, who has also recently been propagating antisemitic remarks.

But Trump eschewed making outright disavowals of Fuentes, the people said, and none of the statements from the campaign or on his Truth Social account included criticism of Fuentes, despite efforts from advisers who reached Trump over the Thanksgiving holiday.

Trump ultimately made clear that he fundamentally did not want to criticise Fuentes – a product of his dislike of confrontation and his anxiety that it might antagonise a devoted part of his base – and became more entrenched in his obstinance the more he was urged to do so.

Across three statements on Friday, Trump initially sought only to play down the dinner and made no mention of Fuentes or his views, before saying angrily in a post on his Truth Social website that evening that [Ye](#) “expressed no antisemitism” and “I didn’t know Nick Fuentes”.

The line about not knowing Fuentes was the closest Trump came to acknowledging the offensive nature of the dinner, under pressure from advisers who warned him that being associated with a racist and Holocaust denier could further damage his personal brand as well as his recently launched 2024 presidential campaign.

But even with his ignorance of Fuentes taken at face value, the statements signal Trump will give extraordinary deference to the most fringe elements of his base – even if it means potentially losing support from more moderate Republicans who have not typically cared for his indulgence of extremism.

Trump has had a long history of delaying or muting criticism of white supremacy, drawing moral equivalency in 2017 between neo-Nazis and counter-protesters at [the deadly unrest in Charlottesville, Virginia](#), and refusing to denounce the far-right Proud Boys group at a 2020 presidential debate.

The halting response to Fuentes most closely mirrored his inability to condemn white supremacist groups after Charlottesville, the people said, when Trump faced intense criticism for not naming the rightwing groups in the bloodshed that ended with the death of a young woman.

When reached for comment, the Trump 2024 campaign said the former president had a record of combating antisemitism, including the appointment of a special envoy to combat antisemitism, and strengthening ties to Israel by recognising Israeli sovereignty in the Golan Heights.

The circumstances of the dinner at [Mar-a-Lago](#) on Tuesday, though, have been a new source of consternation for aides, who privately concede that Ye should never have been allowed to meet with Trump in the first place given his own recent antisemitic history.

Trump had intended to meet with Ye one-on-one for some time, according to a person briefed on the matter, though it was postponed around the time that Ye tweeted offensive tropes against Jews – only for it to be inexplicably rescheduled for late November.

The former president ended up meeting with Fuentes, who was at the unrest in Charlottesville, after he came along with Ye and a former Trump campaign aide, Karen Giorno. There was only a skeleton staff from Trump’s “45 Office” at the property ahead of the Thanksgiving holiday.

During the dinner, the person said, Fuentes told Trump he was among the former president’s supporters, but that he had been unimpressed with the 2024 campaign launch speech because it appeared stilted instead of appearing “authentic” with his ad-libs and off-the-cuff remarks.

Trump, who had told Fuentes that his advisers preferred him to read speeches as scripted, turned to Ye at one point and said: “He gets me.”

Fuentes also told Trump that he thought the former president would crush other 2024 candidates in a primary, including the Florida governor, Ron DeSantis, the person said – though Fuentes later appeared less than enthusiastic [on his live stream](#), saying the future of the country “isn’t Donald Trump”.

On Saturday, US president [Joe Biden said](#) “you don’t want to know what I think” when asked about Trump’s guests.

On Sunday, White House deputy press secretary Andrew Bates issued a statement, saying: “Bigotry, hate, and antisemitism have absolutely no place in America – including at Mar-A-Lago. Holocaust denial is repugnant and dangerous, and it must be forcefully condemned.”

And during the White House media briefing on Monday afternoon, press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said: “This administration, this president totally rejects bigotry, racism, antisemitism and there is just no places for these types of vile forces in our society ... We should all be condemning this.”

She added: “When you say things like this, when you do not speak out against these kinds of poisonous and dangerous kind of remarks ... that is also incredibly dangerous within itself.”

This article was amended on 30 November 2022. A previous version stated that Nick Fuentes, in a live stream, appeared to endorse Ron DeSantis. A reference to these remarks has been clarified.

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[Colorado](#)

Man who helped stop shooter at Colorado gay club ‘wanted to save family I found’

Navy member Thomas James was one of two men who prevented gunman from doing more harm after he killed five people



Flowers, candles, and mementos are left at a memorial after a mass shooting at LGBTQ nightclub Club Q in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Photograph: Isaiah Downing/Reuters

Associated Press

Sun 27 Nov 2022 16.43 ESTLast modified on Mon 28 Nov 2022 08.01 EST

A member of the US navy who was injured while helping prevent further harm during a shooting at a gay nightclub in [Colorado](#) last weekend said on Sunday that he “simply wanted to save the family that I found”.

Petty officer 2nd class Thomas James made his first public comments on the shooting in a statement issued through Centura Penrose hospital in Colorado Springs, where James is recovering from undisclosed injuries suffered during the attack.

The Colorado Springs police chief, Adrian Vasquez, said that James was one of two men who helped to stop the shooter who walked into Club Q late on 19 November with multiple firearms, including a semiautomatic rifle, and killed five people.

At least 17 others were injured when a drag queen's birthday celebration turned into a massacre.

James reportedly pushed a rifle out of the shooter's reach while army veteran Rich Fierro [repeatedly struck the shooter](#) with a handgun the shooter brought into the bar, officials have said.

"If I had my way, I would shield everyone I could from the nonsensical acts of hate in the world, but I am only one person," James said in a statement. "Thankfully, we are a family and family looks after one another."

Patrons of Club Q have said the bar offered them a community where they felt celebrated, but that the shooting shook their sense of safety.

The shooting suspect, Anderson Lee Aldrich, 22, was visibly injured during the initial court appearance on Wednesday. Aldrich was ordered held without bail. Formal charges have [not been filed](#) and Aldrich has not spoken about the shooting.

"I want to support everyone who has known the pain and loss that have been all too common these past few years," James said. "My thoughts are with those we lost on Nov 19, and those who are still recovering from their injuries."

James urged young members of the LGBTQ community to be brave. "Your family is out there. You are loved and valued. So when you come out of the closet, come out swinging," he said.

Colorado's governor, Jared Polis, the first openly gay man elected governor in the US, appeared on TV saying he supported increasing licensing requirements for [semiautomatic weapons](#), improving mental health services and better use of red flag laws that allow courts to remove weapons from people having mental health crises and who may be a danger.

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[Italy](#)

Anger grows as illegal construction partly blamed for landslide deaths on Italian island

Seven confirmed dead and search continues for people missing after Saturday's disaster on Ischia

Italy: footage shows aftermath of landslide on Ischia – video

[*Angela Giuffrida*](#) in Ischia

Sun 27 Nov 2022 16.10 ESTFirst published on Sun 27 Nov 2022 09.20 EST

As rescuers continued to search for five people still missing after a catastrophic landslide in Ischia, anger was growing on the southern Italian island on Sunday over the years of rampant illegal construction that contributed to the disaster.

Seven people, including a three-week-old baby and a pair of young siblings, are confirmed to have died in [Saturday's landslide](#), which was triggered by a violent storm that sent mud and debris from Monte Epomeo, a 789-metre (2,590ft) peak, crashing into the hamlet of Casamicciola Terme. One victim – 32-year-old Eleonora Sirabella – has been named. The others, who include the infant boy's parents, a five-year-old girl and her 11-year-old brother, a 31-year-old island resident and a Bulgarian tourist, have not yet been officially identified.

“Mud and water tend to fill every space,” Luca Cari, the spokesperson for Italian firefighters, told RAI state TV on Sunday. “Our teams are searching with hope, even if it is very difficult.”



Men carry possessions through a street covered in mud after landslides on Ischia. Photograph: Roberto Salomone/The Guardian

The same hamlet was hit by a landslide in 2009, when a 14-year-old girl died, and damaged again by an earthquake in 2017.

Dozens of homes were destroyed, trees uprooted and cars swept into the sea in the latest tragedy.

[Ischia landslide map](#)

Ischia landslide map

Giorgia Meloni's government, which came to power in October, announced a state of emergency on Sunday, adding it has set aside €2m (£1.7m), the first tranche of a fund that will be spent on repairing the damage.

But for many, the move is too little, too late.

"I'm furious," said Franco, as he cleared mud from the entrance of what was a hotel owned by his family. "This is the second time I've had to do this – after the 2009 landslide they made lots of promises to make the area more secure. They knew the risks but did nothing."

The storm, which followed days of heavy rain across much of [Italy](#), is reported to be the worst in 20 years to have hit Ischia, an island in the Gulf of Naples, with 126mm of rain falling in six hours.



