

# The Guardian

卫报

2022.05.23 - 2022.05.29

- [2022.05.29 - Opinion](#)
- [Headlines saturday 28 may 2022](#)
- [2022.05.28 - Spotlight](#)
- [2022.05.28 - Opinion](#)
- [2022.05.28 - Around the world](#)
- [Headlines tuesday 24 may 2022](#)
- [2022.05.24 - Spotlight](#)
- [2022.05.24 - Opinion](#)
- [2022.05.24 - Around the world](#)
- [Headlines](#)
- [2022.05.23 - Spotlight](#)
- [2022.05.23 - Opinion](#)
- [2022.05.23 - Around the world](#)
- [Headlines thursday 26 may 2022](#)
- [2022.05.26 - Spotlight](#)
- [2022.05.26 - Opinion](#)
- [2022.05.26 - Around the world](#)
- [Headlines friday 27 may 2022](#)
- [2022.05.27 - Spotlight](#)
- [2022.05.27 - Opinion](#)
- [2022.05.27 - Around the world](#)

## 2022.05.29 - Opinion

- Ukraine must negotiate from a position of strength. But the world's attention is fading
- The Observer view on Rishi Sunak's cost of living package
- The Observer view on the summits that forecast global environmental dangers
- Boris Johnson, the party animal, has vomited over standards in public life
- God bless the Elizabeth line - heaven for nerds of the built environment
- Boris Johnson, greased piglet, escapes yet again – cartoon
- Why shouldn't the Greeks have their marbles back? We proved we lost ours years ago
- If a lesbian only desires same-sex dates that's not bigotry, it's her right
- Letters: only a coalition can oust the Tories
- For the record
- Dervla Murphy: a girl's own adventurer who showed us how to live at full tilt
- Tory devotion to 'dear friend' Modi says so much about needy post-Brexit Britain

[The ObserverRussia](#)

# **Ukraine must negotiate from a position of strength. But the world's attention is fading**

[Peter Pomerantsev](#)

Putin aimed to reset the world order when his forces invaded. Russians must be persuaded he can't – maybe Arnold Schwarzenegger can help



'The Russian invasion of Ukraine is relevant to any nation that lives unprotected in the neighbourhood of nuclear bullies.' Illustration: Steven Gregor/The Observer

Sun 29 May 2022 03.00 EDT

Russia needs to stop being a threat: to its neighbours, to its own people, to the world. Minimising that threat should be the goal of our policies and the only way to face up to the reality of the Kremlin's boot stamping on so many faces. The hope that the current iteration of [Russia](#) is ready to recognise that other states have rights is gone. Putin's Russia is not an ordinary country

seeking some rational security guarantees. It's a predator that works according to its own logic of internal oppression and external aggression. With such a state there is no going back to "normal". No clever "deal" that can be cut to restore previous relations.

As we work out what minimising Russia's threat means in practice, we may also get to something bigger: a set of security, humanitarian and economic interconnections that redefine how we reduce aggression in an interconnected age. Russia's aim in its invasion of [Ukraine](#) was to reset the world order, tilt it towards dictatorships, impunity and the right of great powers to crush the small. Instead, it may produce a desire to strengthen rights, sovereignty and democracy. In pushing for the worst, it might produce something better.

The first place where Russia's threat has to be minimised is in Ukraine itself. This will be achieved on the battlefield. Ukraine is still vastly outnumbered in both men and arms. The situation in the [Donbas](#) is tenuous. Every day, about 100 Ukrainian soldiers are killed. And it's no longer hardened professional fighters – it's IT specialists, sociologists, students.

When I met President Zelenskiy, together with colleagues from the *Atlantic* magazine a few weeks ago, his greatest fear was that the victory in the battle for Kyiv meant that too many people would think the war over when it was just shifting to a different, more deadly phase in the Donbas. The world's attention has faded. Allies are being slow to arm Ukraine sufficiently. Positions are being ceded daily because of a lack of basic munitions for artillery. This needs to change fast. Any eventual negotiations have to be taken from a position of Ukrainian strength, not weakness, or else they risk being another deal that gives up all the leverage to Russia, only augmenting the threat it poses.

Russia attacked Ukraine in 2022 because, after its 2014 invasion, Putin thought he could get away with it

If and when those negotiations happen, Ukraine has to be armed to the teeth to deter future Russian incursions. It is also hoping for security guarantees,

including from the UK. But there's a greater context here too. The Russian invasion is relevant to any nation that lives unprotected in the neighbourhood of nuclear bullies: think Moldova, Georgia and the central Asian states around Russia; Japan, Australia and Taiwan around China. It's no coincidence that Australia, a country that could have chosen to sit out this conflict, has been such an enthusiastic advocate of the Ukrainian cause, even providing [\\$70m-worth of defensive equipment](#).

How can you protect such countries from aggression, given they are not Nato members and the nuclear status of the states that threaten them? The ad hoc support to Ukraine gives us a clue: a mix of economic warfare and provision of arms. But to act as a deterrent this threat has to be made clear and be coordinated before any invasion. Russia attacked Ukraine in 2022 because, after its 2014 invasion, Putin thought he could get away with it. The moment sanctions kick in should not be up for debate: a war of aggression should trigger harsh measures.

Moreover, we need to tie crimes against humanity to even more aggressive sanctions. The indiscriminate bombing of Mariupol or slaughter in [Bucha](#) should lead to oil embargoes. We need to reconnect humanitarian norms to economics.

All talk about “regime change” from outside is foolish: Russia is a great power no one can influence or attack that brazenly

So far, the economic power dynamics lie the other way. At the moment, a country such as Australia, which criticised Beijing's human rights record, is bullied by China with grain sanctions. Russia holds the world hostage to hunger by limiting its own grain exports and blocking Ukraine's, demanding sanctions against Russia are lifted. In central [Europe](#), a gruesome calculation is emerging: what hike in gas prices are people willing to bear before they close their eyes to Putin's crimes against humanity? Everywhere, human rights are subservient to economic needs. For us to rein in the aggression of the Russias and Chinas of this world, it needs to be the other way round.

While such measures can act as a deterrent, Russia will also have to change internally before it stops being a threat. Can we ever hope for a Russia that is

ready to give up imperial pretensions, live in harmony with its neighbours and even establish rule of law at home? It seems a far-off dream. All talk about “regime change” from outside is foolish: Russia is a great power no one can influence or attack that brazenly. But what we can do is remain steadfast in our sanctions and commitment to indicting war criminals, showing Russian elites that their punishment is long and serious. Anecdotal research from inside the country suggests many think the sanctions will be lifted soon. This betrays great weakness. In his memoirs of life in Nazi concentration camps, the psychiatrist Viktor Frankl noted that those who thought their imprisonment would end soon were in denial of reality – and the first to then break and collapse.

Who will communicate this? Currently, we are not explaining the intent of sanctions to the Russian people, allowing the Kremlin to manage perceptions. It wouldn’t be hard to get Russians’ attention. A short video from [Arnold Schwarzenegger](#) directed at his Russian fans and condemning the war got millions of views. The Russian internet firewall is feeble: you can still use radio, WhatsApp, Telegram and YouTube. The more understanding there is that the Kremlin has led people into a dead end, that this is permanent, the more impetus there is for elites to change the direction of the country.

*Peter Pomerantsev is the author of Nothing Is True and Everything Is Possible: Adventures in Modern Russia*

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/may/29/ukraine-must-negotiate-from-position-of-strength-worlds-attention-fading>

[The Observer](#)[Cost of living crisis](#)

## The Observer view on Rishi Sunak's cost of living package

[Observer editorial](#)

The chancellor's £15bn spending is a welcome step in the right direction, but offers no plan for growth and fails to address the causes of child poverty



'Food banks have warned some children are getting food poisoning as a result of parents switching off fridges to try to save on energy bills.'

Photograph: Andy Buchanan/PA

Sun 29 May 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Sun 29 May 2022 03.15 EDT

Economists and poverty campaigners have for months been warning that low-income families and disabled people would be left in increasingly dire financial straits as a result of inflation [hitting its highest](#) level in 40 years. But for months, a government mired in scandal has chosen to ignore their plight, implementing cuts to universal credit and drawing up packages of financial support that [mostly go to better-off households](#). Labour's calls for a

windfall tax on energy companies to fund more financial relief went unheeded.

At last, the chancellor has given in and corrected course. Last week, Rishi Sunak announced an additional £15bn of one-off financial support for households, [funded in part by a £5bn windfall tax](#) on energy companies. It has come much too late, causing unnecessary hardship and stress for low-income families, but it is a [more generous package](#) than anything that has preceded it and is better, albeit imperfectly, targeted at people who are most in need of support.

All energy bill payers will now receive a grant of £400 rather than the [£200 repayable credit that was originally announced](#) by the chancellor. In addition, there will be a one-off £650 payment for all of the 8 million households who are on means-tested benefits, with an [additional £150 and £300 available for disabled individuals and pensioners](#).

Analysis from the Resolution Foundation has highlighted that six out of 10 pounds of the chancellor's previous two packages of cost of living support went to households in the top half of the income distribution. This new set of measures helps to redress this: two-thirds of the £15bn goes to households in the bottom half of the distribution. Given the unbearable choices some parents on low incomes now face – food banks have warned some [children are getting food poisoning](#) as a result of parents switching off fridges to try to save on energy bills and are going into school in dirty clothes – this package should have been even more skewed towards those for whom inflation is causing the most existential of crises.

There are, however, some issues with the way these measures are being implemented. By resisting introducing this scale of support for so long, the chancellor not only consigned some families to hardship and uncertainty for longer than was needed, he also missed the chance to provide it by uprating benefits more generously ([benefits will have been cut by around 5%](#) in real terms this year as a result of not keeping pace with inflation). Using a flat-rate payment to compensate for this benefit cut is a blunt tool that has the disadvantage of penalising low-income families with children, who have higher costs.

This further undermines the principle firmly established during the Labour years that in an economy with very high housing costs, and too many low-paid jobs that do not pay enough to support a family, it is right that the government financially supports low-paid parents. A significant number of families, particularly with children who live in areas of the country with more expensive housing, will miss out on the flat-rate payment altogether because it would take them over the benefit cap, which has not been increased in line with inflation.

The other fundamental problem with these measures is that they are simply a one-off payment to compensate the least affluent households for the rising cost of living this year, notwithstanding the above point. Many families were already in very difficult financial circumstances before this year as a result of cumulative cuts to tax credits and benefits introduced by successive Conservative chancellors since 2010, even as they were handing out expensive tax cuts that disproportionately benefited more affluent households. Families with children have borne the burden of these cuts, with some thousands of pounds a year worse off in 2020 compared with what support they would have been eligible for in 2010. A one-off payment does not even begin to tackle this structural erosion of the financial safety net for low-paid parents, which has contributed to a long-term decline in living standards that has seen increasing numbers of parents relying on food banks to feed their children in one of the richest countries in the world.

Beyond this immediate crisis, the country also needs an economic growth strategy that reduces the regional inequalities that will be made worse by Brexit and addresses the UK's productivity crisis, which is holding down real wages, as well as a programme of public investment in housebuilding to drive down housing costs for renters. But this is a government that is being buffeted from scandal to scandal, headed by a prime minister who clings on to office despite being fined by the police for breaking the law during a national emergency in order to socialise. In this last week, Boris Johnson has rewritten the ministerial code to water down its sanctions and in doing so has codified the disintegration of integrity and probity over which he has presided.

The emergency support package is better than many expected given the chancellor's rhetoric in recent weeks. But this is not a government that is

either capable of or inclined towards addressing the structural causes of the unacceptable levels of child poverty that blight our nation.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/may/29/observer-view-rishi-sunak-cost-of-living-package>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

## The ObserverEnvironment

# The Observer view on the summits that forecast global environmental dangers

Observer editorial

Fifty years after our first warning, and humankind is still failing to protect the Earth



‘Ice caps go on melting.’ Photograph: John Mcconnico/AP

Sun 29 May 2022 01.30 EDT

Two remarkable anniversaries will be marked by politicians, scientists and activists this week. Fifty years ago, the United Nations conference on the human environment opened in Stockholm. It was the first world forum to focus on the issues involved in caring for Earth’s oceans, land and forests and led directly to the creation of the UN Environment Programme (Uep). In 1992, the Rio de Janeiro environment conference – the Rio Earth summit as it is known today – committed nations to take an ecologically responsible approach to economic growth. Conventions on climate change, biodiversity and forestry ensued.

These hallmark events marked a transition in political thinking. World leaders were being made to realise Earth's resources are finite and that environmental problems are not local issues to be ignored but are part of a worsening global predicament caused by soaring human numbers. But how much was actually achieved? How have our forests fared over the decades? How far have we gone in halting global warming? And what is the status of Earth's biodiversity today?

We have fared badly in every case, despite the clear warnings expressed at these summits. Species continue to head for extinction on all continents; icecaps go on melting; coastal regions face catastrophic inundations; numbers of humans on Earth are expected to reach 8 billion within a year.

Global warming is happening because atmospheric levels of carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas emitted when fossil fuels are burned, continue to rise unabated. In 1972, there were 325 parts per million (ppm) CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere; in 1992, 360ppm; today 412ppm. Such a rate of increase, unprecedented in the past million years of our planet's history, suggests, sharply, that our chances of holding global temperature rises to below 1.5C are very low. Many scientists fear this level will be breached within the next few years, bringing increased risks of catastrophic consequences in terms of rising sea levels, heatwaves and droughts.

Each year, the world's attention is deflected by wars and pandemics, while irreversible ecological damage continues

Then there is the issue of our planet's wildlife. The UN's most recent biodiversity outlook reports that wild animal populations have fallen by more than two-thirds since 1970. Today, 50 years after Stockholm and 30 after Rio, an estimated one million species face the threat of extinction.

These grim scenarios suggest that, for all their good intentions, the summits were failures. Such a judgment would be unfair. Both events had propitious consequences. That same UN biodiversity outlook that outlined the threats to Earth's wild animal populations points out that numbers of bird and mammal extinctions would have been up to four times higher had it not been

for conservation programmes that can trace their origins to Stockholm and Rio.

Things could have been worse, in other words. Nevertheless, international environmental action is in clear need of reinvigoration. Hopes this might happen were raised after the Glasgow [Cop26](#) meeting. Omicron, the fuel crisis and the Ukraine war put paid to those notions, however.

It is a perennial problem. Each year, the world's attention is deflected by economic crashes, wars and pandemics, while drip by drip irreversible ecological damage continues. A few species disappear, icecaps melt a bit more, the sea level continues to rise. Rio and Stockholm raised the alarm about the incremental crisis that we face. By remembering that warning, we can, even at this late stage, avert the worst impacts of the global catastrophe that looms in front of us.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/may/29/observer-view-70-years-warnings-environment>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[The Observer](#)[Boris Johnson](#)

## **Boris Johnson, the party animal, has vomited over standards in public life**

[Andrew Rawnsley](#)



Sue Gray's investigation into Partygate underlines how much will have to be done to disinfect our government institutions when Mr Johnson is finally thrown out



Mr Johnson's life motto - 'see what you can get away with' – has turned into the creed of No 10. Photograph: Reuters

Sun 29 May 2022 03.30 EDT

Picture the squalid scene that confronted the cleaning staff on the morning after a night before of drunken delinquency by the denizens of Downing Street. Wine stains on walls. Pools of sick. Empties spilling out of bins. Mounds of party detritus on the floor. The heart of government, the place where you'd most hope for sobriety in the middle of a pandemic, turned into a vomit-splattered nightclub. The only heroes in [Sue Gray's investigation](#) into Partygate are the security staff who suffered abuse when they tried to break up illegal gatherings and the cleaners who had to mop up.

Now try to picture scenes of all-night boozing, puking, punch-ups, vandalism and law-breaking at Number 10 under any other prime minister. You can't. Nothing like this happened under any of Boris Johnson's predecessors. The character of organisations is immensely influenced by the example set by the person at the top. When that person is Mr Johnson, you get a culture of selfish, arrogant, entitled, amoral, narcissistic rule-breaking that combines, in the true spirit of the Bullingdon Club, snobbery with yobbery.

It is not just the fabric of the building that has been trashed during his occupancy – it is the reputation of the high office that he has despoiled. This is understood by many more Tory MPs than [the minority](#) who have called for him to go. Ask them why they are not then exercising their power to remove him and some will tell you that this is because the Gray report “lacked a smoking gun”.

Seriously, guys? Just how many “smoking guns” do you need? Numerous parties were held in Downing Street during some of the deadliest waves of the pandemic when lockdown rules were at their most stringent. They were often instigated or attended by the most senior people in the building. We have a photograph of the prime minister, standing next to a table laden with bottles of wine and spirits, at one of the parties that he repeatedly swore to parliament never happened. I dare him to try his latest risible alibi, that it was part of his “leadership role” to join boozy leaving dos for departing staff, to the face of anyone who was forbidden from holding the hand of a dying loved one. Eighty-three people have admitted to breaching lockdown rules in Downing Street. In total, 126 fines have been imposed, making Number 10 the most Covid law-breaking address in the country.

One official advised attendees at a Christmas party to leave via the back door to avoid being spotted by photographers

Not only were they flouting the law, the Gray report supplies [ample evidence](#) that they knew they were. One official advised attendees at a Christmas party to leave via the back door to avoid being spotted by photographers. A special adviser warned colleagues to be careful not to be seen “walking around waving bottles of wine, etc” ahead of a gathering, because it was timed to occur immediately after a televised news conference at which the public was exhorted to abide by the Covid rules. Another Downing Street staffer sent an email referring to “your drinks which aren’t drinks”. One of the building’s spin doctors worries that the notorious “bring your own booze party” is “somewhat of a comms risk”. The organiser of that gathering, Martin Reynolds, the prime minister’s principal private secretary, later sends [a WhatsApp message](#) saying “we seem to have got away with it”.

There you have the ethos of Downing Street under the sordid stewardship of Mr Johnson. See what you can get away with. His life motto turned into the degenerate creed of Number 10.

The Gray report is also a searing indictment of the civil servants involved. Mr Reynolds, otherwise known as “Party Marty”, is reportedly [being lined up](#) as our next man in Riyadh. Sending him to teetotal Saudi Arabia, which takes a hard line on illegal drinking, would show that the Foreign Office has a sense of humour. Many others are wondering why he still has a career in the civil service. The same question is being asked of [Simon Case](#), the cabinet secretary. That role has traditionally demanded the capacity to “speak truth to power”, to warn ministers, including the prime minister, when they are crossing lines. Yet either Mr Case was too feeble to challenge so much disgusting misconduct or he was complicit in the debauched culture that the Gray report rightly excoriates. The only reason that Mr Case and Mr Reynolds are still drawing taxpayer-funded salaries is surely this: they can’t be removed without making it look even more outrageous that Mr Johnson is still in his job.

However long he hangs on to it, we can already be clear about one of the defining legacies of his premiership. It is the dustbin of history for the “good chap theory of government”. The phrase was minted by [Peter Hennessy](#), the eminent historian, to describe the belief that Britain could get by with unwritten conventions about how politicians should behave, rather than a firm set of rules, because our politics was populated with honourable characters who could be relied on to do the right thing. If that theory were ever true, it has been tested to destruction by the rogue who is still squatting at Number 10 despite being a law-breaker who has repeatedly issued falsehoods to parliament. We now need to adopt a “bad chap theory of government”, which presumes that some politicians will behave abominably unless they are prevented from doing so by robust laws that are vigorously enforced.

I haven’t the space to list all the things that will have to be done to disinfect our public life once the Johnson regime is gone. Today, I will highlight three especially essential reforms. The ministerial and civil service codes need stiffening and the policing of them has to be placed in independent hands.

Ad hoc inquiries, set up to try to deflect pressure and conducted by civil servants, are not satisfactory.

As an official, Ms Gray could not pass judgment on whether the prime minister and the cabinet secretary, her bosses, are fit to continue in office. The independent adviser on ministerial interests, the post currently held by Christopher Geidt, is not fit for purpose either. He can only investigate code breaches with the permission of the prime minister, who can simply toss aside the adviser's verdicts, as Mr Johnson did when the previous adviser found [Priti Patel guilty](#) of bullying. Evidence can be kept from the adviser, as Lord Geidt discovered when he tried to investigate [Wallpapergate](#). The remedy is to implement the proposal of the committee on standards in public life when it made [34 sound recommendations](#) to improve the integrity of government. We must have a genuinely independent invigilator of ministerial conduct with the power to initiate inquiries, demand the production of evidence and publish findings in full without interference by Number 10.

We can already be clear about one of the defining legacies of his premiership. It is the dustbin of history for the 'good chap theory of government'

Money talks in politics. The Owen Paterson disgrace, the Greensill affair and the Covid contracts scandal demonstrate that the rules on influence-peddling and conflicts of interest are too puny and there is far too little transparency about who is lobbying government. There are guidelines about what business jobs can be taken up by politicians and civil servants after they leave government, but the watchdog is toothless. That invigilator needs to be armed with legal powers and [meaningful sanctions](#) against rule-breakers.

MPs have to reassert the fundamental principle that ministers who knowingly mislead parliament must resign. The Commons has only gone part of the way by [referring Mr Johnson](#) to the privileges committee. Even if that Tory-majority body finds him guilty of lying to parliament, there is no guarantee that he will not try to cling on.

Tougher laws and enforcement will help purge our politics of unethical behaviour. It is even more essential that there is a change in the culture so that the lodestar of parliamentary and ministerial life is not seeing what you can get away with, but probity. That has to be led from the top so it is obviously never going to happen while Mr Johnson is still there. He waited until MPs had left Westminster for recess before issuing a [rewritten and diluted version](#) of the ministerial code that removed from the foreword the previous injunction on members of the government to behave with honesty, integrity, transparency and accountability. Just when you think he can't debase standards in public life any further, this shameless prime minister goes and proves you wrong.

You can wipe wine stains off walls and mop vomit from the carpet. It is our institutions of government that will need a deep clean once the party animal at Number 10 is finally taken out with the trash.

Andrew Rawnsley is Chief Political Commentator of the Observer

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/may/29/boris-johnson-has-vomited-over-standards-in-public-life>

[The ObserverHeritage](#)

## **God bless the Elizabeth line - heaven for nerds of the built environment**

[Rachel Cooke](#)



What better way to celebrate the jubilee than the new underground route and stone pyramids in the Pennines



A TfL worker in Woolwich on the day the line opened Photograph: Jill Mead/The Guardian

Sat 28 May 2022 10.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 28 May 2022 15.52 EDT

Last week was a good one for built environment nerds like me. On Tuesday, I headed straight out to go absolutely nowhere that was very important on the [new Elizabeth line](#), a trip that, however pointless, was unequivocally cheering.

By the time I hit the first escalator, the service was fully en fete, its staff directing with giant purple foam hands the commuters who were walking so very slowly towards their trains, mobile phones lifted reverentially above their heads.

Emerging into the light at Farringdon station a little later, the pleasing feeling of disorientation seemed only to add to the joy. (I'd chosen the exit close to the Barbican, to whose brutalist architecture the new ticket hall nods.)

When did I become the kind of person who gets excited by an underground line? How is it that I know that Farringdon's platforms lie 30 metres below ground and why does it thrill me so to picture the beloved buildings that

stand above them? I honestly don't know. I'm more and more a stranger to myself.

But the action wasn't all in London. Elsewhere, six historic sites were listed to mark the jubilee. I'm happy that both the ultra 1970s Queen's theatre in Hornchurch and All Saints' church in Shard End, Birmingham, which was consecrated in 1955, were among them (the sculpture of Christ above the latter's entrance is by William Bloye, an artist worth looking up).

But in truth, my heart beat fastest at the news that the commemorative markers on the M62 across the Pennines are now listed at Grade II.

These stone pyramids, unveiled in 1971, stand either side of Britain's highest motorway, the first decorated with the Red Rose of the House of Lancaster, the second with the White Rose of the House of York. It's pleasing to think of cars whizzing by them now, unnoticed perhaps, but forever protected – though I do, of course, strongly favour one over the other.

When I married, my bouquet comprised rosemary for remembrance, forget-me-nots for respect and, yes, white roses for the county that is almost as beloved to me as my husband.

## A literary trio



English novelist and author Dame Ivy Compton-Burnett (1892 - 1969).  
Photograph: Picture Post/Getty Images

I meet a new friend for dinner and he arrives, having read in this column of my taste for weird literary memoirs, with a lovely copy of *Elizabeth and Ivy*, a book by the now almost forgotten novelist Robert Liddell about his relationship with the writers Ivy Compton-Burnett and Elizabeth Taylor. On the bus home, I vow to save it for my holiday, but when I arrive, slightly tipsy, I can't resist opening it.

My eyes wander sleepily across a random page... it seems to be the early 1960s, and Liddell is quoting from one of Taylor's letters, in which she describes visiting Compton-Burnett. On the day in question, the latter was, apparently, completely silent "save for little violent outbursts about capital punishment and Iris Murdoch writing too much". In case you're wondering, I did not regard this as a disappointment. Quite the opposite, in fact.

## The joy of design



Althea McNish, textile designer. Photograph: Rose Sinclair

At the William Morris Gallery in Walthamstow is a happy-making show of work by [Althea McNish](#), who arrived in the UK from Trinidad in 1950 and went on to become a celebrated fabric designer for Liberty, Heal's and Dior. McNish's exuberant patterns are so much to my taste – they bring G-Plan furniture and Françoise Sagan irresistibly to mind – and, as a result, I wandered the gallery more in the manner of someone visiting a shop than an exhibition. At moments, it was honestly almost more than I could do to stop myself.

Rachel Cooke is an Observer columnist

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/may/28/god-bless-elizabeth-line-heaven-for-nerds-of-built-environment>

**Observer comment cartoon**

**Boris Johnson**

## **Boris Johnson, greased piglet, escapes yet again – cartoon**

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/picture/2022/may/28/boris-johnson-greased-piglet-escapes-yet-again-cartoon>

The Observer**Parthenon marbles**

# Why shouldn't the Greeks have their marbles back? We proved we lost ours years ago

Catherine Bennett



Antiquated excuses for keeping the sculptures are wearing thin after 12 years of Conservative cultural freezes



‘Pilfered prey’: Visitors to the British Museum look at statues from the east pediment of the Parthenon as Greece renews its bid to have the sculptures repatriated. Photograph: Matt Dunham/AP

Sat 28 May 2022 15.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 28 May 2022 15.06 EDT

In *The Curse of Minerva*, his attack on Lord Elgin’s appropriation of the Parthenon marbles, Lord Byron imagined divine revenge by the goddess whose temple Elgin had raided – not only on the vandal himself but on Britain, the country that bought the peer’s “pilfered prey”.

Elgin would suffer and Britain would one day find herself – it probably sounded far-fetched in 1811 – isolated, starving and impotent, “hated and alone”, her politics declining into ignominy. “Then in the Senates of your sinking state / Show me the man whose counsels may have weight.”

Ever heard of Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay? I hadn’t until discovering, last week, that this is what became of Stephen Parkinson, the Vote Leave organiser once [accused of outing a colleague](#) turned whistleblower. The young anti-EU ideologue and, previously, campaigner against democratic reform of the voting system (“No to AV”) also worked for Theresa May and was rewarded with a peerage for talents unspecified.

These meagre qualifications for public office might not, given prevailing Lords standards, matter much, were it not that, following renewed Greek attempts to repatriate the Parthenon marbles, Parkinson is now responsible for the government's response, possibly in future talks. As under-secretary of state for arts in the DCMS he has already, as demonstrated in a recent debate, committed to the old arguments for keeping the sculptures, regardless of majority British opinion, and endorsed the museum's claim, disreputable even at the time, that Elgin acted lawfully. "The Parthenon sculptures were acquired by the late noble earl, Lord Elgin, legally," he recites, "with the consent of the then Ottoman empire."

Like his like-minded colleague, "retain and explain" Oliver Dowden, Parkinson is reluctant to recognise in fellow Europeans the near-sacred respect for homemade statuary that now protects the paltriest of the UK's monuments from people like Lord Elgin or, indeed, like the deeply law-abiding rulers of the then Ottoman empire. As foreigners requesting the repatriation of cherished 2,450-year-old sculptures that have spent 200 years in Britain, the Greeks should content themselves instead with Parkinson's reminder that Keats, Wordsworth and Rodin greatly enjoyed the BM's recent guardianship, whereby the sculptures feature, unlike in Athens, "in the great sweep of human civilisation". It's a version of the "universal museum" defence for holding the marbles, one that diminished after the Greeks completed a museum in which safely to exhibit the statuary, and is now evaporating along with the local conviction that the BM's arrangements, being invariably exemplary, are an international convenience.

What might have sounded plausible as recently as 2000, when the DCMS claimed the sculptures were "part of this country's heritage", has come to sound absurd, even to Boris Johnson. His reflexive argument, as mayor, was that restitution was "the Hitlerian agenda for London's cultural treasures". Last year, tackled by the Greek prime minister, he claimed that the marbles' fate was entirely the decision of the British Museum's trustees. Which is, as you'd expect, false. The 1963 British Museum Act, forbidding most de-accessioning, turns responsibility back on the government.

However threadbare Parkinson's reasoning, he should perhaps be congratulated for not attempting anything as desperate as the excuse for continued possession recently deployed at Unesco's 2022 meeting of the

Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property. “Much of the frieze was in fact removed from the rubble around the Parthenon,” the museum’s deputy director, Dr Jonathan Williams, told delegates. “These objects were not all hacked from the building as has been suggested.”

The degree of Elgin’s baseness is arguably as irrelevant as the colonial paperwork legalising the Koh-i-Noor

Even if Williams’s argument had not been challenged with, besides other evidence, the contemporaneous requisitioning of marble saws, it must rank as one of the more bizarre arguments against restitution yet made by an academic institution. Greece’s culture minister, Lina Mendoni, said: “Lord Elgin used illicit and inequitable means to seize and export the Parthenon sculptures, without real legal permission to do so, in a blatant act of serial theft.” She didn’t even mention that Elgin’s initial plan was to use them for his own interior decor, outside Dunfermline. But given the marbles’ cultural significance, the degree of Elgin’s baseness in exceeding his Ottoman permissions is arguably as irrelevant as the colonial paperwork legalising the Koh-i-Noor or the procedure by which the Broken Hill skull travelled from British-ruled Zambia to the Natural History Museum.

For the Greeks, as their representatives have repeatedly argued, the Parthenon marbles are emblems of democracy and civilisation and for years the British agreed that this very Athenian identity made them perfectly suited to a London museum informed by the same values. In 2014, lending one of the Parthenon marbles to Russia (an act deplored in Greece as a “provocation”), [Neil MacGregor](#) called it a “marble ambassador of a European ideal”.

In future dialogue with his Greek counterpart it will be for Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay, an undemocratically appointed nonentity who effectively attacked European ideals, to perpetuate MacGregor’s edifying understanding of cultural ownership. If Parkinson insists, like Johnson, that it’s entirely up to the British Museum, he merely confirms that we are witnessing, though more pointedly than anything Byron conjured up, the unfolding curse of Medusa: the BM’s chair is [George Osborne](#), the Lebedev alumnus. Leave

aside his fatal carelessness with Britain's EU membership, Osborne's 2010 cuts of 30% on arts budgets and 15% on museums were understood, at the time, to be [an assault](#) on cultural life. Visiting hours at the British Museum were, [courtesy of Osborne](#), reduced.

That the UK is, after years of Conservative leadership, increasingly internationally recognised as a xenophobic, legally untrustworthy, humanities-averse, parochially minded laughing stock, led by a [Hitler-fixated brute](#), might not be a clinching argument for restoring the plundered marbles to a more deserving European destination. But it's surely no more preposterous than saying, as a reason for retention, that finders are always keepers.

Catherine Bennett is an Observer columnist

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/may/28/why-shouldnt-greeks-have-marbles-back-we-proved-we-lost-ours-years-ago>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[The Observer](#)[Sexuality](#)

## If a lesbian only desires same-sex dates that's not bigotry, it's her right

[Sonia Sodha](#)



At Allison Bailey's employment tribunal, breaking the 'cotton ceiling' was equated to racial integration, an idea that is as wrong as it is dangerous



Allison Bailey, who is at the centre of an employment tribunal after a row over Stonewall's Diversity Champions scheme and "trans women are women" philosophy. Photograph: Yui Mok/PA

Sun 29 May 2022 02.30 EDT Last modified on Sun 29 May 2022 03.14 EDT

Sexual attraction, it seems obvious to me, is not the right frontier on which to focus the fight against racism. Anyone who's used a dating app will know that whether you swipe left or right is invariably determined by snap judgments based on a handful of photos and one-liners. Of course it's an arena in which societal prejudice plays out.

But whether or not we are attracted to someone is so personal that to lambast anyone's dating preferences as bigoted is wrong. The growing number of interracial relationships is the sign of a less racist society, but these relationships are the healthy byproduct of broader shifts in societal attitudes, not of activists hectoring people to be more pluralistic in their choice of partner.

If policing people's sexual preferences through the lens of race feels deeply unpleasant, when it comes to sexual orientation, it is wrong and dangerous. Yet we are in the extraordinary position where lesbians are now being told by some activists that it is bigoted for them to say they are not attracted to

trans women who are biologically male. This is not a fringe belief: the chief executive of LGBT charity Stonewall recently said in relation to a [BBC story about lesbians feeling pressured](#) into dropping their boundaries: “Sexuality is personal... but if, when dating, you are writing off entire groups like people of colour or trans people, it’s worth considering how societal prejudices may have shaped your attraction.” Last week, a QC on the Bar Council’s ethics committee defended the concept of overcoming the “cotton ceiling” – the offensive idea that a lesbian’s lack of desire for trans women is rooted in bigotry rather than their same-sex attraction – and compared it to initiatives to promote racial integration in post-apartheid South Africa.

That some are impressing on women that they are transphobic or [akin to “sexual racists”](#) for excluding all males from their dating pool is deeply troubling. For many same-sex attracted lesbians, the right to say no to all males literally defines their sexuality. Lesbophobia remains a huge problem in a world riven with male entitlement, in which there is perhaps nothing more subversive than a woman being clear she is not attracted to men, full stop. Lesbians have for centuries been persecuted for their sexual orientation, attacked for not trying hard enough to be attracted to men and subjected to abhorrent practices such as corrective rape.

There are sensitive issues at stake. Some female-attracted trans women talk openly about the issues with finding a partner after transition: how it can remove you from the dating pool of many straight women, but it doesn’t mean that same-sex attracted women start finding you attractive. That’s not easy to grapple with, but I suspect many trans women would not dream of finding fault with lesbians who aren’t attracted to anyone male.

However, there are some very vocal activists – some trans, some not – who seek to challenge what they see as the bigotry of exclusively female lesbian attraction in the name of trans rights. This is how the cotton ceiling – and the right of a lesbian to call it out as a coercive device to shame same-sex attracted women into compromising their boundaries – has come to the fore at a hugely important employment tribunal currently under way.

The lesbian in question is Allison Bailey, a black survivor of child sexual abuse who has overcome much adversity to become a criminal barrister. She

was told by her chambers, Garden Court, to delete two tweets they said fell short of the bar's professional standards, one of which described a workshop on "Overcoming the Cotton Ceiling" run in Canada in 2012 as coercive.

Shaming an oppressed sexual minority into dropping their boundaries, or risk being called a bigot is inherently coercive

Cotton ceiling is a reference to lesbians' knickers. It is a riff on the glass ceiling and posits that just as the professional advancement of women is hindered by sexism, the sexual acceptance of trans women is impeded by the "transphobia" of lesbians attracted only to females. It was Cathryn McGahey QC, a witness for Garden Court, who [drew the analogy](#) between this workshop exploring how "ideologies of transphobia and transmisogyny impact sexual desire" and South African racial integration and who implied it was possible in a non-coercive way to persuade a same-sex attracted lesbian she might want to have sex with a trans woman.

But shaming an oppressed sexual minority into dropping their boundaries, or risk being tarnished a bigot within the LGBT community, is inherently coercive. You don't have to look far online to see women who maintain they are female-only attracted abused as transphobes, genital fetishists and worse. Women report being [banned from dating apps for transphobia](#) after stating in their profile they are looking for a biologically female partner.

This is an important reason why gender ideology – the belief that gender identity, whether someone identifies as a man or a woman, should replace biological sex in society when it comes to sports, single-sex spaces and data collection – has divided people who are gay, lesbian and bisexual. Taken to its logical conclusion, it redefines same-sex attraction as same-gender-identity attraction. But this is fiercely resisted by those who say this simply does not accord with the lived experience of their own sexuality.

Another flashpoint is the fear that in the service of this ideology, adult trans identities are being foisted on to gay, gender non-conforming children who are experiencing gender dysphoria, through hormonal and surgical interventions that have long-term health consequences. Many gay people say they temporarily experienced gender dysphoria during puberty and an

[independent review into the care of children with gender dysphoria](#) has outlined how it sometimes naturally resolves itself and that gender identity can be fluid until someone's early to mid-20s.

So many analyses of the gender ideology debate characterise it as a conflict of rights between women and trans people. But there are plenty of trans people who shun gender ideology and some women who embrace it. It is really a conflict of rights between people who want gender identity to replace biological sex in society and people, particularly women, who believe sex is relevant. In the case of lesbians and same-sex attraction, it is vital to re-establish the principle that it is never bigoted for a woman to be clear that she is exclusively attracted to other females.

Sonia Sodha is an Observer columnist

***Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a letter of up to 300 words to be considered for publication, email it to us at [observer.letters@observer.co.uk](mailto:observer.letters@observer.co.uk)***

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/may/29/if-lesbian-prefers-same-sex-dates-thats-not-bigotry-desire-personal-thing>

[The ObserverLabour](#)

## Letters: only a coalition can oust the Tories

Labour and the Lib Dems must put aside their differences to end a decade in power of a corrupt and immoral regime



‘A Lib-Lab pact isn’t merely desirable, but necessary.’ Composite: Guardian Design/Alamy/Getty Images/ZUMA Press Wire/REX/Shutterstock

Sun 29 May 2022 01.00 EDT

Two articles last week highlighted the most important strategic decisions facing Labour (“[Quash talk of a Labour deal with SNP now, 2015 election team urges Starmer](#)”, News, and “[A Lab-Lib pincer movement is the most effective way to strike fear into the Tories](#)”, Comment).

Happily for the party, the dilemma outlined in the former can be negated by forming a Progressive Alliance, as discussed in the latter. With more than a dozen SNP seats vulnerable to Lab-Lib-Green cooperation, a Britain-wide, Tory-busting Progressive Alliance at the next election would also come with

the considerable bonus of allowing [Labour](#) to re-establish a Westminster presence in Scotland.

**Nick Wall**

Llantwit Fardre, Mid Glamorgan, Wales

Andrew Rawnsley is right. A Lib-Lab pact isn't merely desirable, but necessary, if defeating the Tories is the aim. At present, the [Liberal Democrats](#) appear to be marginally left-of-centre social liberals, while Labour are centre-left social liberals.

In short, their aims and wants are not dissimilar. They both want an end to more than a decade of scandalous Tory rule and so they must get their act together and unite. In remotely marginal seats, either the Liberals or Labour should stand down to give the Tory challengers the best chance of victory. It does appear blindingly obvious and yet unions, diehard members, the Labour left and the Liberal Democrat right are hesitant. They should focus on the big picture – deposing a corrupt and immoral (not to mention incompetent) Tory regime. Pure ideology must be diluted for the greater good.