Rescuers search for survivors on the beach following the landslide on Ischia.
Photograph: Roberto Salomone/The Guardian

Casamicciola Terme is home to just over 2,000 people and lies in an area of the island – known for its natural hot springs and popular with Italian and foreign tourists – that is extremely vulnerable to landslides and seismic activity. Seventy-two landslides were registered to have occurred in the hamlet between 2018 and 2021.

The number of illegally built homes and other buildings – estimated at 28,000 across the island – has been blamed for exacerbating the damage.



Vincenzo Capuano. Photograph: Roberto Salomone/The Guardian

“They’ve been giving permits to people to effectively build illegally since the 1920s,” said Vincenzo Capuano, as he assessed the destroyed premises of what was his cultural association. “So we’re not talking about just a few years. These were permits given for houses, hotels, you name it.”

Capuano, whose car was swept away in the disaster, is friends with a man in his 60s who was hospitalised on Saturday after being pulled alive from the thick mud.

The illegal building also meant that trees, which play an essential role as buttresses in reducing landslide risk, were torn down. Experts also say that a geological survey assessing the risks in the area was last done 20 years ago.

“This is a region predisposed to landslides,” said Micla Pennetta, a professor of geomorphology at Federico II University in Naples. “So much of the devastation in the past has influenced the current morphology of Ischia. Seismic activity also plays a part, but on top of the natural aspects we have deforestation and subsequent cementification – this reduced the capacity for water to be absorbed, enabling it to rapidly reach roads and homes, causing extreme damage.”

Pennetta added: “Not only has the geological map done 20 years ago not been updated, but it was never detailed enough to properly identify the risks. And if no proper studies are done, then people can build wherever they want.”

Ischia has a population of about 22,000 and although it attracts far less attention than its more glitzy neighbour, Capri, over the years the island has drawn a crowd who prefer more low-key holidays, including the former German chancellor Angela Merkel, and who want to experience its natural hot springs.

The island enjoyed a robust tourist trade this summer, the busiest season since the start of the coronavirus pandemic.

“We had a great summer,” said Raffaele, a taxi driver whose colleague is waiting for news of a relative who is among those missing. “This is a terrible tragedy for the island.”

Several historic spas, including Belliazzi, a vast complex built in 1854 that sits upon hot springs dating back to the Roman era, have been badly damaged. “The springs have been totally saturated,” said Carmine Bernardo, the spa’s owner.

As the sun set, a crowd of people gathered at the port of Casamicciola, where rescuers were searching the sea for possible victims. Vehicles retrieved from the sea lined the shoreline.

The wind had again picked up strength, and more storms are forecast in Ischia and other parts of Italy in the coming days.



A resident rides his Vespa through a muddy street. Photograph: Roberto Salomone/The Guardian

“This is a tragedy that should never have happened,” said Pascquale Manco, who partly blames the scant maintenance of Mount Epomeo, the highest peak in Ischia, for the catastrophe. “They [the authorities] also set aside money after the 2009 landslide for maintenance, but it was never used. The mountain has not been taken care of the way it should have been. They only act in an emergency, when what we need are prevention measures.”

Manco was at the port with Rosa Pisani, whose husband’s cousin is among those missing. “We can only carry on hoping they find people alive,” he said. “Hope is the last thing to fade even if the reality tells us something different.”

Headlines thursday 1 december 2022

- [Stop and search Met pays out to black brothers searched and handcuffed outside home](#)
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- [Rishi Sunak PM faces first electoral test as Chester votes in byelection](#)
- [Poland 0-2 Argentina Messi misses penalty as both sides go through](#)
- [Socceroos Graham Arnold hails team as they 'unite the country'](#)

[Stop and search](#)

Met pays out to black brothers searched and handcuffed outside home

Brothers speak of trauma and humiliation after being arrested in front of family home in Chingford, east London



Leon (left) and Nicholas Peart. Photograph: Jill Mead/The Guardian

[Vikram Dodd](#) *Police and crime correspondent*

Thu 1 Dec 2022 01.00 EST

The [Metropolitan police](#) has settled a complaint by black brothers who were stopped, searched and handcuffed outside their family home.

Nicholas Peart, 24, and Leon Peart, 20, both black, are Christians who regularly attend church and say they have never smoked tobacco let alone taken drugs. They told of their feelings of trauma and humiliation after about 20 minutes in handcuffs when arrested outside in Chingford, east [London](#).

“We go to church, we follow the law,” Nicholas Peart said. “The only reason [for the arrests] I can assume is race.” The Met denied that claim.

The incident happened on 13 April 2020, on Leon’s 18th birthday, when strict lockdown measures were in place because of the pandemic. Leon said that instead of celebrating his birthday he was left in tears.

At the time the brothers were working in a supermarket and classed as essential workers, as was their mum, Jacqui, an NHS worker. Nicholas said he was sitting in his car before getting petrol so he could get to work early the next day. His brother and mother were going to join him for the drive.

In documents the police, from the violent crimes taskforce, say they were initially investigating why Nicholas was out of the house. No fine was issued. Another officer claimed to have seen items linked to drugs and Nicholas was handcuffed and a search began.

Leon came out the house, saw his brother in handcuffs, and ran into the house to get his mother.

Documents from the Met show police saying they believed this was a possible drugs deal in progress with the two brothers at the centre of it. “Drug paraphernalia was seen inside the vehicle and as subject being spoken to, an unknown male looked to be approaching the subject’s vehicle and ran [out of] sight of police. Believe to be a possible drug deal.”

One officer explained Leon was handcuffed because he was “bigger than me and clearly much stronger”, adding: “I was aware that gang nominal and drug dealers regularly carry weapons and have been assaulted doing similar style stops on numerous occasions.”

Nicholas Peart said: “It was embarrassing to put me in handcuffs in front of my neighbours. Beforehand I had a good view of the police. I always said hi to the local officer. This has diminished my view of the police.”

Nicholas said when the family complained, the system was not interested in finding the truth: “They were trying to cover their own backs.”

Jacqui Peart said: “It was distressing for me as a mother. I thought my son was being attacked in the front garden. I came out of the house and saw a police officer grabbing my son.”

The first few months of lockdown saw the Met stop and search [more than a quarter of all black 15- to 24-year-olds in London](#), with 80% found to have nothing on them.

Leon said his handcuffing and treatment left him in tears and the Met – which under new commissioner Sir Mark Rowley is vowing to change – should apologise: “They twisted them and the metal digs into your hands. I think it was racist and because of my skin colour. There’s no change in the Met. Words are cheap, once we see actions we can start to believe their stories.”

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One officer involved in the stops, Paul Hefford, was [a key player in a hate message group](#), and was dismissed from the Met in July 2022, two years after the stop.

A Met disciplinary panel found the group contained numerous “racist and discriminatory” messages, which were anti-black, anti-Muslim, some abusing Meghan Markle, and that Hefford was the second-most frequent poster to the chat group containing police officers.

The Met deputy assistant commissioner, Bas Javid, said: “One of the three officers involved was dismissed over an unrelated matter in June 2022. His statement could no longer be relied upon. Following this, we took the

decision to settle the claim without admission of liability. Based on the accounts of the two other officers, we did not accept the men were stopped and searched because of the colour of their skin.”

Solicitor [Carolynn Gallwey](#), who represented the brothers, said: “The bigger problem here is that their experience is at least in part the result of a toxic culture within the Met which sees black Londoners disproportionately stopped and searched by police on the street every day. This is what the commissioner should be tackling.”

Waltham Forest council, which covers Chingford, said it would ask for an urgent meeting with the Met about stop and search.

Next week the Met will defend itself in court against claims from two other brothers, Liam and Dijon Joseph, who say [discrimination explains their stop after bumping fists](#) on a south London street in 2018.

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[Politics live with Andrew Sparrow](#)Politics

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Politics

Rishi Sunak faces first electoral test as Chester votes in byelection

Vote triggered by Labour MP's resignation is first byelection under current prime minister



Local councillor Samantha Dixon is hoping to hold on to Labour's majority in the City of Chester. Photograph: Christopher Furlong/Getty Images

[*Sammy Gecsoyler*](#) and [*Nadeem Badshah*](#)

Wed 30 Nov 2022 15.59 ESTLast modified on Wed 30 Nov 2022 16.48 EST

The first Westminster byelection since the resignation of Boris Johnson and Liz Truss and the financial fallout from the mini-budget takes place on Thursday.

Polls will close at 10pm in the City of [Chester](#) constituency in the first electoral test for Rishi Sunak.