**Sebastian Monblat**

Surbiton, Surrey

## How to abolish student debt

The expected student loan interest rate is scandalous, but it is not the fundamental problem facing young people ("['My future's been stolen': 12% rate on student loans condemned as outrageous](#)", News). With so many people going to university, many 18-year-olds believe they will be condemned to second-rate careers if they don't join in. They feel forced to go to university and therefore to take on a depressing amount of debt.

There are far fewer graduate jobs than graduates, so if we halved the number of university places, young people could end up in the same jobs, but start three years earlier and debt-free. Society should decide what graduates it needs and in what subjects and should provide tuition and maintenance free, as used to be the case. This would cost money, but so does writing off the student loans of the many people to whom university does not give the

expected career benefits.

**Richard Mountford**

Hildenborough, Kent

## Taking sides over Heard

I strongly identified with Martha Gill's article ("[#MeToo is over if we don't listen to 'imperfect victims' like Amber Heard](#)", Comment). At university, my female friends and I were united by our belief in the importance of the #MeToo movement. Suddenly, I find myself isolated as these same people turn against Heard in the cruellest of ways, choosing to believe information they have drawn from TikTok videos.

As a teenager, I loved Johnny Depp's films, but as soon as Heard accused him of domestic violence in 2016, the shine was gone, because every woman has experienced male aggression and sexual harassment first-hand.

Yet in 2022, I somehow find myself alone, afraid to defend Heard against my friends, who see her as a liar and manipulator. If I disagree, other women see me as a "bad feminist", so willing to believe any woman's testimony that I represent exactly what sexists think of us.

Heard might indeed be an imperfect victim, but we must stop expecting domestic abuse survivors to fit an angelic ideal. Social media is spreading a compellingly simple, dangerous narrative of the Depp/Heard trial that is proving appealing even to young women who are most at risk of similar violence.

**Name and address supplied**

## Benefits of the NI protocol

It seems to me that the real reason the Tories want to end the Northern Ireland protocol is because it is showing how beneficial it is for NI-based British businesses to still be in the EU single market ("[Truss rejects US plea on Northern Ireland protocol](#)", News).

Every report that shows how both businesses and ordinary people in Northern Ireland want the protocol to stay in place must send shudders down

the spines of Brexit ideologues such as Truss. Were this to morph into a wider movement in support of the UK re-entering the European Economic Area and single market, while staying outside the EU as an institution, I believe a large number of people on the “mainland” would support it.

**Christopher Tanner**

Llandovery, Dyfed, Wales

## Globalisation has failed us

Will Hutton argues that the curtain is coming down on the Thatcherite experiment (“[The food crisis is what happens when global supply chains collapse. We might need to get used to it](#)”, Comment, ).

The massive environmental damage caused by global supply chains is a primary driver of global warming, but was never considered by mainstream economists. British governments have been too willing to rely on mass imports of low-cost vital food supplies for at least 50 years and if Putin’s ruthless economic embargo of raw materials that the west relies on leads to a reindustrialisation of food manufacturing in the UK and beyond, it would not be before time.

**Adrian Berridge**

Clacton-on-Sea, Essex

## Hunt’s hidden agenda

Rachel Clarke is not convinced about Jeremy Hunt’s sensible plans for abolishing avoidable patient deaths in the NHS (“[This is going to hurt...](#)”, the New Review).

I agree with Clarke that Hunt’s plans are a leadership manifesto – all Tories want the NHS to be privatised and the photograph of Nye Bevan on the piece very poignantly puts the contrasting ideologies into plain sight. We’ve let Bevan down, but his model must prevail.

**Jonathan Hauxwell**

Crosshills, North Yorkshire

## Take a chance on holograms

There is an easy solution to Jude Rogers's ambivalence about attending the new Abba concerts ("[I want to see Abba... but it could kill the magic](#)", Focus) – she should send her hologram.

**Anne Cowper**

Bishopston, Swansea

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/theobserver/commentisfree/2022/may/29/observer-letters-only-a-coalition-can-oust-the-tories>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

## [For the record](#)UK news

# For the record

This week's corrections

Sun 29 May 2022 01.00 EDT

In a cover line and interview in today's pre-printed Magazine, we said that *Selling Sunset*'s Christine Quinn had quit the show. While she has left the Oppenheim Group, the real estate brokerage around which *Selling Sunset* revolves, Quinn's representatives have asked to make clear that she is still part of the show ("‘I’m not here because of luck, I’m here because of hustle’", p8).

The film *Mad Max: Furiosa* is due in 2024 and features Anya Taylor-Joy and Chris Hemsworth, not "in 2023 with Tom Hardy and Charlize Theron" as an article said ("[Film inspired by AS Byatt’s genie in a bottle tale revealed as ‘partly true’](#)", 22 May, p25).

Sir Brian Leveson was referred to as Lord Leveson in an article ("[Johnny Depp, Hugh Grant, now Wagatha Christie: the suave barrister to the stars](#)", 15 May, p40). The now-retired judge was Lord Justice Leveson until his appointment as president of the Queen's Bench Division in 2013, when he reverted to Sir Brian.

An article about beauty products said that "vitamin C occurs naturally in the body"; this is not the case in humans ("[10 of the best](#)", 22 May, Magazine, p29).

Abba's single The Day Before You Came did not feature on the group's 1981 album *The Visitors* as an article said, although it was later included as a bonus track on reissues of the album ("[I want to see Abba ... but it could kill the magic](#)", 22 May, p38).

*Write to the Readers' Editor, the Observer, York Way, London N1 9GU,  
email [observer.readers@observer.co.uk](mailto:observer.readers@observer.co.uk), tel 020 3353 4736*

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2022/may/29/for-the-record-observer-corrections>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[The ObserverBooks](#)

## **Dervla Murphy: a girl's own adventurer who showed us how to live at full tilt**

[Rebecca Nicholson](#)



The Irish writer cycled mountains and deserts, but her biggest legacy is a reminder that people are fundamentally good



Irish writer Dervla Murphy, pictured in 1990, who travelled with ‘simple courage and awesome recklessness’. Photograph: NUTAN/Gamma-Rapho/Getty Images

Sat 28 May 2022 12.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 28 May 2022 12.20 EDT

There was no more perfect book to read in the early months of lockdown than *Full Tilt*, Dervla Murphy’s famous account of her solo bicycle ride from Ireland to India.

I bought a battered copy with a 1980s cover on eBay and used it as a prompt to dream of travel when travel itself was not possible. Murphy, who [died a week ago](#) at the age of 90, at her home in Lismore in Ireland, undertook her most well-known journey in 1963, fulfilling an ambition she had held since she was 10. She arrived in India in July 1963. I think of Murphy often. The reasons are largely sentimental, which, you can only surmise from her writing, she would have detested. She is one of the least sentimental writers I have ever read and her straightforwardness is part of her brilliance.

I think of the simple courage and awesome recklessness of her travelling, often alone, never in vehicles (at least not that she was driving), but on mules, bikes and foot, over mountains and through deserts and forests. She was famously attacked by wolves that she shot at during the *Full Tilt* journey

in Bulgaria. She said that in order to be brave, you had to be afraid in the first place, which she never was.

Young boys grow up being given stories of adventures and adventurers, but young girls have to find them. Reading *Full Tilt* made me feel as if I were eight years old again.

It is easier than ever to assume the world is a terrible place and that people are awful and that kindness and empathy are dying qualities. But it is Murphy's writing that comes to mind when that hopelessness creeps in. She describes travelling through countries with little or no money, without knowing the language nor what or who she would encounter. There are bad people, but most are welcoming and as curious as she is, opening their homes and cafes to this Irishwoman on a bicycle who has made her way to the mountains of Afghanistan or Pakistan. Her books are reminders that most people are fundamentally good.

Yet Murphy was under no illusion that the world then was not the same as now. "Politically, the world has changed too much," she told the *Financial Times* in one of her last interviews, in April. But there is such joy to be found in her work still. Speaking to the *Guardian* in 2018, she denied that she was an adventurer, out to overcome. "I am travelling to enjoy myself," she said, with perfect simplicity.

## **George Clarke: how to turn property into a game show**



Stuart Douglas, George Clarke and Scarlette Douglas, presenters of Flipping Fast. Photograph: Andrew Fox / Channel 4

The architect and TV presenter George Clarke knows there is a housing crisis in the UK. He has written eloquently and passionately about the multifaceted problems the UK is facing, railing against greedy developers, ineffective government policies and a lack of affordable social housing. “I’m someone who doesn’t believe really in the capitalist, globalised world,” [he told the \*Big Issue\*](#), in 2021 last year.

So why is he presenting the new Channel 4 series [\*George Clarke's Flipping Fast\*](#), which began last week? The programme turns the hectic property market, which has so eradicated the notion of a home as a basic entitlement for all, into a game show. This *Apprentice*-esque competition sees six teams armed with £100,000 cash to buy properties, do them up, then “flip” them, ie sell them on for a profit.

It’s like arriving at the scene of a fire, noting that it’s hot, then pouring petrol on it just to see what will happen next. The winner will get to keep £100,000. It was pointed out, at the start, that at least two of the contestants have been unable to get on to the property ladder and this money would make that possible. But the show is promising to put them on that ladder while pulling it even further out of everyone else’s reach.

After watching the first episode, I did wonder if there was another way to see it. Perhaps there is a subversive message buried deep within its practical scratchy carpets and bland white walls. It makes “flipping” look like a total nightmare that isn’t worth the effort. Maybe that’s what Clarke is up to, after all.

## Halsey: demand for viral TikToks causes content fatigue



Halsey: ‘Everything is marketing.’ Photograph: Axelle/Bauer-Griffin/FilmMagic

The singer Halsey ignited a debate about TikTok last week when she posted that she had a song ready to release, but her label wouldn’t “let me” until she could [fake a viral moment on TikTok](#). “Everything is marketing,” she wrote.

Other pop stars have voiced similar complaints. Florence Welch, of Florence + the Machine, posted a clip of her singing a cappella, claiming that her label was begging her for “lo fi tik toks”. “Please send help,” she wrote, looking as if she would rather be anywhere else. Charli XCX and FKA Twigs have joined the chorus of disapproval with their own posts about the constant demand for content and that is a supergroup I would pay to see.

Social media is part of the “brand” of an artist, but it is not the same as advertising, though labels often blur the lines. There is confusion as to whether success should be measured in listeners or followers, viewers or sales or likes or shares. It ends up as an unhappy hodgepodge of the lot.

It’s worth noting that these women are long-established artists who feel able to speak up after years in the industry. Halsey’s TikTok did, of course, go viral.

Rebecca Nicholson is an Observer columnist

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/may/28/dervla-murphy-girls-own-adventurer-who-showed-how-to-live-full-tilt>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[The ObserverIndia](#)

## **Tory devotion to ‘dear friend’ Modi says so much about needy post-Brexit Britain**

[Nick Cohen](#)



India’s abhorrent domestic policies are of no interest to this desperate government



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is greeted by Priti Patel and minister of state for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Hugo Swire, in London in 2015. Photograph: Jonathan Brady/PA

Sun 29 May 2022 02.00 EDT

Narendra Modi and the Hindutva right are turning the world's largest democracy into the world's ugliest democracy. Muslims are denied the security of full citizenship. The independence of the Indian courts, the civil service, the electoral system and the media has been horribly compromised as the Bharatiya Janata party creates, if not a one-party state, then at least a state where only one party can win.

Far from criticising Modi, or maintaining a diplomatic distance, Britain's Conservative government is endorsing Modi's policies and prejudices.

Indian opposition politicians have been in the [UK for conferences](#) organised by the Indian diaspora and meetings with politicians and academics. Not one representative from our ruling party was among the hundreds they met. Conservative ministers and backbenchers gave every appearance of taking a collective decision not to engage with any opponent of the Modi regime.

On 16 May, there was a reception in parliament for Salman Kurshid, a former Indian cabinet minister, Pradyot Manikya, chair of India's Indigenous Progressive Regional Alliance, and other opposition figures anyone concerned about [India](#) would be pleased to interview. Conservative MPs said they would attend. But they never showed up. Labour politicians said Priti Patel had ordered a boycott. I put the allegation to the Conservative MPs concerned, but they did not reply to my emails.

She calls Modi "[our dear friend](#)" and praises his "dynamic leadership". But maybe the order came from an operator below her pay grade. British-Indian activists said a boycott did not need to be instigated by anyone as grand as the home secretary. British BJP activists need merely tell a Conservative MP with a strong Indian vote in his or her constituency to steer clear and they would obey.

Tellingly, not one of the British opponents of Modi I interviewed would go on the record. Even in the UK, crossing the BJP brings trolling from its activists and, in one nasty case, demands that the critic's parents be expelled from their temple.

Kurshid and Manikya are not well-known in the UK, but Rahul Gandhi has the glamour of royalty. As the son of Rajiv and Sonia, grandson of Indira and great-grandson of Jawaharlal Nehru, British politicians should want to meet him for the sheer celebrity value. Once again, not a single Conservative minister or MP was in parliament last week to greet one of Modi's most articulate opponents.

When Gandhi came to London in 2018, the Conservative Friends of India said it would [host an event for him in parliament](#). In those days, Tories wanted good relations with India but would not take sides in its political struggles. Or so they said. Just before Gandhi was due to speak, they cancelled the reception. Indian journalists reported that the BJP had made its unhappiness known. And in Tory circles, what the BJP wants, it gets.

There are decent democratic reasons for Tories to appeal to Indian voters

For [Conservatives](#) who criticise the identity politics of the left, this ought to be the moment when they see the left's face looking back at them in the mirror. Like "anti-imperialists" and Islamism, or the pro-Israeli right and Zionism, the Conservative party is now so aligned with the BJP that it is allowing the most oppressive versions of religion and ethnicity to define the whole of a religion or ethnicity. Hinduism is no longer a spiritual but a nationalist creed.

Indians are no longer the country's 1.4 billion inhabitants but Hindus and approved minorities, whose place is guaranteed, but not Muslims, who face religious [tests for migrants before being assured of citizenship](#).

The secular ideals of 20th-century India are too easily dismissed as a western imposition. They were as much a reaction against the west as western: specifically a reaction against the British empire's attempts to divide and rule the subcontinent on the basis of ethnicity. Now divide and rule is back with a demonic energy, with a large portion of scapegoating served on the side.

The cancel culture of sectarianism follows. British Conservative politicians are now tacitly agreeing with the BJP that Hindu nationalism opponents are not "true" Indians or Hindus but are, in the intimidatory phrase of Boris Johnson's allies, at the time of Brexit, "the enemy within".

There are decent democratic reasons for Tories to appeal to Indian voters. The refugees from the African nationalist persecutions in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania have been model meritocrats. Idi Amin and his contemporaries stripped them of everything in the 1970s, but they fled to Britain and worked hard to ensure their children could prosper.

Naturally, the Conservative party could appeal for their support. Equally naturally, conservatism appeals to the more recent influx of high-caste Indian professionals. The notion that minorities have a duty to vote for leftwing parties is itself a species of racism. In happy societies, your ethnic or religious identity is not your destiny and it is to the credit of the Conservatives that Indian voters do not think it is the racist party of leftish nightmare.

If pleasing Indian voters means not being over-eager to confront BJP sympathisers in their midst, that is democratic politics for you. It's hardly as if anti-Hindu feeling on the left isn't already driving them into Conservative arms. The despairing Labour MP [Navendu Mishra wrote in 2021](#) of a "hierarchy of racism" in the Labour party and some groups, most notably Hindus of Indian heritage, being "fair game".

And then there is Brexit. There is always Brexit. Desperate for a trade deal with India to show it has not shoved its country into an unmitigated economic and strategic failure, the Johnson administration will bite its tongue if silence will help it secure a trade deal with India.

Whether it is staying silent out of necessity or choice is an open question. During his tour, [Gandhi spoke well](#) about how the BJP was "strangling" the independence of every potential centre of opposition. "There is not a single institution that is not under attack and it is systematically done. The judiciary, the press, the bureaucracy, the election commission... every single institution is systematically being filled by people who have a particular ideology."

With a few modifications to reflect local circumstances, that description would apply as well to Boris Johnson's Britain. The Tories are not in an alliance of electoral or diplomatic convenience. They are in love.

Nick Cohen is an Observer columnist

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/may/29/tory-devotion-to-dear-friend-modi-says-much-about-needy-post-brexit-britain>

## Headlines saturday 28 may 2022

- [Politics Boris Johnson accused of changing ministerial code to ‘save his skin’](#)
- [Partygate Civil servants furious as Simon Case dodges sanction](#)
- [Politics The Tory MPs calling on Johnson to resign – and what they said](#)
- [Partygate Met never asked me for lockdown party evidence, says Dominic Cummings](#)

## Boris Johnson

# Boris Johnson accused of changing ministerial code to ‘save his skin’

Rewritten rules remove need to resign – instead ministers can apologise or temporarily lose pay for breaches

- [Civil servants furious as Simon Case dodges sanction over Partygate](#)



The prime minister faced criticism after he amended the ministerial code on Friday. Photograph: Reuters

*[Rowena Mason](#) and [Aubrey Allegretti](#)*

Fri 27 May 2022 10.21 EDTFirst published on Fri 27 May 2022 10.05 EDT

Boris Johnson has been accused of changing the ministerial code to help “save his skin” ahead of a new Partygate inquiry that could publish more photos and subject him to a public grilling by MPs.

The prime minister faced a barrage of criticism after he amended the rules on Friday to make clear that ministers will not always be expected to resign for breaching the code of conduct. Under new sanctions, they could apologise or temporarily lose their pay instead.

Johnson also blocked his independent ethics chief, Christopher Geidt, from gaining the power to launch his own investigations, and rewrote the foreword to the ministerial code, removing all references to honesty, integrity, transparency and accountability.

It comes as the PM faces an inquiry by the privileges committee into whether he misled parliament over lockdown parties in Downing Street – which could itself be a breach of the ministerial code.

Labour and the Liberal Democrats accused Johnson of rigging the system to “get himself off the hook” ahead of the inquiry.

No 10 said [a new version of the ministerial code](#), published on Friday alongside a government [statement](#) saying it is “disproportionate to expect that any breach, however minor, should lead automatically to resignation or dismissal”, has the backing of the Committee on Standards in Public Life and Lord Geidt, the adviser on ministerial interests.

Ministers who knowingly mislead parliament are usually expected to resign – which is stated elsewhere in the code. However, Downing Street declined to say if Johnson would resign if found to have done so.

One reason given for changing the rules was to “avoid incentives for trivial or vexatious complaints, which may be made for partisan reasons”.

Chris Bryant, the Labour MP and chair of parliament’s standards committee, said the weakening of the system was “appalling”.

“The new ministerial code is a disgrace. It means that the tiny semblance of accountability disappears. ‘If you break the rules, just rewrite the rulebook’ is the motto of this despicable government,” he said.

Johnson remains under severe pressure over Partygate after the [publication of the Sue Gray report](#). On Friday he [suffered the first loss of a frontbencher](#) since the report, ministerial aide Paul Holmes, who said his work as an MP had been “tarnished by the toxic culture that seemed to have permeated No 10”.

Bob Neill, a former minister and chair of the justice committee, also revealed he submitted a letter of no confidence this week.

“These events have undermined trust in not just the office of the prime minister but in the political process itself. To rebuild that trust and move on, a change in leadership is required,” he said. Neill later told the BBC that the change to the ministerial code was “not a wise move”.

With growing fears in the Conservative party that it may lose two by-elections next month, in Tiverton and Wakefield, new modelling from YouGov found that of 88 “battleground” constituencies the party took from Labour at the last election or holds with a majority of less than 15 points, just three would remain in Tory hands. Among those that could swing red is Johnson’s own seat in west London.

Rebel MPs are planning to use next week’s recess to plot ways to oust the prime minister. One critic said the number of letters of no confidence “had to be” in the 40s – short of the 54 required to trigger a confidence vote but more than the [almost 30 MPs who have gone public with criticism of Johnson](#).

A senior Conservative MP said: “Boris’s value to the party as PM is now exhausted and events will take their natural course. I cannot tell you whether it will crystallise on 6 June [after recess] or 27 June [the return to parliament after two by-elections] but the parliamentary party knows it cannot fight and win the next election under Boris.”

There is a widening gulf between the expectations of Johnson’s allies and his critics, who expect to see him gone before the summer.

One cabinet minister said he did not believe the Gray report had changed people's minds. "Either people are already bored of it or they are permanently enraged by it. I'm not sure anything is going to change now," he said.

But despite this confidence, Johnson is facing a new headache with the start of the privileges committee inquiry within weeks, which is likely to keep Partygate in the headlines.

Separately, it is understood the Greater London Authority's oversight committee is soon due to publish a report looking into London & Partners, the promotional agency linked to Johnson's time as London mayor and the [revelations about his relationship with the US businesswoman Jennifer Arcuri](#).

Three ministerial aides – Laura Farris, Alberto Costa and Andy Carter – are imminently expected to resign from their government jobs in order to be more independent as members of the privileges committee that will sit in judgment over the prime minister's honesty.

It is expected to launch within weeks, before the summer break, and to last four or more months. The committee can sit in private or call witnesses in public – potentially including Johnson himself – and demand further documentary evidence, such as photographs from the government, if required.

Gray published only nine photos in her report, including [ones showing Johnson alongside open bottles of wine and gin](#), but hundreds were seen by her inquiry.

Harriet Harman, the senior Labour MP, is likely to chair the privileges committee, with the probe expected to ask what, if any, assurances the PM was given that the parties were legal when he claimed there were no gatherings and that all lockdown guidance was followed.

Johnson could be found in contempt of parliament if he deliberately misled the Commons, but he could also be in breach of the ministerial code if he knowingly lied to MPs.

However, the ministerial code is governed by the prime minister himself, and Johnson resisted pressure to give Geidt the power to launch his own inquiries without consent.

Under his revised terms of reference, there will be an “enhanced process” to let Geidt initiate inquiries – but he will still require the PM’s consent before going ahead.

Sign up to First Edition, our free daily newsletter – every weekday morning at 7am BST

“Reflecting the prime minister’s accountability for the conduct of the executive, it is important that a role is retained for the prime minister in decisions about investigations,” the government statement said.

Angela Rayner, Labour’s deputy leader, also highlighted Johnson’s move to rewrite the foreword to the code, removing “all references to integrity, objectivity, accountability, transparency, honesty and leadership in the public interest”.

“This prime minister is downgrading and debasing the principles of public life before our very eyes,” she said. “He should be tendering his resignation but is instead watering down the rules to save his own skin.”

Wendy Chamberlain, the Lib Dem chief whip, said it was an “appalling attempt by Boris Johnson to rig the rules to get himself off the hook”.

“It seems the Conservatives have learned nothing from the Owen Paterson scandal,” she said, referring to the MP who breached the MPs’ code of conduct but whose suspension the [government attempted to block](#).

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/may/27/boris-johnson-changes-ministerial-code-to-remove-need-to-resign-over-breaches>

## [Gray report](#)

# Civil servants furious as Simon Case dodges sanction over Partygate

Unions criticise Gray report for ‘outrageous’ failure to censure cabinet secretary and top officials

[Johnson accused of changing ministerial code to ‘save his skin’](#)



A former senior civil servant said Simon Case, left, was ‘joined at the hip’ with Boris Johnson and was ‘a shield’ for the prime minister. Photograph: Reuters

[Jessica Elgot , Peter Walker and Heather Stewart](#)

Sat 28 May 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 28 May 2022 06.02 EDT

One of the firmest predictions before the publication of Sue Gray’s report was that Simon Case, the cabinet secretary, would “do the honourable thing” and resign. As it turned out, he did not.

Instead, Case and the entire No 10 top team appear to have avoided any sanction or even reprimand at all, and it is fair to say not everyone is happy – particularly more junior officials, dozens of whom were fined.

Unions and former senior civil servants have told the Guardian about the intense anger over such top officials doing nothing to stop the often boozy – and sometimes disorderly – social gatherings [outlined in Gray's report](#), without consequence.

While the ire is directed at senior officials in general, it is a particularly difficult position for Case, the UK's top civil servant, whose move from Buckingham Palace to No 10 aged 41 made him the youngest cabinet secretary since 1916, and one of the least experienced.

Case appears just fleetingly in Gray's report, and was not fined. But there is a sense that he and others in charge should have provided more of a lead.

Mike Clancy, the general secretary of the Prospect union, which represents more junior officials, said the culture exposed by Gray showed up “a No 10 bubble which has been condoned by the senior leadership”. He added: “Under any other leadership the Sue [Gray report](#) should be a cause for reflection for the PM and the senior leaders around them.”

Mark Serwotka, the general secretary of the PCS union, was blunter still, saying it was “outrageous that those who set the culture are getting away without censure from the Sue Gray report while junior staff are paying the price”.

One former leading civil servant told the Guardian the events set out in Gray's report reflected very badly on Case, saying top officials knew what was happening but “found reasons to justify it when they shouldn't have done”.

“It all feels like exceptionalism – they only ever checked with each other, and it was all a bit self-justifying. No one stood back and said: ‘I know how much you want this event, and how hard you've worked, but you have to wait, like everyone else.’”

The lack of sanction against Case was, however, unsurprising, they added. “He’s joined at the hip with the prime minister. If Simon Case had gone, that would completely expose Johnson. He’s a shield. How could you take action against him, when he wasn’t fined, and not the prime minister, who was fined?” Even before Gray’s report emerged, many in Whitehall said Case’s conduct throughout Partygate – even having to recuse himself from leading the inquiry because of a Christmas quiz organised by his office – was unforgivable.

“I can’t imagine the circumstances during my time in the civil service where if someone mentioned it was against the law, we would not have gone: ‘Fair point, let’s not do that,’” another former civil servant said. “Case should have resigned immediately. There is a catastrophic failure of the senior civil service here.”

But some feel that a dramatic fall from grace would be undeserved. A former staffer who knew Case from his work at Buckingham Palace said they had watched with horror at the scandals engulfing Downing Street.

“Simon was seen as the best and brightest, really hyped up,” they said. “It’s awful how things have turned out and I think part of that is just how everything golden that Boris Johnson touches turns to shit.”

Case was born and privately educated in Bristol. At university in Cambridge, he studied the history of the intelligence services as part of his undergraduate degree and did a PhD under the renowned political historian Peter Hennessy at Queen Mary University of London, who described him as having a “muscularity of mind and an intellectual curiosity which was outstanding”.

Case, who is married with three daughters, might have been expected to join the security services – but in 2006 he joined the civil service, rising to senior security roles under David Cameron in No 10.

He was lured over as director of strategy at GCHQ in 2015 but lasted less than a year before he returned to Cameron as principal private secretary.

Case was reportedly close to Cameron, but less friendly with Theresa May. Under her, he was given another difficult job: finding a solution for the Irish border post-Brexit.

By 2018, in the depths of Brexit chaos, Case became private secretary to Prince William. Just over two years later he was back in No 10 with the trickiest brief of all – cabinet secretary for Johnson, at the heart of an administration where [his predecessor, Mark Sedwill, had been ousted in a briefing war](#) along with a number of other Whitehall permanent secretaries.

Sign up to First Edition, our free daily newsletter – every weekday morning at 7am BST

Case had initially returned on secondment from the palace, coordinating the coronavirus response, and did not initially apply for the cabinet secretary job until he was asked by Johnson.

“I think he would be the first to admit he did not have experience of system leadership. There was a clear gap in his CV when it came to being equipped to run the civil service,” one former colleague said.

One Whitehall source described the civil service anger towards Case as “visceral”, while another said he had been a “submarine” during various crises, never taking the opportunity to own any mistakes or provide cover for others – except the prime minister.

“His biggest mistake is not to have drawn a dividing line at any point with the PM. He has never picked a battle to defend the civil service,” the former colleague said.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/may/28/civil-servants-furious-as-simon-case-dodges-sanction-over-partygate>

## Conservatives

# The Tory MPs calling on Boris Johnson to resign – and what they said

Explainer: a full list of the Conservatives who have sent a letter of no confidence or publicly urged the PM to stand down



Boris Johnson during his statement on the Sue Gray report to the House of Commons on Wednesday. Photograph: Jessica Taylor/AFP/Getty Images

*[Jessica Elgot](#) Chief political correspondent  
[@jessicaelgot](#)*

Fri 27 May 2022 18.55 EDTFirst published on Thu 26 May 2022 08.26 EDT

Boris Johnson was warned he would face a string of no-confidence letters after the Sue Gray report into Partygate concluded. In order for a vote of no confidence to be triggered, the chair of the 1922 Committee, Graham Brady, must receive letters from at least 54 Conservative MPs – 15% of the parliamentary party.

Here is the full list of Tory MPs who have urged the prime minister to stand down, though some say they have not written letters to Brady. Several other critical MPs say they will not reveal whether they have sent a letter – so the true number is likely to be higher.

## **No confidence in the PM**

### **William Wragg**

#### **Hazel Grove**

*I cannot reconcile myself to the prime minister's continued leadership of our country and the Conservative party. I say this by means of context, so that everyone, particularly my constituents and colleagues, can understand my position, without hiding my views with ever more elaborate disguises.*

### **Gary Streeter**

#### **South West Devon**

*I cannot reconcile the pain and sacrifice of the vast majority of the British public during lockdown with the attitude and activities of those working in Downing Street. Accordingly, I have now submitted a letter seeking a motion of no confidence in the prime minister.*

### **Anthony Mangnall**

#### **Totnes**

*Standards in public life matter. At this time I can no longer support the PM. His actions and mistruths are overshadowing the extraordinary work of so many excellent ministers and colleagues. I have submitted a letter of no confidence.*



Tobias Ellwood, the chair of the defence select committee. Photograph: Dan Kitwood/Getty Images

## **Tobias Ellwood**

### **Bournemouth East**

*I have made my position very clear to the prime minister: he does not have my support. A question I humbly put to my colleagues is: are you willing, day in day out, to defend this behaviour publicly? Can we continue to govern without distraction, given the erosion of the trust of the British people? And can we win a general election on this trajectory?*

## **Peter Aldous**

### **Waveney**

*After a great deal of soul-searching, I have reached the conclusion that the prime minister should resign ... Whilst I am conscious that others will disagree with me, I believe that this is in the best interests of the country, the government and the Conservative party.*

## **Roger Gale**

## **North Thanet**

*It's absolutely clear that there was a party, that he attended it, that he was raising a toast to one of his colleagues. And therefore, he misled us from the dispatch box. And, honourably, there is one answer.*

## **Steve Baker**

### **Wycombe**

*Having watched what I would say was beautiful, marvellous contrition ... the prime minister's apology lasted only as long as it took to get out of the headmaster's study. That is not good enough for me, and it is not good enough for my voters. I am sorry, but for not obeying the letter and the spirit of the law – we have heard that the prime minister knew what the letter was – the prime minister should now be long gone. Really, the prime minister should just know that the gig is up.*

## **John Baron**

### **Basildon and Billericay**

*Parliament is the beating heart of our nation. To knowingly mislead it cannot be tolerated, no matter the issue. Whether or not the prime minister is an asset to the party or the country is of less importance. Having always said I would consider all the available evidence before deciding, I'm afraid the prime minister no longer enjoys my support – I can no longer give him the benefit of the doubt.*

## **Aaron Bell**

### **Newcastle-under-Lyme**

*I wrote my letter following PMQs on 12 January, when I could not square the prime minister's words from the dispatch box with his previous statements to the house before Christmas. Subsequently I have also*

*struggled to reconcile assurances given directly to me with the implications of Sue Gray's interim findings.*



The former culture secretary Karen Bradley. Photograph: David Gadd/Sportsphoto/Allstar

## **Karen Bradley**

### **Staffordshire Moorlands**

*I am proud of the British values of democracy, individual liberty, mutual respect, tolerance and the rule of law and have been privileged to promote those values around the world as an MP and during my time as a government minister. But we will lose the right to promote those values if we do not uphold them ourselves. I do wish to make it clear that if I had been a minister found to have broken the laws that I passed, I would be tendering my resignation now.*

## **Nick Gibb**

### **Bognor Regis and Littlehampton**

*The prime minister accepted the resignation of Allegra Stratton for joking about a Christmas party that she hadn't attended, but he won't take responsibility for those that he did attend. I am sorry to say that it is hard to see how it can be the case that the prime minister told the truth. To restore trust, we need to change the prime minister.*

## **Mark Harper**

### **Forest of Dean**

*I have formally submitted a letter of no confidence in the prime minister to Sir Graham Brady MP. This was not an easy decision for me – I have been a member of the Conservative party since I was 17 years old and will remain in the party I love until my dying day.*

## **Tim Loughton**

### **East Worthing and Shoreham**

*The reason for my conclusion in calling for him to stand down is the way that he has handled the mounting revelations in the last few weeks. Obfuscation, prevarication and evasion have been the order of the day when clarity, honesty and contrition was what was needed and what the British people deserve.*

## **Nigel Mills**

### **Amber Valley**

*He's been fined, I don't think his position is tenable. I think people are rightly angry that at a time when they were observing the very strictest of the rules people who were making the rules didn't have the decency to observe them.*

## **Andrew Mitchell**

### **Sutton Coldfield**

*I think this is a crisis that is not going to go away and is doing very great damage to the party. It is more corrosive, in my judgment, than the expenses scandal was, and it will break the coalition that is the Conservative party.*



Caroline Nokes. Photograph: NurPhoto/Getty Images

## **Caroline Nokes**

### **Romsey and Southampton North**

*I have been very clear that I believe the PM's conduct fell far short of what my constituents have every right to expect. I do not need to write a letter of no confidence to the chair of the 1922 Committee – mine was in a very long time ago.*

## **David Simmonds**

### **Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner**

*It is clear that while the government and our policies enjoy the confidence of the public, the prime minister does not. It is time for him to step down so that new leadership can take forward the important work of the government in ensuring that our people and country prosper.*

## **Julian Sturdy**

### **York Outer**

*It is clear discussions about parties in Downing Street remain a damaging distraction at a time when our country faces massive challenges with war returning in Europe, a global cost of living crisis and our recovery from the pandemic being more important than ever. This is clearly a time when we cannot have any doubt about the honesty, integrity and personal character of the prime minister.*

## **Stephen Hammond**

### **Wimbledon**

*I am struck by a number of my colleagues who were really concerned that it's almost impossible for the PM to say I want to move on, as we cannot move on without regaining public trust and I am not sure that's possible in the current situation. All I can do as a backbencher is speak out and submit a letter... I have said for several months I already have done all I can as a backbencher.*

## **Bob Neill**

### **Bromley and Chislehurst**

*I have listened carefully to the explanations the prime minister has given, in parliament and elsewhere, and, regrettably, do not find his assertions to be credible. That is why, with a heavy heart, I submitted a letter of no confidence to Sir Graham Brady on Wednesday afternoon. Trust is the most important commodity in politics, but these events have undermined trust in not just the office of the prime minister, but in the political process itself. To rebuild that trust and move on, a change in leadership is required.*

## **Steve Brine**

### **Winchester and Chandler's Ford**

*I said some time ago I thought it was inevitable the prime minister would face a vote of confidence among Conservative MPs – (it was widely reported) and I haven't changed my view. All I can do as a backbencher is seek to trigger that process and (some time ago actually) I have done that.*

*I have said throughout this sorry saga I cannot and will not defend the indefensible. Rule makers cannot be law-breakers.*

## Calls to resign – but say no letter sent

### Neil Hudson

#### Penrith and The Border

*The situation is untenable moving forward. That said, I do not believe it would be prudent or responsible to change the leadership of the government in the midst of the international crisis. I will therefore be looking to the prime minister to show the statesmanship he has been showing with Ukraine, and outline a timetable and process for an orderly transition to a leadership election as soon as the international situation permits.*



David Davis invoked Leopold Amery's call for Neville Chamberlain to resign. Photograph: Alastair Grant/AP

## **David Davis**

### **Haltemprice and Howden**

*I expect my leaders to shoulder the responsibility for the actions they take. Yesterday he did the opposite of that. I will remind him of a quotation which may be familiar to his ear: Leopold Amery to Neville Chamberlain. “You have sat too long here for any good you have been doing. In the name of God, go.”*

## **Craig Whittaker**

### **Calder Valley**

*It is my belief that they should both [Johnson and Rishi Sunak] resign. The PM and chancellor should not be an exception to the rules they set to protect us all. I've been asked by many of my colleagues and constituents whether I will submit a letter to the chairman of the 1922 Committee, Sir Graham Brady. The answer is “no”. I believe it should be down to the British people, and the British people alone.*

## **Unclear if letter sent**



Angela Richardson. Photograph: UK Parliament/Roger Harris/PA

## **Angela Richardson**

### **Guildford**

*Trust has been broken and it saddens me that the culture in No 10 and the length of time the inquiry has taken has eroded trust in your political representatives. It reflects badly on all of us. Sue Gray reflects many people's view when she says: "The senior leadership at the centre, both political and official, must bear responsibility." I am clear that had this been a report about my leadership, I would resign.*

## **Paul Holmes**

### **Eastleigh**

*It is clear to me that a deep mistrust in both the government and the Conservative party has been created by these events, something that pains me personally as someone who always tries to represent Eastleigh and its people with integrity. Whether that is taking up your issues in parliament or helping people with their problems closer to home, since 2019 we have completed over 12,000 pieces of constituency casework. It is distressing to me that this work on your behalf has been tarnished by the toxic culture that seemed to have permeated No 10.*

## **Alicia Kearns**

### **Rutland and Melton**

*It is wrong that families were banned from saying goodbye to their dying loved ones, while the prime minister was complicit in the holding of many goodbye parties for his staff, which we now know displayed a complete disregard for restrictions and were complete with vomiting, fighting and bullying. I can only conclude that the prime minister's account of events to parliament was misleading. If he did not know about the culture of parties, then this is because he failed to ask the questions necessary, or has chosen*

*not to since last October. Those around him clearly did not advise a policy of being honest and transparent with the British people.*

## **Letters withdrawn**

### **Andrew Bridgen**

**North West Leicestershire**

*It would be an indulgence to have a vote of no confidence at the time of an international emergency, and this is not going to go away quickly.*

### **Douglas Ross**

**Moray and Scottish Conservatives leader**

*I've said previously that the prime minister's position was untenable, and I've only changed that because of the situation in Ukraine. Sadly, since the report has been published, the situation in Ukraine has not changed.*

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/may/26/tory-mps-calling-on-boris-johnson-to-resign-conservatives-letter-no-confidence>

## Dominic Cummings

# Met never asked me for lockdown party evidence, says Dominic Cummings

Boris Johnson's former aide identified as being present at two events and mentioned six times in Sue Gray report

- [Today's politics news – latest updates](#)



Dominic Cummings leaves Downing Street in London with Boris Johnson in September 2019. Photograph: Daniel Leal/AFP/Getty

*Peter Walker* Political correspondent  
[@peterwalker99](#)

Fri 27 May 2022 09.41 EDTFirst published on Fri 27 May 2022 09.40 EDT

Dominic Cummings, Boris Johnson's former chief aide, was never contacted by police seeking information about alleged lockdown-breaching parties inside Downing Street during his time working there, he has said.

In [a Twitter exchange](#) with a journalist, asked if he was one of the No 10 staffers to receive a fixed-penalty notice (FPN) from the Metropolitan police over illicit social events, Cummings replied: “No, didn’t even send a questionnaire or email asking for evidence.”