The byelection was triggered by [Labour MP Chris Matheson resigning in October](#) after allegations of sexual misconduct.

Parliament's bullying and harassment watchdog and the standards commissioner found he had violated the Commons' sexual misconduct policy.

The byelection comes after a year of turmoil for the [Conservatives](#), including byelection losses in Wakefield and Tiverton and Honiton in June and the Partygate scandal, which contributed to Johnson's resignation in July. His successor, Truss, resigned after only 45 days in office.

Labour, which has a majority of 6,164 votes in the affluent constituency, is expected to retain the seat. However, its history is more mixed. In 2015, [Labour](#) won by just 93 votes, making the City of Chester seat the most marginal in the country. In 2010, the Conservatives took the seat from Labour with a 2,583 majority.

Labour could also be concerned because the last time a byelection was held due to one of their MPs standing down in disrepute they lost what was seen as a safe seat.

[Mike Hill resigned from his seat in Hartlepool in 2021 after allegations of sexual harassment](#) and Labour went on to face an embarrassing defeat in the resulting byelection, losing the seat for the first time in its history.

Local councillor Samantha Dixon is Labour's candidate in Thursday's byelection. In the past month, senior party figures including Angela Rayner, Ed Miliband and Richard Burdon have visited to campaign.

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The Conservative candidate is Elizabeth Wardlaw, a nurse who is also a local councillor.

A result is expected at around 3am on Friday.

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World Cup 2022

Argentina advance despite Messi's saved penalty and Poland squeak through



Argentina's Julián Álvarez (right) celebrates after scoring their second goal against Poland. Photograph: Tom Jenkins/The Guardian

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[Louise Taylor](#) at Stadium 974

Wed 30 Nov 2022 16.23 EST Last modified on Thu 1 Dec 2022 05.32 EST

As Lionel Messi zigzagged this way and that it sometimes seemed that Argentina's No 10 must be electrically powered and perhaps operated by remote control.

Although Brighton's Alexis Mac Allister scored the vital breakthrough goal for Lionel Scaloni's side, it was Messi's dedication, in equal measure, to bewitching his adoring public and bewildering [Poland](#) that really made the difference.

Well before the end everyone had, almost, forgotten that a player who is such a catalyst for his country and who spent much of the game slaloming past often helpless markers had missed a first-half penalty.

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Qatar: beyond the football

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Photograph: Caspar Benson

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When the music stopped and the final whistle blew Manchester City's Julián Álvarez had joined Mac Allister on the scoresheet yet, miraculously, a thoroughly overwhelmed Poland still followed their tormentors into the knockout stages thanks to a superior goal difference to Mexico.

Talk about progressing by the skin of your teeth. Had Lautaro Martínez not missed a late sitter for Argentina and Saudi Arabia not pulled a goal back against Mexico his opponents would have been boarding a flight to Warsaw

today on Thursday. Instead Poland survive to face France on Sunday in the round of 16.

Although they will need to improve considerably it at least means Robert Lewandowski will fight another day at a [World Cup](#). The traffic was far too one way for Poland's talisman to make the desired impact here but "Lewangoalski" surely deserves at least one more moment in the Doha sun.

Few would bet against its still powerful December rays shining on Messi and Argentina – who meet Australia on Saturday – for a while yet. If Messi exists in anyone's shadow it is that of the late Diego Maradona. Here, in making his 22nd World Cup appearance, he eclipsed his compatriot's equivalent tally of 21 games.

Given that every other person pouring into Stadium 974 seemed to be wearing a pale blue and white No 10 shirt with either Maradona or Messi on the back, the latter bore quite some responsibility. Could Messi upstage Lewandowski, Poland's record goalscorer and the striker who effectively replaced him at Barcelona?



Wojciech Szczesny saves Lionel Messi's penalty in the first half after the Poland goalkeeper was adjudged to have fouled the Argentina forward. Photograph: Tom Jenkins/The Guardian

The good news for that adoring audience was that the answer was a resounding “yes”. In persistently destabilising Czeslaw Michniewicz’s defence the Paris Saint-Germain forward swiftly suggested that Lionel Scaloni’s side’s shock defeat to Saudi Arabia in their opening Group C game had been an aberration rather than a symptom of a worrying new structural flaw. In the first 15 minutes alone, Messi forced Wojciech Szczesny into a couple of saves after variously dodging and brushing aside assorted Poland defenders.

Not to be eclipsed entirely, Lewandowski sporadically looked capable of offering a masterclass in the No 9 role but lacked the service to conduct it properly. A glimpse came when, holding the ball up and holding off markers with equal aplomb, he conjured a decent opening for Krystian Bielik but the midfielder responded with a tepid shot directed straight at the underemployed Emiliano Martínez.

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“What can I say,” said Michniewicz after watching Lewandowski being regularly marooned in less than splendid isolation as his teammates manned the barricades against an impressively fluent, tempo-setting Argentina. “We didn’t assist Robert.”

In marked contrast Messi received plenty of help from, among others, Scaloni’s left-back Marcos Acuña and their eye-catching interchanges posed considerable problems for Poland’s right-back, Matty Cash. Not that the Aston Villa defender was the only one of Michniewicz’s players experiencing raised stress levels.

The entire team lived dangerously as, to select just a very few examples, Alvarez saw a shot blocked, Acuña headed wide and Szczesny backpedalled desperately to claw Ángel Di María's cross out from beneath his crossbar.

Wojciech Szczesny

It frequently seemed as if the former Arsenal goalkeeper was resisting Scaloni's blue and white tide single-handed. Typically, Szczesny performed minor wonders to deny Álvarez following Mac Allister's brilliant pass and then found himself, extremely harshly, deemed to have conceded a penalty after brushing Messi's face with a hand after the ball had gone.

Precisely why the spot-kick was awarded following a VAR review remains a mystery but justice appeared done when Szczesny dived superbly to his left, extended a gloved hand and saved Messi's penalty.

With Poland barely touching the ball in Argentina's half it was extremely one-sided but as long as Michniewicz's central defenders continued clearing a barrage of crosses the impasse endured.

Their luck ran out a minute into the second half when Nahuel Molina's cut back reached Mac Allister and, despite failing to make the truest right-footed connection, his shot narrowly evaded Szczesny's outstretched fingertips before grazing the inside of a post en route to the back of the net. "I was so happy," said Mac Allister. "It was so emotional for me and the whole squad. We played really well collectively. We managed to find that calm."

After that Messi's quick feet – is he really 35? – and even faster brain took over. When Álvarez met Enzo Fernández's ball, took a controlling touch, swivelled seamlessly and lashed the ball into the roof of the net, it was all over. And Scaloni's verdict?: "Reassuring."

World Cup 2022

Graham Arnold hails Socceroos after team ‘unites the country’ with World Cup run

- Australia coach talks of a new ‘golden generation’ of players
- Socceroos reach knockout phase for first time since 2006
- [How and what time to watch the Socceroos vs Argentina 2022 World Cup match live in Australia](#)



Graham Arnold celebrates at full-time after Australia’s win over Denmark at Al Janoub Stadium. Photograph: Fantasista/Getty Images,

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[Paul MacInnes](#) at Al Janoub Stadium

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Wed 30 Nov 2022 14.54 EST Last modified on Fri 2 Dec 2022 21.06 EST

“I truly believe that the Socceroos are the team that unites the country”, said Graham Arnold, vindicated. “If the cricket team get to the final of the [World Cup](#) you don’t get scenes like tonight. You don’t see the squares like they are tonight, and not with the rugby union or rugby league either. I’m just so proud and happy. This is what World Cups are for.”

The [Australia](#) coach was talking after his team had beaten the odds and perhaps even their own expectations to qualify for the round of 16 at Qatar 2022. A deserved victory over the team placed 10th in the Fifa world rankings, Arnold believes this feat has sealed the creation of a second “golden generation” for Australia after the team of 2006, but that now the focus must be on achieving more.

“It’s first time ever an Australian team has won two games of the World Cup in a row,” Arnold said. “Maybe we’re talking about a new golden generation now because we’ve been listening and hearing about the golden generation of 2006 who got four points – and now we’ve got six.

“I’m just so proud of the players, the work ethic, the commitment, the fight, the way they played. Denmark are top 10 in the world for a reason, they have high quality players who play in top leagues and defensively I thought we were outstanding tonight.”

After victory over Tunisia, Arnold had tried to bring his players down to earth by telling them they had achieved nothing yet. He said he had shared the same message after beating Denmark too. “I truly believe that when you look at underdogs – teams like Japan and Saudi Arabia – they achieve something and they’re celebrating, they’re very emotional and they’re on social media till 4 or 5 in the morning reading pats on the back”, he said. “I’ve been around long enough to know that most important thing is recovery, it’s sleep. Do everything to get ready for the next game.”