The police issued 126 fines to 83 people, including one to Johnson, in an investigation which ended last week.

Because the offences fell under the system of FPNs, they were dealt with entirely by police, who investigated alleged breaches and issued fines, which could be challenged in court, although none were in this case. Those involved were not formally interviewed but sent written questionnaires.

Cummings was Johnson’s most senior adviser until he was sacked in November 2020, and is mentioned six times in the report into the gatherings, [published on Wednesday](#) by the senior civil servant Sue Gray.

The report identifies Cummings as present at two events considered in the report, one of which is a gathering in the Downing Street garden on 15 May 2020, where [Cummings was pictured](#) sitting with Johnson alongside a table with wine bottles and a cheese platter. Gray described this event as a continuation of work meetings, and it was not investigated by police.

However, Cummings was also identified by Gray as attending at least part of an event on 18 June 2020 for which others were fined, a leaving event in the cabinet room for a No 10 private secretary. This continued until after 3am, involving a karaoke machine and what Gray called “excessive alcohol consumption” in which someone was sick and “a minor altercation between two other individuals”.

Cummings subsequently [took again to Twitter](#) to argue that while Gray considered 18 June a single event in two parts, he considered them separate gatherings, adding: “I was \*not\* at later one & far as Im aware \*nobody\* was fined for earlier meeting in CAB room.”

Sign up to First Edition, our free daily newsletter – every weekday morning at 7am BST

Cummings is also cited by Gray as having raised written concerns about a “bring your own booze” gathering in the No 10 garden on 20 May 2020, another event for which people were fined.

Gray said in her report she had “not found any documentary evidence” of Cummings’ worries. But in [another tweet](#), he said this was a misunderstanding by Gray, and that while he and another official, the then communications chief Lee Cain, both raised concerns, only Cain did so in writing.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/may/27/met-never-asked-me-for-lockdown-party-evidence-dominic-cummings>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

## 2022.05.28 - Spotlight

- 'High drama, with the lowest stakes' What really happened at the Wagatha Christie trial
- 'I woke up and he was on top of me' Six women on being abused by fashion agent Jean-Luc Brunel
- Blind date I was so engrossed, I leaned over the candle and my sleeve caught on fire
- Books by women that every man should read Chosen by Ian McEwan, Salman Rushdie, Richard Curtis and more

# ‘High drama, with the lowest stakes’ – what really happened at the Wagatha Christie trial

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2022/may/28/wagatha-christie-vardy-v-rooney-celebrity-trial>

# ‘I woke up and he was on top of me’: six women on being abused by fashion agent Jean-Luc Brunel

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2022/may/28/jean-luc-brunel-abuse-six-women-spstein>

Advertisement

US edition

- [US edition](#)
- [UK edition](#)
- [Australian edition](#)
- [International edition](#)

[The Guardian - Back to home](#)[The Guardian: news website of the year](#)

[Blind date](#)[Relationships](#)

## **Blind date: ‘I was so engrossed, I leaned over the candle and my sleeve caught on fire’**



Photograph: Christian Sinibaldi/The Guardian

**Jemma, 31, gardener, meets Pietro, 25, PhD student**

Sat 28 May 2022 01.00 EDT

---

## **Jemma on Pietro**



### **What were you hoping for?**

An interesting and fun chat with someone new.

### **First impressions?**

Smart, well dressed, polite ...

### **What did you talk about?**

Our travels. Food. Animals (we both got a bit excited over Attenborough!). Places we've lived. TV shows.

### **Any awkward moments?**

I got so engrossed in the conversation I leaned over the candle and my shirt sleeve went up in flames. Waiters came over to put it out! Strange thing was, I was just telling a story about setting myself on fire doing a kids' science show! Luckily, Pietro found it funny.

**Good table manners?**

Yes.

**Best thing about Pietro?**

He was very interesting and had a great sense of humour. I really enjoyed talking to him and conversation flowed naturally. We got along great!

**Would you introduce Pietro to your friends?**

Yes, in fact he reminded me of a few of them. I think they'd get on well.

**Describe Pietro in three words?**

Intelligent, interesting, funny ...

**What do you think he made of you?**

Crazy, chatty, entertaining ...

**Did you go on somewhere?**

We couldn't as I had to run off to catch my last train. We needed more time.

**And ... did you kiss?**

No, it was a brief goodbye, but he chased after me to give me the takeaway pavlova to eat on the train. Very chivalrous of him.

**If you could change one thing about the evening what would it be?**

I'd say not setting my favourite shirt on fire. Also, that there had been a later last train so we could have had more time together.

**Marks out of 10?**

8.

**Would you meet again?**

Yes, we still had lots to chat about!

---

**Pietro on Jemma**

**What were you hoping for?**

To meet someone interesting.

**First impressions?**

She was immediately friendly and talkative, maybe nervous, but she made it very easy to start chatting.

**What did you talk about?**

Climate change. How to swear in Italian. Getting lost in London and Bulgaria without a phone. How Kesha ruined The Simpsons. Future plans.

**Any awkward moments?**

Five minutes after she'd told me how she set herself on fire for a children's science show, her sleeve caught fire.

**Good table manners?**

Perfectly good. Responsible enough to ask the waiter for a quieter table, which got us a nice upgrade to a booth.

**Best thing about Jemma?**

She seems to have a big love for life and is very adventurous.

**Would you introduce her to your friends?**

To the nice ones, yes.

**Describe Jemma in three words?**

Capable, experienced, approachable.

**What do you think she made of you?**

A bit young, soft spoken and nerdy; but hopefully nice and interesting.

**Did you go on somewhere?**

Sadly, she had a train to catch, so our time was cut short.

**And ... did you kiss?**

No. I don't think I would do that on a first date.

**If you could change one thing about the evening what would it be?**

I would have done a brisk walk instead of a run after Jemma to give her the pavlova. I think it may have got a bit scrambled.

**Marks out of 10?**

9. Unforgettable.

**Would you meet again?**

Absolutely.

*Jemma and Pietro ate at [The Gun](#), London E1. Fancy a blind date? Email [blind.date@theguardian.com](mailto:blind.date@theguardian.com)*

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2022/may/28/blind-date-jemma-pietro>

---

Advertisement

US edition

- [US edition](#)
- [UK edition](#)
- [Australian edition](#)
- [International edition](#)

[The Guardian - Back to home](#)[The Guardian: news website of the year](#)

[Books](#)

## **Books by women that every man should read: chosen by Ian McEwan, Salman Rushdie, Richard Curtis and more**



Illustration: Lalalimola/The Guardian

Studies show men avoid female authors. Ahead of the Women's prize for fiction, chair of judges Mary Ann Sieghart finds out why – and we ask male

authors to redress the balance

### Mary Ann Sieghart

Sat 28 May 2022 04.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 28 May 2022 13.55 EDT

The film-maker [Richard Curtis](#) realised during the first lockdown that he would at last have time to immerse himself in books. More specifically books by women, “to compensate for 63 years of male bias”, he explains. “It’s been an amazing two years: the glory of [Anne Tyler](#), [Ann Patchett](#), [Ali Smith](#), [Zadie Smith](#), [Daphne du Maurier](#), [Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie](#) and so many others.”

Now, 32 books later, he has become positively evangelical. When a male friend had a birthday recently, Curtis gave him four novels by female writers. “I have given away more copies of [Olive Kitteridge](#) [by [Elizabeth Strout](#)] than you can imagine,” he says. “I spend my whole time romping through bookshops saying: ‘Why haven’t you got more Anne Tyler novels on your shelves?’ I’ve had a genuine epiphany in terms of the novels that I read.”

Women read roughly 50:50 books by male and female authors; for men the ratio is 80:20

Yet there are still many men who, like Curtis until recently, barely read books by women. On average, women will read roughly 50:50 books written by men and by women; for men, the ratio is 80:20. Why should that be? “I think subject matter has a lot to do with it,” the novelist [Ian McEwan](#) says. Men are said to be more interested in violence than relationships: they often prefer war or crime novels to ones about couples or families, or so the stereotype goes. “But of course there are loads of men writing about relationships and parents and despair and suicide, and all the ways in which love can go wrong. That’s been the engine of English literature for three and a half centuries.”

The broadcaster [Andrew Marr](#) points out that men have traditionally not been encouraged to talk about their emotional life. “And if you don’t talk

about it very much, you're less likely to read about it. So the bounce off into fantasy versions of the working life [such as stories about soldiers and spies] is more attractive, because you jump away from an area that you find hard to talk about, and you're not quite sure of the words."

Yet this is precisely why the novelist [Howard Jacobson](#) turns to fiction by women. "I like the fact that they write about love a lot," he says. "Because I write about love a lot. And I think it is the most interesting subject. It's more interesting than guns. It's more interesting than policemen. It's more interesting than adventures. It is the stuff of our life."

It's wrong to pigeonhole women's novels as purely about relationships – often they're cast that way, even when they're not

Though, of course, it is wrong to pigeonhole women's novels as purely about relationships. Often they are unfairly cast that way, even when they're not. [Kamila Shamsie](#) won the 2018 Women's prize for fiction for her novel [Home Fire](#). A retelling of Antigone in the context of the war on terror, it covers deep contemporary themes with an overlay of complex relationships between three Anglo-Pakistani siblings and the son of the home secretary. But, she says: "When my books get talked about, people go much more to the familial and the romantic elements of them. And, actually, the male writers are writing as much about romance and family, maybe more, but they get talked about in terms of the larger political stories they are telling."

As well as genre, there is the question of how we train young boys to read. Jacobson grew up on Jane Austen, George Eliot and the Brontës: "That was my world. Jane Eyre was the novel I most loved. I was Jane Eyre." But these days, perhaps because educationists are worried about boys reading less than girls, the curriculum is massively skewed the other way. [Recent research by End Sexism in Schools](#) found that, in the key stage 3 English curriculum, 77% of schools teach only one or no whole texts by female writers out of nine, 82% of novels have a male protagonist and 99% of plays are by men. If we don't inculcate the habit of reading widely at that age, it's going to be harder for men to learn it when they are older.

And then, what joys they will miss! Curtis has been blown away by the novels he has read in the past two years. “I have become obsessed by the texture of the writing and the observation, and I have started to reunderstand novels as a conversation with an absolutely delicious mind.”

Jacobson feels the same way. “I like the pitch of women’s morality. Austen is wonderfully unforgiving. I love that. She has a terrific sarcasm. It gives me pleasure. I like [Austen’s and Eliot’s] ironies. I like their social cruelties. I like the degree to which they observe.”

McEwan evokes an image from [Saul Bellow’s The Dean’s December](#), in which the male protagonist is lying in bed, listening to dogs barking all over the city. “He begins to hallucinate that what they’re shouting through the night is: ‘Open the universe a little wider!’ And I think that any time any of us read a novel that we like, the universe is a little wider. For that reason, men must open their universe just a crack wider by reading widely. It doesn’t make sense to confine it.”

Mary Ann Sieghart’s [The Authority Gap: Why Women Are Still Taken Less Seriously Than Men, and What We Can Do About It](#) is published by Black Swan.

## **Male authors on their favourite book by a woman**



Photograph: Murdo Macleod/The Guardian

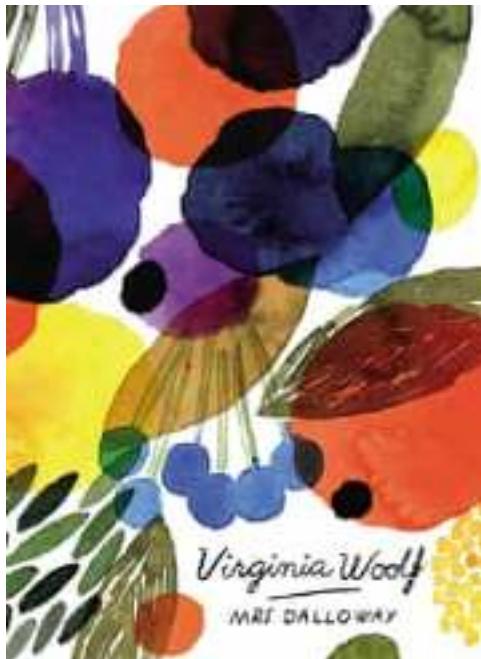
### **Howard Jacobson: Middlemarch by George Eliot**

Not every page of Middlemarch is a masterpiece of impassioned intelligence, where action is imbued with thought, and thought is shaped by feeling; but every other page is. No man or woman can be considered educated who hasn't read it at least twice.



## Ian McEwan: We Had to Remove This Post by Hanna Bervoets

I would leave aside the unassailable triumfeminate of Austen, Eliot and Woolf in favour of our contemporary literary culture. In Hanna Bervoets's novel, translated by Emma Rault, the setting alone is compelling and has always been in need of an accomplished novelist's attention: desktop workers enduring sweatshop conditions to remove vile, cruel and deluded posts from a social media site. To witness daily, in cascades, the very worst of human nature has its effects on a group of young friends. Alcohol keeps them barely functional as they begin to unravel. The dreamlike climax of the final pages is beautifully wrought. Men might usefully confront in Bervoets a writerly intelligence at once so tender and so willing to look into the abyss.



## Salman Rushdie: [Mrs Dalloway](#) by [Virginia Woolf](#)

I reread it this year and it remains astonishing: first, at the level of the sentence, because her sentences are very beautiful; and second, because of Woolf's ability to enter profoundly into the interior life and thoughts of her characters. Why should men read it? Because we have interior lives too.

## **Richard Curtis: [Olive Kitteridge](#) by [Elizabeth Strout](#)**

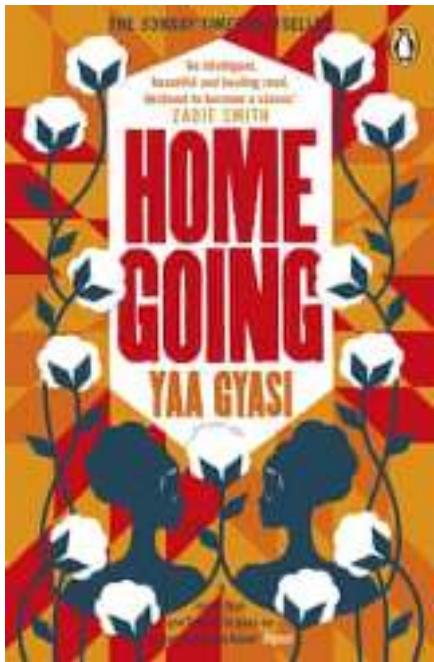
Strout is my absolute favourite, and Olive Kitteridge is *the* masterpiece. Its profound humanity; its deeply flawed but wonderful heroine; its remarkable structure, separate stories from one life that add up to a total picture; its perfect language page after page. It would be crazy to generalise about men's books and women's books – but I do feel my whole life has been hugely enriched and my sense of the world deepened by at last flying around in the other half of the sky.



Photograph: Roberto Ricciuti/Getty Images

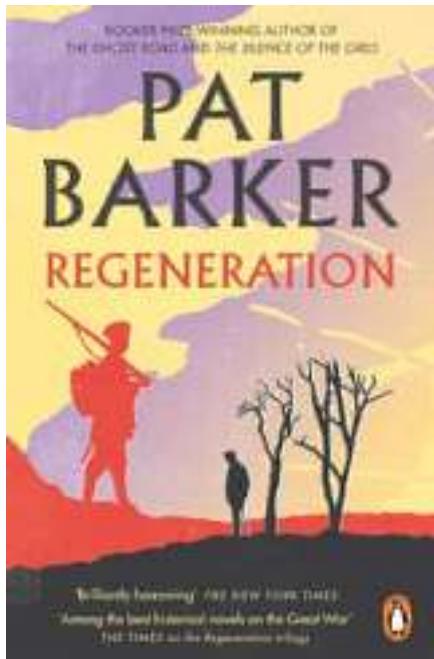
## **Stuart Turton: The God of Small Things by Arundhati Roy**

It's the only perfect book ever written. There isn't a wasted word, and every word is poetry. It's a magical piece of writing that has something to say about every important thing in our lives – funny, beautiful, moving and playful. Nobody else could have written this. It's my constant companion, and I'm so glad it exists.



## Michael Donkor: [Homegoing](#) by Yaa Gyasi

This novel boldly pushes the scope and possibilities of what historical fiction can do. Intimate yet expansive, it follows the legacies of slavery and colonialism across the generations of one Ghanaian family. One of the many extraordinary achievements of Gyasi's enviable debut is the writer's ability to make all the myriad descendants here – enslaved mothers, carpenters, academics – equally worthy of the reader's sustained engagement and compassion.



## Blake Morrison: Regeneration by Pat Barker

Resisting the claims of Jane Eyre and Middlemarch, I've chosen a novel that resonates in times of war, the first of Barker's 1914-18 trilogy set at Craiglockhart hospital and involving Siegfried Sassoon, Wilfred Owen and the psychiatrist WHR Rivers – all men, but this is a woman's fresh perspective on war and trauma.

## Andrew Marr: The seasonal quartet by Ali Smith

She is the lightest, wittiest and most provoking novelist writing about modern Britain. I read everything Ali Smith writes. Then there's Anne Enright who tells us about the condition of contemporary life better than anyone else. Claire Keegan's Small Things Like These was the other new novel I've enjoyed most this year – spare, sensuous and haunting. Women see parts of the world men often miss; I suppose all of these books move into corners, fears and experiences my favourite male writers avoid. But what matters is quality; and at the moment most of the highest quality writing is coming from female voices and female hands.



Photograph: Simone Padovani/Awakening/Getty Images

## Derek Owusu: [The Terrible](#) by Yrsa Daley-Ward

The prose is inventive and poetic, and the observations so startling and nuanced that you never doubt you're in the presence of something special. When it was first handed to me, I read it three times, one sitting after another, and have added to that number since.

## Simon Schama: [Anything by Daphne du Maurier](#)

Because men are so easily scared, claim they like to be, and since [Poe](#) no one has done terror on the page like Du Maurier, who ought to be recognised as an astonishingly great writer.

## Sanjeev Bhaskar: [To Kill a Mockingbird](#) by [Harper Lee](#)

One of the greatest books I've read. It opened my young eyes to the civil rights issues in the US while also providing the greatest male/father role model I'd ever read. Sure, I wanted to be Elvis or Bruce Lee but I never quite shook wanting to be [Atticus Finch](#).

## **Adam Thirlwell: Chéri by Colette**

It's a beautiful novel from 1920 about an older woman's relationship with a much younger man – and in its multiple inversions of gender and desire and power it should hopefully allow men to think more freely and acrobatically.



## **Rob Doyle: Oryx and Crake by Margaret Atwood**

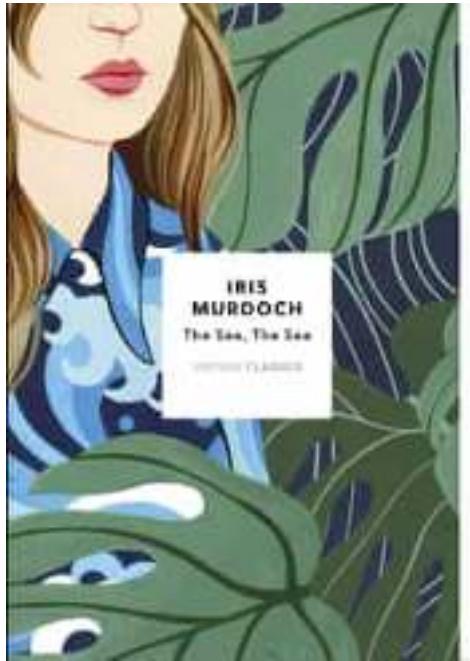
When I read her bleak and engrossing novel it had a similar effect on me as when I'd first read George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four: the appalled fascination of confronting a dark future, astounding in its detail, that seemed all too plausible.

## **Krishnan Guru-Murthy: The Goldfinch by Donna Tartt**

It's a book you become engrossed and invested in so quickly that you desperately want to know what happens but really don't want to get to the end.

## **Lee Child: The Last Widow by Karin Slaughter**

Real men read books by women. In my genre, try The Last Widow by Karin Slaughter – great story, great characters, pace, thrills and action ... just as fast, hard and tough as anything I write.



## **Justin Webb: The Sea, the Sea by Iris Murdoch**

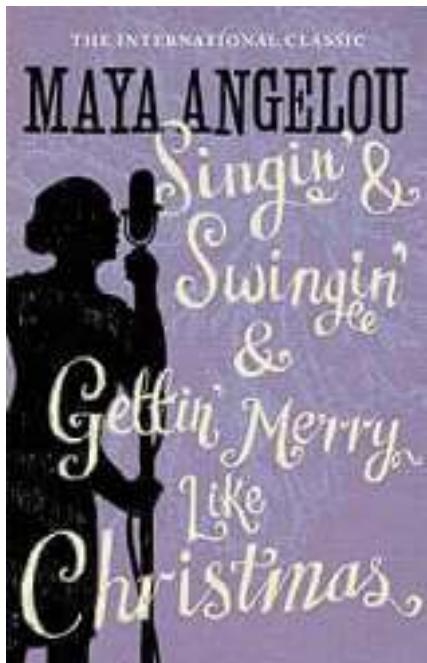
The book is an observation of the male ego and the damage it can do to those who possess it and those they interact with. It left me squirming as I read it – and an (almost) reformed character afterwards.

## **John Boyne: The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole, Aged 13½ by Sue Townsend**

Who could have guessed that the essential guide to becoming a man would be written by a woman? Not just a classic of comic fiction but a portrait of a true romantic, going through the problems that every boy endures and every man remembers.

## **Chris Power: My Phantoms by Gwendoline Riley**

Funny, clever, acid and so ruthless and sad: show me a better writer of any gender in the UK today than [Gwendoline Riley](#).



## Moses McKenzie: [Singin' Swingin' and Gettin' Merry Like Christmas](#) by [Maya Angelou](#)

In order to properly write, Maya Angelou would have a rented hotel room in whichever city she was living in. She would arrive in the early hours of the morning, lie on the bed and begin to read. Maybe the Psalms, maybe James Weldon Johnson, something, as she once said, to remember how beautiful and pliable the language is. My own Psalms and James Weldon Johnson is Singin' Swingin' and Gettin' Merry like Christmas It has inherited timelessness through a life lived for language and storytelling, and I am in love with it.

Join the conversation and tell us the books by women you think every man should read in the comments.

The winner of the Women's prize for fiction will be announced on 15 June. To read more about their campaign to encourage more men to read novels by women and to vote for your Essential Female Novel go to [womensprizeforfiction.co.uk/menreadingwomen](http://womensprizeforfiction.co.uk/menreadingwomen). Voting is open until 6

June.

To browse all the books by women that every man should read visit [guardianbookshop.com](http://guardianbookshop.com). Delivery charges may apply.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2022/may/28/books-by-women-that-every-man-should-read-chosen-by-ian-mcewan-salman-rushdie-richard-curtis-and-more>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

## 2022.05.28 - Opinion

- Rewilding, or just a greenwashed land grab? It all depends on who benefits
- Ambivalence about the Queen seems modern – but it's actually a Victorian feeling
- No drive, no spine, very little vision: even science can't explain the creatures clinging on to Johnson
- Andrew Fletcher: the pop-loving everyman who held Depeche Mode together

---

## [Opinion](#)[Rewilding](#)

# Rewilding, or just a greenwashed land grab? It all depends on who benefits

[Eleanor Salter](#)

Such schemes should be celebrated only when local people and democratic institutions lead the way



‘The average price of land in Scotland has jumped by 87% in the last year.’  
Photograph: Marcel Nicolai/Getty Images/EyeEm

Sat 28 May 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 28 May 2022 06.33 EDT

Few environmental ventures have captured the popular imagination quite like rewilding. For decades, campaigners have been clamouring for the restoration of natural ecosystems as an urgent response to climate breakdown, and as a good in itself. And now it counts more than just environmentalists among its advocates – big business and the wealthy are getting involved too.

Across the UK, hundreds of thousands of acres are being snapped up for the purpose of rewilding by businesses, billionaires and asset managers. Asos billionaire Anders Povlsen and his wife, Anne, are now [Scotland's largest landowners](#). In a manifesto of sorts, addressed to the people of Scotland, the couple wrote that their intention was to “restore our parts of the Highlands to their former magnificent natural state and repair the harm that man has inflicted on them”. The investment companies [Aviva](#) and [Standard Life](#) have also bought land to plant forests and restore peatland. The brewery and pub chain Brewdog is planting “the biggest ever forest” in Scotland; while pop star Ed Sheeran is “trying to rewild as much of the UK as [he] can”.

Whatever the virtues of these particular schemes, the practice of environmentally motivated private land purchases has attracted controversy, having been dubbed another form of “[greenwashing](#)”. In many cases, land is bought and trees are planted to “offset” the owner’s carbon emissions from elsewhere. It’s easy to see the appeal from the point of view of corporations and the wealthy. But what are the consequences for the rest of us?

The race for land to use for this kind of offsetting has been supercharged by a combination of government green subsidies such as environmental land management schemes, which pay farmers and landowners to rewild, and a global appetite for carbon markets. As the researchers Laurie Macfarlane and Miriam Brett [point out](#), land markets in the UK are lightly regulated, and tax breaks encourage investment in both land and property. This system fast-tracks sales of large areas of the UK with little scrutiny.

In the UK, Scotland is the most affected: the average [price](#) of land, according to research by the estate agent Strutt & Parker, jumped by 87% in the last year. Some estates have seen a 333% price increase since 2018. Many of the landowners are colloquially and pejoratively titled “green lairds”, echoing the Highland clearances of the 18th and 19th centuries. The new Somerset-based venture Real Wild Estates recently said its business model was “making nature pay, by delivering sustainable business returns” for investors.

Part of the issue lies in offsets themselves. Many activists [demand](#) the UK reaches negative, not net zero, emissions – which will require significant

domestic rewilding as well as huge financial flows to the global south. Offsets should be a last resort for residual emissions, reserved only to offset so-called hard to decarbonise sectors such as the steel industry. The current system provides impunity to corporations and the super-rich who can emit as much as they like so long as they plant enough trees later.

This race for land will only accelerate and exacerbate the existing [rural housing crisis](#), where prices soared in the pandemic as urban dwellers sought an escape to the country. This is compounded by the Airbnb effect – where homes are being snapped up for tourists to rent.

The land bought for offsetting is often framed as derelict – an empty wilderness devoid of community. Rarely does corporate rewilding consider the displacement of communities living and working on the land. It is also having impacts on agriculture: threatening [crofting](#) in Scotland, [farming](#) in Wales and perpetuating [struggles](#) to continue farming in England.

Rather than empower a generation of green lairds or eco-aristocrats, we should push for the democratisation of land ownership, using mechanisms such as community buyouts and restoring council or country farms, which are run and owned by local authorities and help new farmers get into the industry. Real land reform would root rewilding projects in people, securing good rural jobs in agro-ecology and conservation, producing sustainable food, livelihoods and a common connection to nature.

There are some models for this already. The famous [Langholm Moor](#) community buyout bought 5,300 acres of land to put back under communal ownership. Another inspiring initiative can be found on the [Isle of Ulva](#), which was brought back into community ownership in 2018. In 2015, the population had fallen to just five people. Now they're seeing the “repeopling” of the island, and conservation projects are under way to restore habitats and biodiversity. The benefits of climate, nature and community are far from zero sum.

Rewilding should not be about profit and offsets, remote and alien from rural communities. The value of a real, democratic rewilding is that it doesn't just

secure a home for beavers and sequestered carbon dioxide – but for people too.

- Eleanor Salter writes about climate, culture and politics
- 

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/may/28/rewilding-greenwash-land-schemes>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

## OpinionQueen's platinum jubilee

# Ambivalence about the Queen seems modern – but it's actually a Victorian feeling

[Ian Jack](#)



As we reach Elizabeth's platinum jubilee, my mind is drawn to another ageing monarch's pomp and ceremony



Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee procession in London, 22 June 1897.  
Photograph: Heritage Images/Getty Images

Sat 28 May 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 28 May 2022 08.30 EDT

When the machine begins to break down, nobody is spared: even in the most majestic corporeality, bones ache, muscles weaken, tendons hurt, joints creak. Walking, previously a thoughtless activity, now needs deliberation and strategy. Longer lives and longer reigns merely postpone the process. Aged 96, and with “episodic mobility issues”, the Queen this week [used a motor buggy](#) to get around the Chelsea flower show; her arthritic great-great-grandmother, Queen Victoria, aged 78 at the time of the diamond jubilee in 1897, toured her own garden party in a horse-drawn carriage, literally talking down to everyone she met. “Drove about my guests, to many of whom I spoke,” she wrote in her diary, “but I could not see many whom I wished to.”

An even bolder innovation had been planned for her. The diamond jubilee had at its heart a magnificent procession of 50,000 imperial troops, who marched or rode from Buckingham Palace by two separate routes converging at St Paul’s for a thanksgiving ceremony that praised the Lord and blessed the Queen. The procession was spectacular. Britain had seen nothing as dazzling in its grandeur and variety before, and never saw it to quite the same extent again. This was peak empire. Hussars from Canada,

Hong Kong policemen in conical hats, Indian lancers, Dyaks, Maoris, cavalrymen from New South Wales: it was said to be the largest military force ever assembled in London, and behind it in her carriage rode a little old woman, bowing and smiling and dressed modestly in grey and black. Mark Twain, there to write about it, thought that “she was the procession herself” and all the rest, spurs, men, rifles, gleaming helmets and trotting horses, “mere embroidery”.

There had been a problem, nonetheless. The Queen was too arthritic, too lame to climb the cathedral’s steps. The solution first proposed was to build a wooden ramp that would allow the carriage and its contents to be dragged up the slope and into the cathedral, and there parked centrally beneath the dome. But the Queen had vetoed the idea. Instead the service moved al fresco. The carriage remained at the foot of the steps and the Queen remained inside it, surrounded by the country’s political and clerical establishment, to hear prayers and the music provided by 500 choristers and two military bands.

“A never-to-be-forgotten day,” Victoria entered in her diary. “No one ever, I believe, has met with such an ovation as was given to me passing through those six miles of streets ... The crowds were quite indescribable, and their enthusiasm truly marvellous and deeply touching.” The Daily Mail thought the same. The sun had stood in heaven for many millions of years, the paper wrote, but never before had it “looked down ... upon the embodiment of so much energy and power” as that wonderful procession. Every line of the Mail’s jubilee issue was printed in gold ink and many of them celebrated what the Mail called the GREATNESS OF THE BRITISH RACE.

Some good work was done that today might usefully be repeated. The Princess of Wales (later Queen Alexandra) inaugurated a charity intended to provide a series of diamond jubilee feasts for London’s poor. Sir Thomas Lipton, the Glasgow grocery magnate, started the fund with a £25,000 donation, and by the end of the scheme about 400,000 people served by 10,000 waiters had consumed 700 tonnes of food, including lots of roast beef and lamb, veal and ham pie, pickles, dates, and oranges, all washed down with English ale or ginger beer.

Beneath the general mood, however, lay pockets of dissatisfaction and unease. (Like the Daily Mail and arthritis, the metropolitan elite is always with us.) The painter Edward Burne-Jones thought the dreadful boasting in the newspapers – “all this enthusiasm spent over one little unimportant old lady” – might prompt a chastising thunderbolt to fall on London. Hubris was easy to detect. Kipling’s poem *Recessional*, published a few weeks after the celebrations ended, gave the jubilee a doleful postscript: “Lo, all our pomp of yesterday / Is one with Nineveh and Tyre”. “Imperialism in the air,” Beatrice Webb noted, “all classes drunk with sightseeing and hysterical loyalty.” Her fellow socialist Keir Hardie saw the celebrations as no more than superficial theatrics. The cheering millions would cheer just as lustily for the president of a British republic; the soldiers were there because they were paid to be there, and probably found their duties irksome. “Royalty to be a success should be kept off the streets,” Hardie decided. “So long as the fraud can be kept a mystery, carefully shrouded from popular gaze, it may go on.”

Hardie’s view was a blunter version of Walter Bagehot’s dictum about the dangers of letting daylight fall on the “magic” of monarchy – a worry that grew the more powerful newspapers became and the more the monarchy depended on them for favourable publicity. A subtler witness to public attitudes – and, perhaps, a better guide to the monarchy’s future – was the London schoolteacher Molly Hughes, whose two ostentatiously radical friends (what was Victoria to them but a mere mortal?) went to the trouble and expense of hiring rooms in Cheapside from which to watch the parade. Hughes was astonished by their inconsistency, and to discover that “at heart they were as conservative as anyone and almost fanatically loyal to the queen, whose joys and griefs they had always seemed to share”.

That kind of ambiguity has sustained the monarchy during my lifetime, and I’m as prone to it as most people I know. This week I went to Fortnum and Mason in Piccadilly to look at their souvenirs for the platinum jubilee, which are very prettily got up and astonishingly expensive: £100 for a pudding plate, £12.95 for a tea towel, £200 for a 1.2kg box of chocolates. They bore no relation to the trinkets that came home to Scotland from the coronation in 1953, brought by an older cousin who had travelled south to see it: a little gold coach pulled by horses, and two or three toy soldiers wearing busbies or breastplates, sadly out of scale to the coach. That summer, variations of

this combination must have fought battles across innumerable living room floors.

At the village school we were given tiny volumes of the New Testament and snake-clasp belts in red, white and blue. On the day itself, 2 June, games were organised on the football field of the local army barracks. I was no good at games, and a photograph of the event catches me looking away from my schoolmates towards something out of the frame. My buck teeth are prominent, and I have never looked at this picture without a stab of retrospective pity. “Buck teeth, buck teeth” was the taunt that followed me for several years, until they were fixed.

Last week one of those teeth snapped off: a minor symptom of the machine breaking down. In the dentist’s chair, having my root canal prepared for a replacement, I thought: “I had that tooth longer than the Queen has been on the throne.” A bizarre calculation. The fact I made it is evidence of her mysterious, inconstruable, possibly regrettable but certainly indisputable role in the way British people imagine themselves. It shouldn’t be underestimated. Victoria lay dying four years after her diamond jubilee, and in Lytton Strachey’s words “it appeared as if some monstrous reversal of the course of nature was about to take place. The vast majority of her subjects had never known a time when Queen Victoria had not been reigning over them.”

When the present Queen’s turn comes, be prepared.

- Ian Jack is a Guardian columnist
- *Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a letter of up to 300 words to be considered for publication, email it to us at [guardian.letters@theguardian.com](mailto:guardian.letters@theguardian.com)*

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

**OpinionPolitics**

# No drive, no spine, very little vision: even science can't explain the creatures clinging on to Johnson

[Marina Hyde](#)



It takes a very weird bunch to stay loyal after the damning Sue Gray verdict on Partygate. They are that bunch



Boris Johnson and Rishi Sunak in the cabinet room at No 10 on Johnson's birthday, 19 June 2020. Photograph: Getty Images

Fri 27 May 2022 10.03 EDT Last modified on Fri 27 May 2022 15.47 EDT

For followers of British politics, this week was probably best understood in terms of quantum physics. For the past six months, the prime minister and his cabinet explained that they couldn't comment on the Partygate scandal because they were waiting for the [Sue Gray report](#). Then, the very day that report was published, they explained it was in the past now and it was time to move on.

I know what you're thinking: then WHEN?! When was the permitted moment to get some actual accountability?! Well, scientists estimate there were four picoseconds of liminal time on Wednesday when [lawbreaking by lawmakers](#) was an appropriate subject on which to challenge said lawmakers. It was hoped some challengers would be able to enter this witching moment without getting drawn into a black hole, and somehow extend the moment to try to work out what the hell the answers were.

A version of this device was used on an episode of Stargate once, so would probably only need minor adjustment for Westminster. But in fact, the window of opportunity – the window of “taking responsibility” – closed

before it had even opened. Or to put it another way: if you've been sitting in your metaphorical cop car staking out Downing Street for six months, you now have jack shit to show for it bar severe doughnut-induced arterial hardening. And I should probably tell you that while you were waiting, like a coiled Krispy Kreme, the government juked its obesity strategy, so ... thoughts and prayers. Oh, and while you were reading this, the prime minister changed the ministerial code so ministers accused of breaking it – eg him – don't have to resign. Shitfinger strikes again! Seriously, everything he touches ...

There has been an increase in the number of Tory MPs who'll say publicly that a prime minister breaking his own laws at a time of widespread national distress is a bit of a dealbreaker. But a fascinating number still cling to Johnson. They're not parasites, biologically speaking. They lack the drive of a flatworm, much less the root-for-me resourcefulness of the sort of alien you might expect to see protruding from a prime ministerial chest cavity. No, think of them more as a huge barnacle community living on the underside of a whale. Unfortunately, the rest of us only get this clear a view of who's on board when the whale has done something perhaps fatally unfortunate, like swim up the Thames, or explain why its lady petrol-fuelled leaving speech was more important than your mother's lonely death.

Anyway. The things Boris Johnson says to the 1922 Committee are far more revealing than the things he tells the silly old public, and on Wednesday he explained to backbenchers that Britain wouldn't have won the second world war if Churchill hadn't been pissed. This comparison simply makes me picture Churchill giving Johnson a hugely disdainful look up and down, and saying: "Well, sir, you are useless at your job. But I shall be sober in the morning." You see, Johnson has made the classic mistake of comparing himself to people who are dazzlingly competent. Very, very bold to bring Britain's greatest wartime leader into it. Other figures to avoid would be the likes of iconic Manchester United midfielder Roy Keane, who also managed to pull off a glittering career while getting regularly wasted.

The Downing Street pandemic officials, in contrast, oversaw a catastrophically mismanaged response to Covid that resulted in thousands of people – probably tens of thousands – dying unnecessarily. The sole stellar bright spot – the vaccines taskforce – was worked on remotely by others.

Quite why we're expected to see the emotional-support booze suitcase as essential to this lot's process has never been explained. At some point we might just have to consider a mad counterfactual to rank alongside questions such as, "What if Keane's Blackburn deal had gone through and he'd never signed for United?" and "What if Hitler had won the war?" Namely: what if Downing Street pandemic staff HADN'T been pissed half the time? I don't want to return too much to sci-fi quantum physics, but I think we'd all love a wormhole to transport us to that sunlit bit of the multiverse and away from this version.

The sole upside to the Partygate disgrace was that the need to distract from it seems to have finally forced the chancellor's hand on the cost of living crisis. And so to unhappy boyband member Rishi Sunak, who really wants to give audiences his bad-boy, tax-cutting Conservatism, but keeps getting pushed into crowd-pleasing, cheesy harmonies and U-turns during the second chorus. You know the kind of fare: new household support measures, windfall taxes.

Still, if the past six months have taught us anything about the type of artist we're dealing with, it's that Rishi Sunak is too wet to do a Robbie and quit. Reports that Sunak spent £500,000 of Treasury cash on vanity-adjacent polling and focus groups feel closer to the mark. Maybe one of the hard truths the focus groups have told him is that the previously popular Rishi Sunak franchise was all about giving people money: via furlough, or in the form of half-price burgers and whatnot during eat out to help out. Nobody knew who he was before all that. Unfortunately, they now know he's a guy who couldn't even get his own wife to pay him tax, so he needs to double down harder than ever on being Mr UnConservative. *No one* wants to hear his new stuff.