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Photograph: Caspar Benson

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While [crowds were up all night at home celebrating](#), Arnold advised his players to “make yourself happy before you go to sleep” before the players go again on Saturday night, potentially against Lionel Messi’s Argentina. Arnold said the Socceroos’ progress has struck a blow for Asian football which, he says, is catching up the rest of the world “quickly”.

“We were probably the last team everyone in Asia thought would qualify but it shows that when you walk on the pitch and have the right mentality where it’s a war and you go out there and fight [what you can achieve]. It’s great for Asia. I do believe Asia is getting stronger and stronger, particularly in the Middle East but also in South Korea and Japan. The travelling can make it difficult but i do think Asia is catching up quickly.”

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2022.12.01 - Spotlight

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- [‘My mother was a child cheated of childhood’ How my broken family put itself together](#)
- [‘We’re left to die of snake bites, hunger, disease’ Somalia’s people of the drought – a picture essay](#)
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Centrica

Back online: the retired gas storage site now able to power 1m homes

Rough, a 37-year-old Centrica facility off east Yorkshire, has been reopened to prop up the energy grid



Centrica's Easington gas terminal, east Yorkshire, which receives and separates natural gas piped from Rough, the North Sea underground storage site. Photograph: Centrica



[Alex Lawson](#) *Energy correspondent*

Thu 1 Dec 2022 01.00 EST Last modified on Thu 1 Dec 2022 04.21 EST

“Do you hear that?” asks Chris O’Shea, putting a finger in the air and looking out over a tangle of pipes and workers in orange hi-vis overalls.

A deep whirr punctures the calm of the east Yorkshire coast, as a huge engine powers up and prepares to suck thousands of cubic metres of gas from deep beneath the North Sea.

It is the first time that stored gas from Rough, a vast sandstone reservoir, has been pumped into the grid since 2017. Then, British Gas owner [Centrica](#) deemed its storage function “uneconomical”, and the government ignored calls to step in. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, and its throttling of Europe’s gas supply, has changed all that, and allowed the 37-year-old storage facility to make an unlikely comeback.

“I promise this wasn’t staged,” says O’Shea, who is standing on a platform 100ft above the maze of metalwork that is the Easington gas terminal, which sucks the gas from Rough.

It is six months since the then business secretary Kwasi Kwarteng asked if Centrica could reopen Europe’s largest storage facility. The site, which has

only been used to produce local gas for the last five years, is now 20% full, enough to heat about 1m homes.

Its reopening means the UK now stores nine days' worth of gas, up from six, but still the lowest in Europe. Rough has been called into action because of "Dunkelflaute" conditions blanketing northern Europe: barely any wind or solar power available to generate electricity on grey, still days.



Centrica boss Chris O'Shea Photograph: Centrica

These conditions have thwarted O'Shea's efforts to fly by helicopter to the Rough platform, 18 miles offshore.

He recounts trips offshore in early roles at the oil giant Shell, mistaking a tunafish for a shark on a rig trip in Nigeria. He is dressed in a trademark bright blue hoodie, with "join our Centrica pathway" on the front and "#netzerobattalion" on the back. Blink and you'd miss the millionaire executive with skin in the game of nearly every evolving energy story this week (see: [costly bills](#), [Sizewell C](#), [Bulb's takeover](#), [windfall taxes](#), [power cut frets](#)).

The reopening of Rough is a line in the sand for O'Shea, who has championed owning energy generation assets over simply being a retail

supplier since taking charge in April 2020, reversing former boss Iain Conn's strategy.

The dash for gas after Russia's invasion has [raised questions](#) as to why Britain has so little gas storage, and why ministers allowed Rough to halt its storage activities. Centrica had decided in 2017 that substantial investment was needed to make it safe at high pressures, with government support, to make it last a further 40 years. "Hindsight is a wonderful thing," says O'Shea. "If we knew then what we know now, would it have been a different decision? Possibly."

Storage sites make money by taking in gas when prices are low, typically in the summer, and pumping it back out when prices are high. But the fall in gas prices in recent weeks has meant Centrica has been able to refill relatively cheaply. Investec analysts estimate reopening Rough could be worth as much as £5m a day.

Rough sits below the resource-rich southern North Sea, where rigs routinely compete with windfarms and fishing boats for space. The sea is 36m deep, and Rough is 3km below that. A 30km-square sandstone reservoir, it is twice the size of Lake Windemere. It is connected to pipelines via 24 ever-narrowing straws. On the surface is a rig capable of housing more than 100 workers.

Despite Britain's drive to wean itself off fossil fuels, it is viewed as a giant insurance policy for the energy network. Executives argue its mere presence as part of the gas network "takes the froth" off prices. Centrica says it could have saved customers £2.4bn, or £88 each, last winter had it been active then.

The FTSE 100 firm has funded this winter's call to action, but O'Shea wants government support to secure its future. He estimates it would cost £150m to double its capacity to 60bn cubic feet by next winter. Longer-term, £1bn is needed to ramp up its methane capacity, and £2bn to fit the toughened steel needed for what Centrica hopes will be its next stage of life: the world's largest hydrogen storage facility. The refit could take five to seven years if it is kept open during the work.

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“In order to invest, companies need to understand they can make a return and at the moment there is no confirmed model for hydrogen. We don’t need any government money and have never asked. We’re looking for the right regulatory framework,” he says. O’Shea hopes a “cap and floor” model guaranteeing revenues in tough times and returning windfall profits to taxpayers can be created for hydrogen.

Is the current focus on gas obscuring the need to focus on green energy? “I think that long-term security of supply and decarbonisation can actually be complementary. They’re not mutually exclusive,” he says.

He argues hydrogen is vital for decarbonising industrial Humberside and Teesside – the worst polluting areas of the UK and home to sites such as Scunthorpe steelworks.

Entering Easington, it is easy to see the hallmarks of state ownership ([British Gas was privatised under Margaret Thatcher in 1986](#)). Over the fence lie the assets separated off in privatisation, now with fellow FTSE 100 company National Grid, that handle gas from Norway and the North Sea.

On the wall, a projection shows the live status of each piece of machinery from the “pig tray” (a big bowling ball that squeezes liquid out of the pipeline) to the “slug catcher”, which helps further purify the methane.

Ministers hope Rough’s extra supplies can complement other measures to reduce pressure on the energy supplies this winter – from putting coal plants

on standby to [National Grid incentivising firms and consumers to cut energy usage](#).

The British [Gas](#) pilot of this scheme launches on Thursday. Called Peak Save, consumers with smart meters can receive about £4 for every unit of electricity they save compared with their normal usage. About 100,000 households are likely to participate and could save £100 between December and March, it estimates. “This approach to help manage residential electricity demand is likely to become a major feature of the market in years to come,” O’Shea says.

The Scotsman neatly packs away his personalised overalls and tucks a can of Irn-Bru into his jeans pocket, before heading off to tackle whatever the energy crisis has to throw at him next.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/dec/01/back-online-the-retired-gas-storage-site-now-able-to-power-1m-homes>

2022.12.01 - Opinion

- British foreign policy is in flux – we need more than Sunak's pragmatic blandness
- In Buckingham Palace and outside it, we know what it means when people ask 'where are you from'
- Bonkers football jargon puts people off the game. It needs an idiot filter, and I'm volunteering
- One of us is a millionaire, the other a care worker. The cruel divide between rich and poor disgusts us both

Opinion**Rishi Sunak**

British foreign policy is in flux – we need more than Sunak’s pragmatic blandness

Martin Kettle



The country is not a superpower, its strategic future lies in Europe, and its reputation is in tatters. Does our PM get this?



Rishi Sunak: ‘It is not clear what he really thinks, or whether he himself knows.’ Photograph: Tolga Akmen/EPA

Thu 1 Dec 2022 01.00 EST Last modified on Thu 1 Dec 2022 06.43 EST

It would be insulting and false to dub Rishi Sunak as, in Theresa May’s infamous phrase, a [citizen of nowhere](#). Yet with a career rooted in international banking and financial networking, our prime minister is in many ways the embodiment of the globalised economic and political order that is in crisis, and may be in terminal decline.

Life, it seems, has not done much to prepare Sunak for the task he faces on the world stage of plotting a path on Britain’s behalf in a multipolar world. Ukraine, nationalism, energy shortages, climate crisis, Chinese power and refugees are among the issues he must navigate, all of them refracted through Brexit and economic downturn. Sunak is not alone among western or British political leaders in having to adjust to radically changed times. But his inexperience showed in the [speech he delivered](#) this week at the lord mayor’s banquet in London’s Guildhall.