As for how long they'll be able to stand the prime minister's old tunes, that remains a question with variable answers. Free to those who can afford it, very expensive to those who can't.

- Marina Hyde is a Guardian columnist
-

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/may/27/boris-johnson-sue-gray-partygate>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

**Depeche Mode**

## **Andrew Fletcher: the pop-loving everyman who held Depeche Mode together**

[Dorian Lynskey](#)



As well as a keyboard player, Fletch was a facilitator – and someone whose cheerleading demeanour helped fans feel closer to the band they loved

[Depeche Mode's Andrew Fletcher dies aged 60](#)



Amiable and egoless ... Andrew Fletcher of Depeche Mode performing in France in 2018. Photograph: Balázs Mohai/EPA

Fri 27 May 2022 11.54 EDT Last modified on Fri 27 May 2022 11.55 EDT

Andy Fletcher was the last person to tell you why he was vital to [Depeche Mode](#). In 101, the classic 1989 tour documentary directed by DA Pennebaker and Chris Hegedus, he said: “Martin’s the songwriter, Alan’s the good musician, Dave’s the vocalist, and I bum around.” He knew there was much more to it than that, but the man they all called Fletch felt no need to shout about it.

Depeche Mode are one of the most popular and influential British bands of all time but nothing about them makes sense in conventional terms. It should not be possible to lose your chief songwriter (Vince Clarke) after just one album and then get bigger and better. There was no precedent for a synth-pop group evolving into a stadium rock band without actually playing rock music. It is unusual, if not unique, for one person to write the songs (Martin Gore) and another to sing them (Dave Gahan) with such conviction that it is hard to believe they are not autobiographical. They have sold more than 100m albums and had dozens of hit singles while retaining the outsider allure of a cult band – arguably the world’s largest, with no fewer than three documentaries made about their fandom. And all this from Basildon.



‘The glue that held them together’ ... Andrew Fletcher (right) with Martin Gore and Dave Gahan in 2012. Photograph: Benoît Tessier/Reuters

Fletch’s role in Depeche Mode was yet another thing that didn’t follow the rules. He was there from the very beginning, playing bass with Clarke in a punk band called No Romance in China, then co-founding the electronic trio Composition of Sound before Gahan joined and renamed them Depeche Mode. But over the years, fans often wondered what exactly he did. As the truest believer in electronic pop, he was an important sounding board in the studio but he didn’t sing or write songs. He played synthesizers, but not with the virtuosity of his former bandmate Alan Wilder, who quit in 1995. Only once did he admit that doubts about his contribution bothered him. “Because I don’t push myself to the fore, many mistake me for the fifth wheel,” [he said in 2013](#). “Sometimes it’s frustrating not to be taken seriously. After all, you could also say my job is the most important – without me there would be no band any more.”

Fletch’s importance could be hard to grasp because he took on roles that are usually occupied by people outside a band. For a while he was their quasi-manager, handling the business side of what effectively became a small corporation. At various points he owned a restaurant, invested in property and ran his own label, Toast Hawaii. At the same time, he seemed like the childhood friend that pop stars take with them to make sure their feet stay as

close to the ground as possible. A natural extrovert, he became the band's spokesperson and ambassador, with a nice sideline in DJing. (I saw him at a club once: he played a lot of Depeche Mode.) Within the band, he was the diplomat – the glue that held them together.

'We had something': how Depeche Mode's Andrew Fletcher saw the music, the fans and the band – video

Anyone who studies pop music knows that bands are mysterious and delicate entities. Some (well, one: the Rolling Stones) have endured for 60 years and others have flamed out after two. It's hard enough to hold together under pressure when you're a mid-level indie band, let alone global superstars. What's required is the right balance of personalities. Fletch was Gore's best friend (born 15 days apart, they had a joint 50th-birthday party) but he was so amiable and egoless that he could serve as a sturdy bridge to Gahan when things got dicey. A pop star on paper, he came across in the flesh as a profoundly ordinary bloke who liked beer, chess, Chelsea and very dry humour. I've never met anyone in a big band who was so utterly unaffected by fame – but then, he would say with relief, he wasn't actually famous.

That's not to say Fletch was solid as a rock – he used to drink too much on stage and suffered a breakdown during the making of 1993's Songs of Faith and Devotion – but in a band that once took a psychiatrist and a drug dealer on the road he was still the level-headed one. There was never any danger of him trying to steal the spotlight or throwing his weight around. He was a facilitator, and proud of it. Once asked if he had a motto for life, [he replied](#): “Sure and steadfast.”

Fletch was also a great cheerleader for his own band. Fans loved him because he felt like one of us: a man who expressed his joyful enthusiasm for Depeche Mode from the stage rather than the crowd, jigging around behind his keyboard as if he couldn't believe his luck. It felt as though, if you, too, had experienced the good fortune to grow up with one of the best songwriters of your generation, then that could be you up there. “We had an absolute dream career,” he said in 2017, adding with characteristic understatement: “At least if you take out those years that were a bit messy.”

In 1996, during those “messy” years, Gahan clinically died for two minutes after a drug overdose. Fletch never seemed as if he would be the first member to go. It’s hard to tell what Depeche Mode will do now. Gore and Gahan could continue to record and tour and your ears wouldn’t notice the difference. But Gore has lost his best friend and they have both lost someone who was a constant, steady presence in the band for 40 years. Only they really know how essential Fletch was and how much he will be missed.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2022/may/27/andrew-fletcher-the-pop-loving-everyman-who-held-depeche-mode-together>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

## 2022.05.28 - Around the world

- [Pacific islands Samoa signs China bilateral agreement during regional push by Beijing](#)
- [Indonesia 26 people missing after ferry sinks](#)
- [US Republican primaries offer look into future of Trumpism without Trump](#)
- [Columbia Has the left's time come at last as ex-rebel closes in on presidency?](#)
- [France Ailing orca stuck in River Seine to be lured to sea using drone with loudspeakers](#)

## [Pacific islands](#)

# **Samoa signs China bilateral agreement during Pacific push by Beijing**

Scant details released apart from promises of infrastructure support, amid western concerns that China is seeking to expand its security presence in region



Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi (right) and Samoan prime minister Fiame Naomi Mata'afa attend an agreement signing ceremony between the two countries in Apia. Photograph: Vaitogi Asuisui Matafeo/Samoa Observer/AFP/Getty Images

*Helen Davidson and agencies  
@heldavidson*

Sat 28 May 2022 03.55 EDTFirst published on Sat 28 May 2022 01.30 EDT

Samoa signed a bilateral agreement with China on Saturday, promising “greater collaboration”, as Beijing’s foreign minister continues a tour of the Pacific that has sparked [concern among western allies](#).

The deal's details are unclear, and come midway through a Chinese delegation's eight-nation trip – but an earlier [leaked draft agreement](#) sent to several Pacific countries outlined plans to expand security and economic engagement.

The mission has prompted western leaders to urge regional counterparts to spurn any Chinese attempt to [extend its security reach across the region](#).

The Samoan government confirmed in a press release on Saturday that the Chinese foreign minister, Wang Yi, and the Samoan prime minister, Fiame Naomi Mata'afa, had met and discussed "climate change, the pandemic and peace and security".

Local media were invited to witness the signing of a deal, but no questions were taken. Previously, journalists seeking to cover the Solomon Islands leg of Wang's tour for international outlets said they were [blocked from attending press events](#), while those journalists allowed access were extremely limited in their ability to ask questions.

The Samoan release said [China](#) would continue to provide infrastructural development support to various Samoan sectors and there would be a new framework for future projects "to be determined and mutually agreed".

"Samoa and the People's Republic of China will continue to pursue greater collaboration that will deliver on joint interests and commitments," the release said.

While not addressing the Samoa-China agreement specifically, the newly elected Australian prime minister, Anthony Albanese, said on Saturday the previous federal government had "dropped the ball" in its dealings with Pacific nations.

"The truth is, the former government had a submission from [the department of] foreign affairs and trade, backed by the former foreign minister at the time Marise Payne, for increased aid in the Pacific, and they ignored," he said.

“We’ll be proactive in the region and we want to engage. Australia has been the partner of choice for a long period of time in the Pacific and we continue to do that.”

The Chinese delegation has already visited Solomon Islands and Kiribati this week. The delegation arrived in Samoa on Friday night and was to depart for Fiji on Saturday afternoon, with other stops expected to be Tonga, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea and East Timor.

In a duel for influence, Australia’s new foreign minister, Penny Wong, was in Fiji on Friday, seeking to woo island states after Solomon Islands took Canberra by surprise last month by signing a wide-ranging security pact with China. The draft agreement and a five-year plan circulated to several Pacific nations would give China a larger security footprint in a region seen as crucial to the interests of the US and its allies.

“We have expressed our concerns publicly about the security agreement,” Wong told reporters in the capital of Suva.

“As do other Pacific islands, [we think there are consequences](#). We think that it’s important that the security of the region be determined by the region. And historically, that has been the case. And we think that is a good thing.”

The prime minister of Fiji praised Wong after the meeting, while also taking a swipe at Australia’s former prime minister Scott Morrison.

Frank Bainimarama said on Saturday he had a “wonderful meeting” with Wong after she travelled to the country in her first solo overseas visit since being sworn in.

“Fiji is not anyone’s backyard – we are a part of a Pacific family,” Bainimarama later wrote on Twitter.

“And our greatest concern isn’t geopolitics – it’s climate change.”

He said the meeting would strengthen Fiji and Australia’s Vuvale Partnership, using a Fijian word meaning “friendship”.

The post included a photo of Bainimarama and Wong smiling and shaking hands.

Bainimarama appeared to be taking a thinly veiled swipe at former prime minister Morrison, who in 2019 referred to the Pacific as Australia's "backyard".

At the first stop in Honiara on Thursday, China's Wang lashed out at "smears and attacks" against the security pact already signed with Solomon Islands.

In a stark letter to fellow Pacific leaders, the Federated States of Micronesia president, David Panuelo, warned the agreement seemed "attractive" at first glance but would allow China to "acquire access and control of our region".

On Friday, Wang met Kiribati's president, Taneti Maamau, for discussions on fisheries, education and health, during the four-hour stop. Kiribati was focused on trade and tourism opportunities with China, and wasn't keen on a security arrangement, according to a Kiribati official, who was not authorised to speak to media.

The official said a controversial plan to reopen a protected marine zone for fishing, and to upgrade an airstrip on Canton island, were not among agreements due to be signed.

Chinese state media lauded the Kiribati trip as a significant milestone in the bilateral relationship, which only formally resumed in September 2019 after Kiribati switched recognition from Taiwan to Beijing. According to China Daily, Wang said China was "not only the friend of Kiribati, but also the most reliable friend of all the developing countries".

It said both sides had agreed to increase cooperation on Covid-19, and that a Chinese medical team had arrived with the delegation to assist with the pandemic response and provide health services to Kiribati people. The state-backed outlet also said the two sides had agreed to expand Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) development and to "give full play to Kiribati's advantages in resources" and create new maritime cooperations "on the premise of ecological protection".

The readout did not mention security measures but railed against the US for “hindering China’s development”.

*With Agence France-Presse and Reuters*

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/28/samoa-signs-china-bilateral-agreement-during-pacific-push-by-beijing>.

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

## [Indonesia](#)

# 26 people missing after ferry sinks in Indonesia

Ferry was carrying 43 people when it capsized after running out of fuel in bad weather in the Makassar Strait



Makassar Strait in Indonesia where the ferry capsized. Photograph: Claudine Klodien/Alamy

*Agence France-Presse in Jakarta*

Sat 28 May 2022 06.06 EDTFirst published on Sat 28 May 2022 05.42 EDT

Twenty-six people are missing after a ferry ran out of fuel and sank in bad weather off the coast of [Indonesia](#), officials have said.

The country's search and rescue agency said the vessel was carrying 43 people when it capsized on Thursday in the Makassar Strait, the sea separating the islands of Sulawesi and Borneo.

News of the incident only reached officials on Saturday, said the local head of search and rescue, Djunaidi – who like many Indonesians goes by only one name.

“Seventeen people have been rescued alive by two tugboats that were passing by. We have deployed a rescue team to search for the missing others,” he said.

A group of 40 rescuers were at sea searching for survivors, Djunaidi added.

Marine accidents are common in Indonesia, a south-east Asian archipelago of about 17,000 islands where safety standards are often lax.

Last week, a ferry carrying more than 800 people ran aground in shallow waters off East Nusa Tenggara province and remained stuck for two days before being dislodged. No one was hurt.

In 2018, more than 150 people drowned when a [ferry sank in one of the world's deepest lakes on Sumatra island](#).

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/28/indonesia-ferry-sinks-makassar-strait>

**Donald Trump**

## **Republican primaries offer look into future of Trumpism without Trump**

The ex-president suffered some humiliation when his candidates lost in the Georgia primaries – but the hard-right strain of Republican politics will survive



Donald Trump speaks in Austin, Texas, on 14 May. Photograph: Brandon Bell/Getty Images



[David Smith](#) in Washington

[@smithinamerica](#)

Sat 28 May 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 28 May 2022 02.12 EDT

In his campaign heyday, [Donald Trump](#) would declare it the greatest movement in the history of politics and promise: “We’re going to win so much, you’re going to be so sick and tired of winning.”

What never occurred to him was that the “Make America Great Again” movement – or Maga – might get sick and tired of him first.

The former US president suffered some humiliation on Tuesday when four candidates he handpicked in Georgia [lost Republican primary elections](#) in a landslide. It was a stinging rebuke in what has become ground zero for his “big lie” that the 2020 election was stolen.

But it was no rebuke of Maga and all it stands for.

The hard-right, nativist-populist strain of Republican politics predates Trump and will surely survive him. This year’s primary season winners in Georgia and elsewhere have been careful [not to disavow the movement](#), or its patriarch, even when they lack his blessing.

“Donald Trump has transformed the Republican party over the past five years and it is now a solid majority Trumpist party with everything that entails in policy and in tone,” said [Bill Galston](#), a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution thinktank in Washington. “On the other hand, Republicans, including very conservative ones, are clearly willing to entertain the possibility of Trumpism without Trump.”

Trump is now 75 and could be living a quiet, golf-playing retirement like other past presidents. But against the counsel of some of his inner circle, he chose to make this year’s midterm elections about him and the primaries – votes in states and districts to decide which Republicans will take on Democrats in November – [a referendum](#) on his continued influence.

Trump endorsed candidates in nearly 200 races, from governor to county commissioner, often in contests that are not particularly competitive and help bolster his list of wins. But others have been reckless, vengeful bets aimed at dislodging incumbents who defied his claims of election fraud. So far, the results have been a mixed bag.

The month began well enough in Ohio, where venture capitalist and author JD Vance [leaped from third to first place](#) following Trump’s late-stage endorsement in the Senate primary.



JD Vance greets Donald Trump at a rally in Delaware, Ohio, in April. Photograph: Joe Maiorana/AP

In North Carolina, Trump helped the 26-year-old former college football player [Bo Hines](#) win the nomination for a seat in the House of Representatives. In Pennsylvania, voters chose his preferred candidate for governor, Doug Mastriano, who said he would not have certified Joe Biden's 2020 win of the state.

But other governor races, which often turn on specific local issues, have proved more elusive. Trump's pick in Nebraska's primary, Charles Herbster, lost after allegations surfaced that he had groped women. In Idaho a week later, Governor Brad Little comfortably beat a Trump-backed challenger.

In North Carolina, meanwhile, voters rejected Trump's plea to give a scandal-plagued congressman Madison Cawthorn a second chance. And in Pennsylvania, a Senate primary featuring Trump-endorsed TV doctor Mehmet Oz remains too close to call.

This week Trump again notched some wins including Sarah Sanders, his former White House press secretary, in the primary for governor of Arkansas. But it was [all overshadowed by Georgia](#), where he has pushed his personal vendetta hardest and so squandered political capital.

It was not just that former senator David Perdue, whom Trump had lobbied to run, lost to Governor Brian Kemp, who had refused to overturn the results of the 2020 election in his state. It was also the crushing margin: Kemp beat Perdue by a staggering 52 percentage points.

Republicans, including very conservative ones, are clearly willing to entertain the possibility of Trumpism without Trump

*Bill Galston*

Rubbing salt into the wound, Georgia's secretary of state Brad Raffensperger, who defied Trump's call to "find" the votes to change the outcome two years ago, [also won his party's nomination](#). Attorney general

Chris Carr and insurance commissioner John King, both opposed by Trump, prevailed in their primaries too.

Galston, a former policy adviser to President Bill Clinton, commented: “The results in Georgia were really stunning. Few, if any [Republicans](#), have aroused Donald Trump’s ire so much as Governor Kemp and Brad Raffensperger and they both did substantially better than expected. Donald Trump went all out in Georgia and he ended up an egg on this face, which is significant.

“It may be that the people who have been in the bull’s eye of Trump’s ‘big lie’ campaign have started resenting it and took their resentment out. More generally, I think an increasing number of people are asking themselves a question that they weren’t asking previously: would we be better off with a Trumpist candidate who’s not named Donald Trump?”

Among those asking the question is Chris Christie, the former governor of New Jersey, who campaigned for Kemp in Georgia and [told the Politico website](#): “Trump picked this fight.” Senators Ted Cruz and Rand Paul have also felt at liberty to campaign for midterm candidates denied Trump’s imprimatur.

Then there is Mike Pence, the former vice-president, who defied his old boss by [rallying with Kemp](#) on Monday and telling the crowd: “Elections are about the future.” Pence, himself a former governor of Indiana, has made a habit of speaking with pride about the accomplishments of the Trump-Pence administration while distancing himself from the “big lie”.

Should he [run for president in 2024](#), he may pay close attention to how Little, Kemp and others have studiously avoided criticising Trump while capturing swaths of his base by shifting right on abortion, gun rights and “culture wars” issues and signing legislation to prove it. Ron DeSantis, the governor of Florida, is another likely student of the formula.

That means there is still little room for more old school Republicans such as Senator Mitt Romney and his running mate, Paul Ryan, who lost the presidential election in 2012. Few are making an impact in the primaries. “A Republican who wants to pretend that 2016 through 2020 never happened

and go back to the Romney-Ryan era is not going to do well in today's Republican party," said [Henry Olsen](#), a senior fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center thinktank in Washington.

But Trump does face a further challenge to his authority from the far right.

Some on this wing effectively accuse him of not being Trumpy enough, as demonstrated last year when he was booed for urging supporters to get vaccinated against the coronavirus (he now barely mentions vaccines in his speeches).

[Kathy Barnette](#), a Senate candidate who mounted a late surge in Pennsylvania with ideas even more extreme than Oz, told the Reuters news agency: "Maga doesn't belong to him. Trump coined the word. He does not own it."

[Kandiss Taylor](#), a similarly far-right candidate for governor of Georgia, backs Trump's false claims of voter fraud but is unsure whether she would vote for him again in 2024. She said in an interview with the Guardian: "It's not about him. The people of America chose him and he's the one that we elected. Will I vote for him in 2024? It all depends on what happens between now and then and who runs against him."

A further sign of fracturing came this week when Cawthorn, smarting from his defeat in North Carolina, swore revenge on "cowardly and weak" members of [his own party and declared](#): "It's time for the rise of the new right, it's time for Dark Maga to truly take command."

The anti-democratic implication was that the end justifies the means in an existential struggle for America. Cawthorn named allies including the Georgia congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene, rightwing activist Charlie Kirk, Fox News host Tucker Carlson and Trump himself, suggesting that the former president has already [turned to the dark side](#).



Donald Trump dances as he leaves the stage during a rally for GOP candidates in Commerce, Georgia, in March. Photograph: Hyosub Shin/AP

[Joe Walsh](#), a former Republican congressman who belonged to the rightwing Tea Party movement, said: “Maga’s dark enough on its own ... Trumpism has metastasised beyond Trump and it’ll go in a bunch of different dark, eerie places but it’s all the same thing. Trumpism now is the dominant strain in the party.”