The prime minister’s annual speech in the heart of the City of London is traditionally focused on foreign policy. It’s the occasion at which [Winston Churchill declared](#) in 1942 that he had not become prime minister “in order

to promote the liquidation of the British empire” and where, 70 years later, David Cameron began his speech by boasting about the [“global race”](#) that Britain was winning by making financial services and arms deals with China, Russia, Brazil and the Gulf states.

Sunak’s was also a foreign policy speech. Its headline moments were about China, when he said that the “so-called golden era” in Sino-UK relations was over and, more generally, in his affirmation of a foreign policy based on “robust pragmatism” rather than “grand rhetoric”. These are transformed priorities compared with Cameron’s a mere decade ago. War, shortages, climate and Brexit have reshaped Britain’s world. [Foreign policy](#) has not mattered so much in a generation.

Rishi Sunak says UK's 'golden era' with China is over – video

Seasoned foreign policy watchers called the speech unstartling, which is true up to a point. Sunak is not striking out in a new direction in this distanced approach to China, for instance. In reality, the golden age that Cameron famously pronounced in 2015 lasted barely a year. From May’s time onwards, responding to Xi Jinping’s authoritarianism and preoccupied with [Brexit](#), Britain has been increasingly putting China at arm’s length. Nothing that Sunak said on Monday was in any way at odds with that.

The Guildhall speech was unstartling in other respects too. Its support for Ukraine and attacks on Russia could have come from any British prime minister since at least the time of Tony Blair. Its recital of the UK’s security and trade alliances was mostly cut-and-paste stuff. Its assertions that Britain “has always looked out to the world” and that “the world often looks to Britain” were clichéd, glossing over the imperial past and the international head-shaking caused by Brexit in ways which Sunak, of all UK prime ministers, might seem equipped to confront.

In these respects, one might see Sunak’s speech as typifying the way that many, not least in his own party, see the man himself. Sunak is still Britain’s unknown prime minister. It is not clear what he really thinks, or whether he himself knows, as the eminently avoidable [Tory split on windfarms](#) illustrates. Is he, in short, and was the speech also, a blank sheet of paper on

which others have had to inscribe the words and themes that he lacks the clarity and conviction to supply?

It is tempting to say yes, and to leave it at that. There is a plausible political argument that says the Conservatives' electoral predicament is so severe that Sunak's smiley blandness makes him merely the least damaging front person that the wounded party can offer. In this reading, Sunak's task is to minimise Conservative electoral losses by posing as the man who weathers the storm. In that contest, the unimaginative vanilla of his speeches and views matters less.

There is, however, another reading of the speech and Sunak. To be unstartling is to be, potentially at least, reassuring. If Boris Johnson had been giving the first Guildhall speech after the invasion of Ukraine, imagine the boastfulness and bullshit it would have contained. If Liz Truss had been the speaker, imagine the needle and preening. Both would have told lies to and about Britain. In their place, a worldview that is pragmatic rather than rhetorical – or which at least claims to be those things – is surely better than the other way about.

As supporting evidence, consider what Sunak said this week about [Europe](#). On Europe, Sunak's tone was cautiously but unmistakably positive. Relationships were "reinvigorating". Wider post-Brexit engagement was evolving. There would be no alignment with EU law, but "instead we'll foster respectful, mature relationships with our European neighbours on shared issues like energy and illegal migration".

All this could mean anything or nothing. It is certainly not a U-turn on the single market, freedom of movement, or the Switzerland-style agreement that was floated from deep inside the government last month. It is not so full-hearted as to provoke fanatical leavers, and it did not say enough to enthuse the majority that now regrets Brexit. But it marks a shift from either Johnson's evasive flannel and from Truss's Thatcher tribute act.

Consider, also, what Sunak did not say about the United States. In most Guildhall speeches by most prime ministers, America looms very large. Not in Sunak's. Here it was America's absence that was more striking. There was no invocation of the special relationship, and no celebration of Britain and

the US leading the west. There were fewer references to the US than to Australia and to the Indo-Pacific. All this reflects, but does not admit, the new uncertainty surrounding the US's role in the world since Donald Trump's election in 2016 – an uncertainty that may stretch well beyond 2024.

British foreign policy needs to recognise that the US is in flux, that Britain is an important country and not a superpower, that its security is at risk without treaties and military alliances, that its primary arena of engagement, irrespective of its relationship with the EU, is in Europe, that it is not an Asian or Pacific power and never will be, and that its international reputation needs to be rescued from the legacies of empire and Brexit alike. Sunak may get some of this, but too much of his party is not even close to doing so.

The problem with Sunak's speech this week is not that it offered a blank sheet of paper. It is that it wrote too small a story. It was too cautious and squeamish to match the changing moment with analysis and clear priorities. British foreign policy urgently needs to make some of the hard choices that politicians flatter themselves that they are in business to provide.

- Martin Kettle is a Guardian columnist

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[OpinionRace](#)

In Buckingham Palace and outside it, we know what it means when people ask ‘where are you from’

[Kohinoor Sahota](#)



When Susan Hussey asked that of a black British charity boss, she echoed the words of many who alienate people of colour



‘Ngozi Fulani’s story is every person of colour’s story’ Fulani, centre left, at the reception. Photograph: Kin Cheung/AP

Wed 30 Nov 2022 13.22 ESTLast modified on Thu 1 Dec 2022 05.37 EST

“Where are you from?” is a question that every person in my family has been asked, from my parents in the 1960s to my little nephew, crying on his way back from school. I’ve faced the question from schoolteachers who want to know if I speak English, dates trying to exoticise me – and a manager who laughed afterwards, knowing he should not have asked.

“Where are you *really* from?” is the follow-up, if you don’t give someone what they want. While the question can come from a place of curiosity, it is hard to ignore the sinister undertones, especially when it’s repeated.

So, when I read that Ngozi Fulani, the head of a domestic abuse charity, was questioned where she was from while in Buckingham Palace, I wasn’t surprised. What did surprise me, however, is how it has become headline news and a sackable offence, as the honorary member of the royal household who asked the question has since [apologised and resigned](#). Dear, oh dear.

Fulani’s story is every person of colour’s story. I wish I could say it’s unique. I wish I could say that nobody else has been asked such a thing. But

that isn't the case; if it seems unique it is simply because not all of the people of colour get the chance to tell their story. I have had my own day out at Buckingham Palace, and found it similarly unwelcoming.

The grandest invitation I ever received as a journalist was to attend an exhibition at the palace. It arrived in a small cream envelope, with my name – spelt correctly – in calligraphy.

Regardless of whether you're a kid from a council estate like me, or a prime minister going to a weekly audience with the monarch, I imagine that everyone feels some sense of wonderment when they drive up the Mall. Fulani probably felt the same. In the palace, your eyes widen as you are blinded by the bling – there's lots to take in, after all – with the sky-high ceiling, crystal chandeliers and *that* balcony.



‘In the palace, your eyes widen as you are blinded by the bling.’ Camilla, the Queen Consort gives a speech at Buckingham Palace. Photograph: Kirsty O’Connor/AFP/Getty Images

The crowd was all establishment figures in Savile Row-worthy suits and designer dresses: Tory politicians, mid-level royals, a David Attenborough here (talking in that wisdom-filled staccato tone), and a David Starkey there. There’s feeling out of place, but then, sure, there is this. Almost any person

would feel some discomfort, but when you also realise that every single person in the room is oh-so white, darling, it's one of the most uncomfortable feelings in the world.

There were jokes about the “exotic” art in reference to the Asian pieces. Someone recognised one of their aristocratic ancestors in a portrait on display as if that were ordinary – it consolidated how somebody like me could never belong in the establishment.

How the British crown has more power than you think – video

The only person I saw all night that looked like me – aside from a glimpse of Patricia Scotland – was a single Asian man. We locked eyes and smiled at each other. I'm sure if we'd have spoken I'd have had more in common with him than anyone else at the party. But he was a waiter, and I was a guest. In that moment, you are reminded that it's merely by an accident of birth – or, more accurately, the aftereffects of colonialism – that you're on one side and they're on the other.

It all reminded me of the pervasive feeling of not belonging. That is why “where are you from” is such a politically loaded question. The answer should be simple, but it is a way for people – white people – to rank you on the social ladder. I know what I am *actually* being asked: why is the colour of your skin different? Why are you brown? Why aren't you white? Why are you here? Should you be here?

Since I am brown-skinned and Indian, time and time again I have to prove my Britishness. When people ask me where I'm from, saying “Oxford” never meets their expectations. I've had enough. If I don't call out the question, I allow the problem to persist; if I do call out the question, I make white people uncomfortable.

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The thing is, I've assimilated into their version of Britain, so it's time for them to assimilate into mine and the "minority" version – a multicultural, truly British society. The face of Britain is changing. Whether you like it or not, there are more and more people who look like me. The British story is a multicultural story. Whether it's Labour MP Robin Cook hailing curry as the national dish, the most diverse team making up the England football squad, and now the first British prime minister of colour being of Indian descent – we are part of the fabric of Britain.

But who gets the privilege of being labelled British has always been a controversial subject. Ever since Britain began its overseas expansion, people of colour have been made to feel like guests in our own home as well as our new home – welcomed with one hand and scolded with the other.

Working-class people of colour are unlikely to stumble upon people that share their melanin, let alone long-lost relatives on the walls of galleries, museums or Buckingham bloody Palace. So, let's make everyone feel welcome.

It's time to start asking new questions.

- Kohinoor Sahota is an arts and culture journalist. She is working on a book titled *Where Are You Really From?*

Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please [click here](#).

[Opinion](#)[Harry Kane](#)

Bonkers football jargon puts people off the game. It needs an idiot filter, and I'm volunteering

[Adrian Chiles](#)



England needed to 'play better with the ball in the attacking third', according to team captain Harry Kane. But what on earth does that mean?



Harry Kane speaking after England v USA in Qatar. Photograph: ITV Sport
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Thu 1 Dec 2022 02.00 EST Last modified on Thu 1 Dec 2022 06.13 EST

I started out in journalism presenting programmes about financial matters. I tried to take this often complicated subject matter and make it as simple as possible. When I moved into presenting football on television, it often felt as

if we were endeavouring to do the opposite – take something as simple as football and make it as complicated as possible. Don't get me wrong: the analysis of the best ex-footballers in the business, as long as they use the most accessible language, can be fascinating. My favourite to work with was the former Arsenal and England player Lee Dixon. To make sure what he was saying was intelligible, he used to run it past me first. He called me, very few might say unkindly, his idiot filter. But I was very proud to perform this function for him because I was very good at it.

Working Lunch was the business programme I co-presented with Adam Shaw, who was as expert on matters financial as Lee was on football. And, like Lee, Adam used me as a bit of an idiot filter, too. Interestingly, Adam used to say of football that he'd like to be more into it but found a lot of the language around it baffling. This made him feel excluded, as if he was a guest at the wrong party.

I think about this a lot, especially at World Cups, when many non-fans may engage with football. I hope they fall in love with this simple, beautiful game, but we don't make it easy for them. Straining the rivers of football talk through my expert-approved idiot filter, I find a good deal of guff stuck in the mesh. What is a casual viewer to make of a team described as being "good in the transition"? Or a team needing to, in the words of England's captain, [Harry Kane](#), "play better *with the ball* in the attacking third"? And how about a player described as "more of an 8 than a 10"? The uninitiated will assume they are being judged, unfavourably, as more of an 8 out of 10 than a 10 out of 10. It doesn't mean that. As for what it does mean, I'm afraid that this idiot isn't quite sure.

Adrian Chiles is a broadcaster, writer and Guardian columnist

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OpinionInequality.

One of us is a millionaire, the other a care worker. The cruel divide between rich and poor disgusts us both

[Julia Davies](#) and [Winsome Hill](#)

Britain's cost of living crisis is disastrous for one of us and will barely touch the other. The best answer is a wealth tax



Illustration: Tomekah George

Thu 1 Dec 2022 03.00 ESTLast modified on Fri 2 Dec 2022 18.09 EST



Julia Davies is a member of campaign group Patriotic Millionaires

The two of us are from very different worlds. One of us is a millionaire investor, the other a care worker and trade union member. We have totally different experiences of the economy, but we share a fundamental belief that it is broken – and the government in its [autumn statement](#) did nothing to fix it.



Winsome Hill is a care worker and a member of the Community trade union

The cost of living crisis affects all of us, but it doesn't affect us equally. One of us struggles to afford the spiralling price of the weekly shop, while the other can shop as before, unaffected by rising food prices. One of us fears turning on the heating to keep her house warm, while the other can heat her home and travel for some winter sun without a second thought.

This isn't how an economy succeeds. The argument of the last prime minister – that the only route to economic success is to allow inequality in our country to grow even greater – is simply wrong. Wealth does not come from the top and trickle down, it comes from all of us. There is no route to prosperity through increasing inequality.

The new chancellor may have accepted this argument in theory, saying in his autumn statement that he is “asking more from those who have more”, but this is not the reality. A slight lowering of the threshold for the top rate of tax and some tweaks to the thresholds for dividend and capital gains taxes will, as one of us can testify to, hardly be noticed by those with real wealth. In comparison, the squeeze on income tax rates for low and middle earners raises far more revenue and will cause far more economic pain.

Instead of squeezing low earners, the chancellor should have matched his actions to his rhetoric and taxed wealth at the top. If the last prime minister's attempt to [give huge tax cuts to rich people](#) is part of what crashed the economy, then the opposite seems like a good place to start in fixing it – as even those of us on the highest incomes should recognise.

Let's start with taxing the seriously wealthy – people with wealth of more than £10m. A wealth tax of just 1% or 2% on their stocks of wealth over £10m would give our country the investment it desperately needs to see out the hard winter to come. A 1.1% tax on wealth above £10m [would raise £10bn](#) from the wealthiest 0.04% of the population, according to Arun Advani, assistant professor of economics at the University of Warwick's CAGE research centre.

We also need to make sure that people's incomes are taxed at the same rate, no matter how they are earned. The reality of our current tax system is that money made from work, such as caring for vulnerable people, is taxed at a

higher rate than money made from investments or the rising value of assets. The unfairness is maddening, and it's also holding our economy back.

This matters because of the other big part of the chancellor's plan: the squeeze on public services. The bitter experience of the last few years shows us that when public services such as social care are cut, it piles pressure on to other areas and we all suffer. We need to invest in our public services and those who work in them, rather than inflict further cuts that continue a journey of decline. This isn't unaffordable. The wealth exists in this country, but the government's unwillingness to tax it properly is what is starving our services of the funding we need. One of us is seeing the result of this underfunding every day, as staff in the care sector work longer and longer hours for less and less pay, and feel more overwhelmed than ever before. These staff simply can't be asked to continue to give everything to keep the social care sector afloat, when what is desperately needed is the extra resource that only government can provide.

A collection of groups have come together to form the [Stop the Squeeze](#) campaign, in order to call for this vital change of direction. It is a rejection of the failed inequality economics that has held us back, and an endorsement of the simple idea that, as the saying goes, we're all better off when we're all better off. This agenda is backed by economists, charities and trade unions, but more importantly it is supported by the public, with large majorities across the political spectrum in favour of higher taxes on wealth. The two of us have never met, but we both felt the inequality in this country couldn't continue, so we got involved with Stop the Squeeze (one through a union, the other as part of the anti-inequality [Patriotic Millionaires](#) group), and decided to write this piece together.

The media also have a role to play here. The narrative about the overall "tax burden" is spin designed to deflect from the real questions that need to be asked about exactly who is being asked to pay, and whether it makes sense. The focus on tax cuts during the summer Conservative leadership race, which even included the BBC framing questions to the candidates in terms of when, not if, taxes should be cut, is a good example of this lack of nuance in the public debate around tax. We can all see where that kind of groupthink led us. If anything should have impressed upon people the need to question

propaganda about low taxes on the rich being good for everyone then surely the past few months should have been the wake-up call we needed.

We may not have got to vote for the new prime minister, but that doesn't mean he doesn't have to listen to us. An economy that works for one of us, but not the other, is an economy that is never going to succeed. A country where people who do essential work in our communities struggle to put food on the table is not a country that is working.

- Winsome Hill is a care worker and member of the Community trade union; Julia Davies is a millionaire investor, lawyer and member of Patriotic Millionaires
- Comments on this piece are premoderated to ensure discussion remains on topics raised by the writer. Please be aware there may be a short delay in comments appearing on the site.

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2022.12.01 - Around the world

- [Global relief fund One in 23 people will require humanitarian aid in 2023, UN warns](#)
- [China Vice-premier signals shift in Covid stance as some lockdowns eased](#)
- [Zero-Covid Five charts that show how restrictions are throttling the Chinese economy](#)
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Humanitarian response

One in 23 people will require humanitarian relief in 2023, UN warns

A global relief fund of a record \$51.5bn will be needed to assist 339 million people suffering because of 2022's 'extreme events'



People affected by floods receive aid in Sehwan, Pakistan. The flooding was described by the UN as a 'monsoon on steroids'. Photograph: Rehan Khan/EPA

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[Lizzy Davies](#)

Thu 1 Dec 2022 00.00 EST Last modified on Thu 1 Dec 2022 00.03 EST

The number of people who will be in need of humanitarian relief in 2023 has increased by almost a quarter in the past year, as the climate crisis, the war in Ukraine and the largest global food crisis in modern history pushes millions to the brink, the UN has warned.

A record 339 million people, an increase of 65 million on last year, will be suffering next year as a result of 2022's "extreme events" and will be in urgent need of assistance, said Martin Griffiths, the UN's under secretary general for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief coordinator.

The UN and partner agencies are asking donors for \$51.5bn to fund the relief effort, another record figure and a 25% increase on the beginning of 2022. They say while most donors have remained relatively generous, the needs have ballooned.

[Graphic showing that an estimated 339m people worldwide will be in need of humanitarian assistance in 2023](#)

The Russian invasion of Ukraine, which has forced millions from their homes and destroyed basic health facilities, hugely exacerbated [a wider food crisis](#) for many countries – such as Somalia, Afghanistan and Yemen – that were also grappling with the devastating impact of their own internal conflicts and global heating. In Pakistan, widespread flooding was described by the UN secretary general, António Guterres, as a [“monsoon on steroids”](#).

Speaking on Wednesday as he presented the UN’s 2023 global humanitarian overview (GHO), Griffiths said: “There’s no doubt that 2023 is going to perpetuate these ‘on steroids’ trends [particularly in climate crisis].”

The figure of 339 million – or one in 23 people – was, he added, “equivalent to the third most populous country in the world [after China and India], so it’s a phenomenal number, and it’s a depressing number”.

Those projected to be in need of assistance are spread over 68 countries, but in 10 of them, where the UN has unveiled humanitarian relief plans costing more than \$1bn, the needs are particularly high. They include Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, Ukraine, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia, which is [teetering on the brink](#) of famine.

[Graphic showing that the UN plans to spend \\$4.6bn \(£3.8bn\) on urgent humanitarian relief in Afghanistan in 2023](#)

The UN and partners want to be able to reach 230 million of those in need, with hopes that other organisations and bilateral donors will cover the remaining 109 million. But funding is a main concern: this year’s humanitarian relief efforts only received 44% of the resources needed.



In Kherson, Ukraine, residents crowd round an aid truck distributing food parcels. Photograph: Alessio Mamo/The Guardian

Griffiths said that was not the fault of donors, most of whom (though [not the UK](#)) had maintained levels of aid spending. The problem, he said, was the sheer scale of the multiple and interlocking crises faced by such a large proportion of the world's population.

“The generosity of a few member states – and there should be more – is being sustained. The [funding] gap is because of the needs, not because of the funding, and the needs are going up because we’ve been smitten by the war in Ukraine, by Covid, by climate. And I fear that 2023 is going to be an acceleration of all those trends,” he said.

In the GHO, the UN warns that at least 222 million people in 53 countries will face acute food insecurity by the end of this year, and that 45 million people in 37 countries risk starvation. Public health infrastructure is under pressure due to the continued threat from Covid-19 but also [resurgences of cholera](#) and other diseases, it adds.

“For people on the brink, this appeal is a lifeline. For the international community, it is a strategy to make good on the pledge to leave no one behind,” said Griffiths.

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[China](#)

China's vice-premier signals shift in Covid stance as some lockdowns eased

Sun Chunlan says Omicron less pathogenic as Beijing appears to respond to protests

- [China's zero-Covid policy explained in 30 seconds](#)



Workers wearing personal protective equipment spraying disinfectant along a street in Beijing. Photograph: Noel Celis/AFP/Getty Images

[Helen Davidson](#) in Taipei

[@heldavidson](#)

Thu 1 Dec 2022 08.04 EST First published on Wed 30 Nov 2022 23.44 EST

One of China's most senior pandemic response officials has said the country is entering a "new stage and mission", in the latest indication of the

government's changing approach after mass protests against its zero-Covid policy.

Sun Chunlan, China's vice-premier, made the comments to national health officials on Wednesday, according to the Xinhau state media outlet. It came as several regions, including Shanghai, began to lift lockdowns despite continuing high case numbers.



Sun Chunlan. Photograph: Wu Hao/EPA

“With the decreasing pathogenicity of the Omicron variant, the increasing vaccination rate and the accumulating experience of outbreak control and prevention, China’s pandemic containment faces a new stage and mission,” Sun reportedly said.

Sun was attending a roundtable meeting of health experts, who Xinhua said praised China’s efforts before offering suggestions on “improving” current measures. Sun said China was taking a more “humane approach” with its outbreak responses. Like the health officials who addressed the country on Tuesday, she did not refer to the “dynamic [zero-Covid](#)” policy by name, but instead emphasised vaccinations and other measures.

Only in recent days have Chinese officials begun to emphasise the lower severity of the Omicron variant of Covid-19. State media has also begun to

publish reassurances that the public should not panic over Omicron. The shift in tone comes alongside [a new vaccination drive aimed at elderly people](#) announced on Tuesday. More than 90% of China's population has received at least two doses of a vaccine, but the rate drops sharply among elderly demographics, especially those over 80.

In a further potential loosening of restrictions, China may soon allow some people who test positive for Covid to quarantine at home, Reuters reported on Thursday. Not all positive cases will be allowed to quarantine at home unconditionally, but pregnant women, elderly people and those with underlying illnesses will qualify to isolate at home, the news agency said, citing unnamed sources. Close contacts of the cases will also be allowed to isolate at home if their home environment meets certain conditions, Reuters said. Authorities will also increase antigen tests for the new variant and reduce the frequency of mass testing and regular nucleic acid tests, the report said.

China reported 36,061 Covid cases on Wednesday, a slight drop on Tuesday's 37,828.

On Thursday, 24 districts in Shanghai designated as "high risk" were released from lockdown measures, state media said. It followed [the easing of lockdowns](#) across 11 districts in Guangzhou on Wednesday, despite both cities reporting rising cases. The lifting of lockdowns suggested an easing of the stringent measures that protesters had rallied against. However, while it may be a sign that grievances have been heard, authorities are showing [no tolerance for protests](#) and are continuing to track down and sometimes detain people who demonstrated.

Protesters clash with hazmat suit-clad riot police in Guangzhou, China – video

Zhengzhou, where employees at an Apple-supplier factory staged extraordinary walkouts to escape Covid restrictions in recent weeks, has also eased the rules. And state media reported Chongqing will begin to lift lockdowns.

Hu Xijin, the former editor of the nationalistic state media tabloid the Global Times, and who remains a public commenter, [tweeted](#) on Thursday: “China is speeding up to cast aside large-scale lockdowns.”

Analysts have said the changes are a sign the government is listening to protesters, even if it is not publicly acknowledging them and is pursuing those who attended protests.

From blank paper to alpacas: how protesters in China are voicing their anger – video

The past week included [several days of protests](#) at a scale not seen in China for decades, as mounting frustrations with the zero-Covid policy coalesced into anger and grief after the [deaths of 10 people in a building fire](#) in Urumqi, Xinjiang.

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China remains the last major country still committed to a Covid elimination strategy. Early on in the pandemic it kept the virus largely at bay and the death toll minimal compared with other countries. However, the emergence of more transmissible variants has challenged and at times overwhelmed the system, resulting in frequent and sudden lockdowns, travel restrictions and associated deprivations, including food shortages, secondary deaths and economic damage.

At some rallies there were shouted demands for democracy and the rule of law, and – in Shanghai – for the Chinese leader, [Xi Jinping](#), to step down.

Observers say it is likely that those who protested against Xi and the government will face harsh punishment.

The protests have also coincided with [the death of the former Chinese leader Jiang Zemin](#). The 96-year-old, who was elevated to the head of the Communist party during the Tiananmen protests and then presided over years of economic expansion, died on Wednesday, state media said. The timing has put observers on alert – there is a tradition in China of people using public mourning events for past leaders to express discontent with the existing regime.

China's changing approach to Covid came as Xi met the European Council president, Charles Michel, in Beijing. Michel, who chairs meetings of the EU's 27 national leaders, said the pair had talked for three hours, discussing the war in Ukraine, the EU-China relationship, the climate crisis and coronavirus.

Michel told reporters he had raised China's Covid measures: "On the protests, yes, we discussed that question as well and the acceptance by the societies of measures that are taken and the reaction by the authorities." He did not give details of Xi's response.

Michel said he had stressed that European companies were willing to provide vaccines to China if they were approved by Chinese authorities. He had also explained how Europe had developing vaccines as a way out of lockdowns, he said.

The German chancellor, [Olaf Scholz, met Xi in Beijing last month](#), where he also extolled Europe's experience of using mRNA vaccines, such as the Pfizer/BioNTech jab. Michel was the first head of an EU institution to hold a face-to-face meeting with China's top leader since the start of the pandemic.

Additional reporting by Jennifer Rankin in Brussels

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Zero-Covid: five charts that show how restrictions are throttling the Chinese economy



China's zero-Covid strategy has affected the output of major industries like steel making Photograph: VCG/Getty Images

Three years into the pandemic, China is still relying on snap lockdowns and mass testing – and that could spell trouble for the global economy

[Jonathan Yerushalmy](#)

Wed 30 Nov 2022 22.04 EST Last modified on Wed 30 Nov 2022 22.05 EST

[Protests against pandemic restrictions in China](#) could unleash a new wave of volatility into a global economy already racked by inflation, energy shocks and the war in Ukraine.

The government's continued reliance on lockdowns, quarantine orders and mass testing to limit the spread of the virus has provoked the biggest protest movement in decades. But there's little evidence that authorities are willing to diverge from the path they have taken.

As well as prompting social unrest inside [China](#), there are signs that the zero-Covid strategy is throttling the world's second largest economy – and as one of the key drivers of global growth, the waves of instability emanating from China are likely to be felt elsewhere.

Consumer confidence

China's GDP is forecast to grow by 3.2% this year, well below the official target of 5.5%. This would make 2022 the slowest year for GDP growth in more than 40 years, excluding the Covid-affected rate in 2020.

On Tuesday, the International Monetary Fund warned this growth forecast might be cut even further.

[China retail sales](#)

Signs of slowdown are evident on the streets of major cities and in the spending patterns of consumers. In September, retail sales growth declined and a [survey of small and medium sized businesses](#) showed that accommodation and catering bore the brunt of this downturn, as a result of extended lockdowns.

Bloomberg reported this week that subway usage in major cities is down as much as 91% on some days.

The unwillingness – or inability – of Chinese consumers to get out and spend is not just reflected in day-to-day purchases. Strict pandemic controls have done nothing to lift demand in a housing market that has been traversing bouts of instability since 2020.

[Prices of new-build houses in China](#)

At its peak, property and construction accounted for a quarter of China's economic output, but government efforts to curb speculation and rein in prices [have pushed the housing market close to crisis point](#).

The [government has been forced to intervene again](#), this time to help prop up property developers that are failing to repay debts and complete projects

It's not yet clear whether these government measures will be enough to inspire confidence in consumers who have already shown a wariness to spend money on apartments that may never get completed.

A factory to the world

For decades, China has played a vital role in global supply chains, and in 2021 close to 30% of the world's goods were manufactured there. But in October, Chinese exports fell for the first time since May 2020, in part due to weakening international demand.

China's factory activity has been declining over the last two months. With large sections of the country hit by lockdowns, manufacturers are struggling to attract – and retain – staff.

More than 80% of Chinese manufacturers have faced labour shortages this year, with the country's Ministry of Education forecasting a shortfall of nearly 30 million workers by 2025.

[Chinese exports](#)

All of this could hamper the ability of Chinese manufacturers to make and export goods to the rest of the world – and lockdown related unrest is already having an effect on the ability of global companies to meet demand.

Shipments of Apple's iPhone 14 Pro and Pro Max could fall short by up to 20m units as we enter the Christmas period, according to TF Securities analyst Ming-Chi Kuo.

[Riots at Foxconn's factory in Zhengzhou](#) – the single biggest producer of iPhones in the world – were sparked by local lockdowns and disputes over pay and working conditions. Some analysts estimate that worker unrest at the factory could cost Apple up to \$1bn a week.

Further lockdowns and unrest could continue to slow production – and as production slows, Chinese demand for the commodities that go into making these manufactured goods wanes as well.

The sheer size of China's economy and manufacturing sector make it a pivotal player in the global trade in natural resources. The price of copper – a vital component in electronic goods and construction – has fallen over the last six months as China's output slows.

[Price of copper](#)

China is the world's biggest importer of petroleum and according to some analysts, Chinese demand has the biggest single influence on oil prices. China's commitment to zero-Covid and concerns over domestic unrest are therefore a major contributor to the cost of crude oil falling to the lowest point since Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

While this will be welcome news to consumers who have seen the cost of living skyrocket on the back of near record-high oil prices, the broader economic outlook remains hazy.

[Price of crude oil](#)

China's decades long run of growth was powered by a population that traded democratic freedoms for economic prosperity. If protests continue, it could be a sign that this social contract between China's rulers and its people has begun to fray.

[Experts have raised concerns](#) that Xi Jinping's precedent breaking third term will see ideology and the party's security, take precedence over economic growth.

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[Florida](#)

Florida doctor found dead days after arrest on suspicion of raping sedated patients

Eric Salata faced investigation over claims he assaulted two women at his clinic after incapacitating them



Naples, Florida, where Eric Salata's clinic is based. Photograph: EQRoy/Alamy

[*Ramon Antonio Vargas*](#)

Thu 1 Dec 2022 04.40 ESTLast modified on Thu 1 Dec 2022 10.03 EST

A doctor in [Florida](#) who was accused of drugging and raping his patients has been found dead, according to local authorities.

Investigators could not immediately determine how Eric Salata, 54, died when his body was discovered in woodland on Monday. But they said he

had a gunshot wound to the head, was lying next to a pistol, and that they did not suspect he had been the victim of a crime.

Police in the city of Naples had arrested Salata on 21 November on allegations that he raped two patients at his cosmetic surgery clinic after incapacitating them with laughing gas, the anti-anxiety medication Xanax and tequila.



Eric Salata. Photograph: Naples police department

A week later, after the doctor was released on bond from jail, deputies with the sheriff's office in Collier county – which includes Naples – responded to a request to check on Salata after he went out of his home while leaving behind two notes, his wedding ring and his credit cards, the local news outlet [WINK-TV said](#), citing a police report. The notes' contents were redacted in the report obtained by WINK-TV.

The person who alerted deputies about Salata also informed a company managing the ankle monitor that a judge had ordered him to wear to track his movements while he was out on bond. The device showed Salata walking away from his home that morning before stopping.

A deputy who searched Salata's last known location saw a boot sticking out of a wooded area nearby and found the doctor's corpse in a ditch. He appeared to have died a short time earlier, the sheriff's office report said, according to WINK-TV.

Before his arrest and death, Salata and his wife operated a Pura Vida Medical Spa in Naples.

One of the women who reported Salata to the police said she woke up from a cosmetic procedure and realised he was performing oral sex on her. She reported losing consciousness again and waking up to notice Salata had raped her.

The woman, 51, said Salata had given her tequila, Xanax and laughing gas, claiming they were forms of pain relief.

Another woman, 72, said Salata began massaging her as she lost consciousness after being given laughing gas, and he then raped her, leaving her lip bruised from the attack.

In both cases, Salata was the only medical professional in the procedure room, police said, according to reports.

Investigators charged Salata with two counts of sexual battery to a physically helpless person and he was scheduled for a court appearance on 19 December. Salata could have faced between six years and 30 years in prison for either of those charges if convicted.

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Two days after Salata's arrest made the news, a third woman went to police and accused him of sexual battery, [WFTX-TV reported](#). Salata had not been charged in connection with that allegation when he died.

A call to a phone number listed for Pura Vida on Wednesday went directly to voicemail, and a recording said the clinic was closed "indefinitely".

Salata's case drew attention after a neurologist, [Ricardo Cruciani](#), killed himself in a New York City jail in August while awaiting sentencing for his conviction on charges that he had sexually abused patients. Cruciani, who had denied the accusations, faced a maximum punishment of life imprisonment.

In the US, the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) is at 800-273-8255 and [online chat is also available](#). You can also text HOME to 741741 to connect with a crisis text line counselor. A list of prevention resources can be found [here](#).

In the UK and Ireland, [Samaritans](#) can be contacted on 116 123 or email jo@samaritans.org or jo@samaritans.ie. In Australia, the crisis support service [Lifeline](#) is 13 11 14. Other international helplines can be found at www.befrienders.org

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