Maga’s identity crisis comes as Biden and other Democratic leaders seek to brand their opponents as “Ultra-Maga Republicans” in the hope that labelling the entire party as extremist will be more effective in the midterms than a singular focus on Trump (though he and his supporters have embraced “Ultra-Maga” [in merchandise](#) and fundraising emails).

Yet while Trump’s status as a kingmaker has been diminished, and his “Stop the steal” obsession is wearing thin, [it would be unwise](#) to extrapolate too much from primaries where it was always going to be hard to oust popular, well-funded incumbents.

Trump continues to raise vast sums of money and command loyalty from most Republicans in Congress as well as from the Republican National Committee. Polls suggest that he is more popular with the Republican base

now than when he won the nomination for president in 2016. His “America first” mantra is now in the party’s DNA; even the candidates he does not endorse typically do endorse him.

Walsh, who [challenged Trump in the 2020 presidential primary](#) and now hosts a podcast, added: “Nothing has changed. This is Trump’s party and everything that’s happened this primary season just continues to reflect that ... Wake me up when an anti-Trump Republican wins a primary. That would be news.”

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/may/28/trump-georgia-primaries-republican-party>.

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[The ObserverColombia](#)

## Has Colombian left's time come at last as ex-rebel closes in on presidency?

After a century of rightwing rule and decades of civil war, Gustavo Petro goes into Sunday's election as the frontrunner



Gustavo Petro during a presidential debate in Bogotá. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

[\*Joe Parkin Daniels\* in Bogotá](#)

[@joeparkdan](#)

Sat 28 May 2022 05.30 EDT Last modified on Sat 28 May 2022 13.54 EDT

He began his political career in the ranks of a Colombian guerrilla army, has survived assassination attempts and served as senator and mayor of Bogotá. When he appears before throngs of adoring supporters in squares across the country, he does so flanked by bodyguards with bulletproof shields.

And after Sunday's election, Gustavo Petro, 62, could become the first ever leftwing president of Colombia, a country ruled since independence by conservative elites and plagued for decades by political violence.

"If we want to open an era of peace in Colombia, we need to bring down the regime of corruption," Petro said from a bulletproof podium at the closing rally of his campaign in Bogotá. "I'm certain that on Sunday we will change Colombia's history."

Petro and his running mate, Francia Márquez, – who is already making [history as the first black female vice-presidential candidate](#) – are the frontrunners of a fistful of candidates running in the elections on Sunday.

"The right has always governed this country and it's always done so with corruption and violence," said Arturo Romero, at the rally in Bogotá's historic Plaza Bolívar. Around him, people drank beer and waved flags of the M-19, the onetime rebel group to which Petro belonged. Onstage, a salsa band played.

"We need something new," the 58-year-old said. "This country will be broken if we don't change."

Petro has long rattled political elites with his progressive policy proposals and sharp tongue. He was the runner-up in the 2018 election, when he was [defeated by the conservative Iván Duque](#), but quickly emerged the frontrunner in this campaign.

His main rival this time is Federico Gutiérrez, the former mayor of Medellín, who is widely seen as representing the rightwing status quo, although a third candidate, the populist Rodolfo Hernández, has recently surged in the polls. If no candidate wins with more than half of the vote, a runoff will be held in June.

If Petro does win, it would mark another victory for Latin America's left, which has recently come to power in Chile, Honduras, and Peru.

The immediate backdrop of the vote is [an unprecedeted wave of protest that shook Colombia last year](#), and for many of those who participated in that wave of dissent, the election is a continuation of the same struggle.

The protests – which were [met with widespread police brutality](#) – began over an unpopular tax reform but quickly morphed into a howl of outrage against inequality, and politicized a generation of young voters.

Gareth Sella, a 25-year-old videographer and director, is one of them. He lost the sight in his left eye after being struck by a police rubber bullet during a demonstration, and sees a clear line between that wave of unrest and the presidential vote.

“In Colombia what they call democracy is actually having all the power concentrated on one side,” said Sella, at a cafe in Bogotá, wearing sunglasses to cover his scarred eye. “We have to make a stand because it’s been 200 years of the same and we can’t go backwards now.”

Sella was fed up with Colombia’s entrenched poverty, which has been [horribly exacerbated by the pandemic](#), and said that until now, he had felt excluded from politics.

“Something is not right in this country, and we could all see it,” Sella said. “People are going hungry in their homes.”



A mural depicting Gustavo Petro and vice-presidential candidate Francia Márquez, in Ciudad Bolívar, Bogotá. Photograph: Yuri Cortéz/AFP/Getty Images

For most of the 20th century, political power in Colombia involved power-sharing deals – sometimes explicit – between rightwing and centre-right parties. Meanwhile leftwing parties were tarnished by association with the many rebel groups fighting against the Colombian state. Decades of [vicious civil war between guerrillas, state forces and their paramilitary allies](#) killed more than 260,000 people and displaced 7 million.

When the country's main guerrilla army – the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Farc) – laid down its weapons after a 2016 peace deal, many hoped that the deal would finally open up a space for non-violent progressive activists.

But the peace process remains fragile. The government has been accused of failing to make good on promises to demobilised fighters, and violence continues to dog the countryside, where dissident factions who ignored the peace deal continue to battle with drug militias and the army. Seventy-nine local activists and social leaders have been murdered this year alone.

Petro is an outspoken supporter of the peace deal, while Gutiérrez is thought to be a skeptic.

“Petro is the only candidate who can bring Colombia the peace it desperately needs,” said Ana Milena Andrade, 40, at the campaign rally in Bogotá. “We’re tired of the corruption, the massacres, the dead social leaders.”

Petro was last month forced to suspend part of his campaign amid reports of an assassination plot. And the threat of violence has loomed large in a country where four presidential candidates have been killed since the 1980s.

One of those was Carlos Pizarro, a leader of the M-19 rebel group Petro once belonged to. Pizarro led the group through a peace process from militant insurgency to legal politics in 1990 but was shot dead on a commercial flight, amid a frenzy of violence against leftist activists and former rebels which claimed thousands of lives.

Pizarro’s daughter, María José Pizarro, a senator-elect from Petro’s coalition, said that political violence remains endemic in Colombia, making Petro’s polling success even more striking.

“There has long been persecution and extermination of the left in our country, and it’s resurged during the last decade,” said Pizarro. “It’s always been difficult for us in Colombia, compared with the left elsewhere in Latin America.”

And though Petro may boast diehard support from swaths of the country, he is hardly without critics. His tenure as mayor of Bogotá was pockmarked with scandal, and he was [briefly removed from office](#) over a procurement scandal his allies say was politically motivated. His high-handed style has also alienated others, and he is no stranger to gaffes and incendiary remarks.

“He would be a debacle as president, just as he was when he was mayor,” said Diana Rodríguez, 50, a media manager from Bogotá who plans to vote for Gutiérrez. “My two daughters are about to go to university, but if Petro wins, I’m thinking I’ll have to send them abroad.”

Rodríguez is not alone in her fear. Billboards across the country liken Petro to Hugo Chávez, the Venezuelan strongman who led his country from democracy to dictatorship via economic ruin. It is a line of attack that resonates in Colombia, where more than 1 million Venezuelans have sought refuge.

Others have accused Petro of secretly planning to expropriate private property, which he has repeatedly denied on the campaign trail. Gutiérrez, meanwhile, has made “saving Colombia’s democracy” from Petro a central talking point in stump speeches.

Sergio Guzmán, the director of Colombia Risk Analysis, a consultancy, said Petro’s opponents are most worried about his economic policies. He has pledged to halt oil exploration and to stop fracking in the country.

“That anxiety is trickling into markets,” Guzmán said. “Of course people are worried about other issues too, but the main one is economic anxiety.”

But those at the rally in Bogotá say the only things they are worried about are Petro’s safety or a failure to displace rightwing politics from the presidential palace in Sunday’s vote.

“The right means violence and corruption,” said Romero, as the sun began to set on a crowd of tens of thousands, shortly before Petro took to the stage. “That’s why we must win.”

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/28/colombia-election-president-gustavo-petro-leftwing>

[\*\*France\*\*](#)

## Ailing orca stuck in France's River Seine to be lured to sea using drone with loudspeakers

A drone emitting orca sounds will be used in attempt to guide the animal, whose health is fast deteriorating



The orca seen swimming in the River Seine in France. Officials will use orca sounds to try to guide it back to sea. Photograph: Pascal Rossignol/Reuters

*Reuters*

Fri 27 May 2022 22.23 EDT

An orca lost in France's River Seine is to be guided back to sea using sounds made by the species under a last-ditch plan to save the animal's life.

The local prefecture said it would monitor the animal, also known as a killer whale, from a distance with a drone while emitting orca communications in

an attempt to guide it back to the sea, following a meeting with national and international scientists, including marine mammal specialists.

“The use of these non-invasive methods, from several hundred metres’ distance, will make it possible to avoid using ships in the immediate proximity of the animal, which could aggravate its stress and endanger its survival, as well as the safety of rescuers,” said the Seine-Maritime prefecture in a statement.



The orca’s distinctive fin surfaces.

The four-metre (13ft) orca, identified as a male, was first spotted at the mouth of the Seine on 16 May between Le Havre and Honfleur in Normandy, before it travelled dozens of kilometres upstream to end up west of the city of Rouen.

The orca’s health is deteriorating and it is at risk of dying. It is unable to find enough food in the river and the fresh water is increasingly damaging its health.

“It is in a life-threatening condition ... Its state of health is very poor,” Gerard Mauger, the vice-president of Cotentin Cetacean Study Group, told France 3.

“It is really complicated to find solutions to try to make it go back to the salt water. Mauger added that helping the animal risked stressing it.

Muriel Arnal, president of French animal rights organisation One Voice, said there was an urgent need to rescue the animal. “We have to be fast,” Arnal said, suggesting that using nets to guide the orca would be less stressful than placing it on a barge.

She also noted that male orcas are “mummy’s boys”, generally sticking to their mothers their entire lives.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/28/ailing-orca-stuck-in-frances-river-seine-to-be-lured-to-sea-using-drone-with-loudspeakers>

## **Headlines tuesday 24 may 2022**

- [Live Shapps refuses to deny Johnson suggested Sue Gray abandon publication of her report](#)
- [Partygate Boris Johnson under pressure to explain meeting with Sue Gray](#)
- [Partygate Met faces questions about credibility of inquiry after photos emerge](#)
- [Tell us Partygate: what were you doing on 13 November 2020?](#)

[Skip to key events](#)

[Politics live with Andrew Sparrow](#)[Politics](#)

## Boris Johnson would throw ‘entire team under bus’ to survive Partygate, No 10 official says, amid claims over lockdown events – as it happened

Latest updates: [insiders express fury](#) to BBC that Boris Johnson escaped fine for events junior staff were penalised for attending. This blog is now closed, [read our full report here](#).

- [Party attended by PM ‘so cramped people sat on laps’](#)
- [How people spent the day of the Downing Street leaving drinks](#)
- [Pressure on Met to justify no fine for PM over leaving drinks](#)
- [Unions angered by No 10 remarks about public sector pay](#)
- [No 10 refuses to deny PM suggested Sue Gray shelve her report](#)
- [Summary of Downing Street lobby briefing](#)

Updated 4d ago

[Harry Taylor \(now\)](#) and [Andrew Sparrow \(earlier\)](#)

Tue 24 May 2022 15.17 EDTFirst published on Tue 24 May 2022 04.14 EDT

Partygate: Boris Johnson under fresh scrutiny after new party pictures emerge – video report

[Harry Taylor \(now\)](#) and [Andrew Sparrow \(earlier\)](#)

Tue 24 May 2022 15.17 EDTFirst published on Tue 24 May 2022 04.14 EDT

## Key events

- [5d agoSummary](#)
- [5d agoJohnson would throw his entire team under a bus to survive Partygate'](#)
- [5d agoLeaving drinks attended by PM so cramped people sat on other's laps and bins overflowed with bottles, No 10 staff say](#)
- [5d agoLabour says it will vote against Northern Ireland Troubles bill because it equates soldiers with terrorists](#)
- [5d agoSenior US congressman Richard Neal says it is up to UK to help find solution to 'manufactured' dispute about NI protocol](#)
- [5d agoEnergy price cap rise could leave almost 10 million families in fuel poverty, says thinktank](#)
- [5d agoSadiq Khan writes to Met asking for explanation for its decision not to fine Johnson over No 10 leaving drinks](#)

Show key events only

## Live feed

Show key events only

From 5d ago

[14.39](#)

## 'Johnson would throw his entire team under a bus to survive Partygate'

After a clip about the reshuffle in Downing Street earlier this year, **Kuenssberg** is told by Will Walden, a former staff member of **Boris Johnson's** when he was mayor of London says that he does “burn” people and because of his personality as a “loner” he finds “burning people” easy.

An official said: “He’s a nice guy, but he knows where the bodies are. He will be cut-throat to protect his own interests.”

When asked what he would do to protect his interests, she said: “I think he would throw his entire team under the bus to survive this.”

- 
- 

Updated at 15.16 EDT

[5d ago](#)[15.14](#)

## Summary

Here's a round-up of today's politics news in the UK, the night before it is expected that civil servant Sue Gray will publish her report into lockdown-breaking parties in Downing Street.

- A **BBC Panorama** documentary has heard that parties in **Downing Street** were so cramped that at one point, people were [forced to sit on each others laps](#).
- Officials, given anonymity, said **Boris Johnson** would [“throw his entire team under a bus”](#) if it meant he would get past the Partygate scandal intact.
- They said that they felt **Johnson** had implicitly given them permission to hold events, because of his attendance. “He was grabbing a glass for himself,” [one said](#).
- The mayor of London, **Sadiq Khan**, has [asked the Metropolitan police why Johnson was not fined](#) for attending Lee Cain's leaving drinks on 13 November 2020, from which photographs have emerged. Others who attended were fined.
- One rebel Tory thinks the number of letters submitted to the Conservative backbench 1922 Committee demanding a vote of no confidence in Johnson is now in the high 40s, the Telegraph's **Christopher Hope** reports. The threshold for a ballot to take place is 54.

And away from Partygate:

- **Jonathan Brearley**, the Ofgem chief executive, told MPs on the Commons business committee that he expects the energy price cap to rise to about £2,800 in October.
- The **Resolution Foundation** thinktank says raising the energy price cap to about £2,800, would almost double the number of families in fuel poverty.
- Former cabinet minister **Robert Jenrick** said he believed **Rishi Sunak** and the Treasury would come forward with another “significant” support package to help families through the cost of living crisis.
- **Labour** says it will vote against the Northern Ireland Troubles bill because it equated soldiers with terrorists.
- British officials did not require Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe to sign a forced confession before her departure from Iran, but instead advised her that the Iranians would not allow her to leave unless she did so, [the UK's Middle East minister, Amanda Milling, told MPs.](#)

That's all for today, thank you for following.

- 
- 

Updated at 15.35 EDT

[5d ago](#)**15.03**

Looking back, an official who worked in **No 10** said: “I think for everybody it has been very distressing and shaming.

“The whole period was traumatic. It was very difficult to work on every single day. We were learning that people were dying in hospital beds and people were dying needlessly.

“We were worried about making mistakes and getting these big calls wrong and working through it.

“It was quite difficult to look back at that period now and thinking this is what will define it. Not the vaccine programmes, or food parcels for shielding people. It’ll be, what were you doing on 20 May in the garden?”

Afterwards, speaking to Kuenssberg, **Iain Duncan Smith** said [\*\*Boris Johnson\*\*](#) should survive the scandal because of the problems with the cost of living crisis and Ukraine and that there was a need for leadership.

And that's it.

•  
•

Updated at 15.13 EDT

[5d ago](#)[14.51](#)

It's now on to the unhappiness from staff at Downing Street after being fined.

“A lot of these young members of staff from across Downing Street that were fined feel that when they went to the events they didn’t think they were breaking the rules because the prime minister was at them. Some of the most senior civil servants in the country were at them, and were indeed even organising them,” said one official.

“I think it has been a big surprise for a lot of people, that after being told they would be protected by senior people, including the prime minister, he stood up in the House of Commons and essentially implied he was misled by essentially some very junior people, whose job it wouldn’t have been to police these events.”

Another said that they would come in to work sometimes and find bins overflowing or empty bottles left on tables.

•  
•

Updated at 15.14 EDT

[5d ago](#)[14.47](#)

The party in Downing Street on the night before Prince Philip's funeral is now being discussed.

The official who was there said there were people from different departments, press, policy and speechwriters, with about 20-25 present in total.

"It was a general party, it just happened to have someone leaving at it."

They then went into the gardens after the noise continued, with some staff ending up staying the night at No 10. "I think it's unforgivable," she added.

"It's like sticking two fingers up to the British public," Iain Duncan Smith said.

•  
•

Updated at 15.15 EDT

[5d ago](#)[14.39](#)

## **'Johnson would throw his entire team under a bus to survive Partygate'**

After a clip about the reshuffle in Downing Street earlier this year, **Kuenssberg** is told by Will Walden, a former staff member of **Boris Johnson's** when he was mayor of London says that he does "burn" people and because of his personality as a "loner" he finds "burning people" easy.

An official said: "He's a nice guy, but he knows where the bodies are. He will be cut-throat to protect his own interests."

When asked what he would do to protect his interests, she said: “I think he would throw his entire team under the bus to survive this.”

- 
- 

Updated at 15.16 EDT

[5d ago](#) [14.34](#)

An official who was at the gathering pictured outside in the garden of 10 Downing Street said: “If the PM or his chief of staff set a rule for the building that there was to be no alcohol, then it wouldn’t have happened.

“In a way it happened because people were happy for it to happen.”

After a question by Kuenssberg about whether it struck people as odd that these events were taking place, the official adds: “I suspect it went through everyone’s minds because it was so different to what everyone else was doing.”

Another official told Panorama: “I think he [**Johnson**] is very adept at believing his version of the truth. Obviously he’s often referred to as a liar, but it’s more complicated than that. I think he’s very good at retrofitting events and genuinely believing the conclusion he has come to.

“I think he would pass a lie detector test asking: ‘Do you think you were breaking the rules?’ But I also believe he must have known that some of these events were not in the rules.”

- 
- 

Updated at 15.17 EDT

[5d ago](#) [14.30](#)

An official said that **Boris Johnson’s** was slow to realise the danger of Covid. “He was even making jokes about kung flu,” and only shifted when

he got Covid himself and he saw footage of people dying in Lombardy, Italy, before the virus got a grip on the UK.

“Trying to get him to wash his hands was hard enough.”

Another said “he was a freedom loving Conservative at his core and that became something he had to keep in check.”

“The majority of people need to follow these rules, and that’s the right message to send, but it stopped short of him almost seeing himself as part of that majority. In that building in his general interactions, it felt like business as usual.”

The official added that it was “business as usual” in Downing Street, with no extra rules including people wearing face masks or social distancing.

She said it felt like Johnson had given the events permission to take place. “He was there, he may have just been popping through on the way to his flat but that’s what would happen. He wasn’t there saying this shouldn’t be happening, or can everyone break up and go home, can everyone socially distance or put masks on, no he wasn’t telling anyone that.

“He was grabbing a glass for himself.”

•  
•

Updated at 15.05 EDT

[5d ago](#)[14.17](#)

In a clip that was released before it aired tonight, one former official said that they were in disbelief when **Boris Johnson** denied that there were parties. “We’ve been with him this entire time, we knew that the rules had been broken, we knew that these parties happened. It is quite clear that he lied to parliament.”

She mentions regular press office “wine-time Fridays” drinks at 4pm on a Friday.

Another ex-staff member said it was “pretty typical” for the press team to have drinks in the office with a lot of “young sociable people working there ... who lived alone.” Through an actor’s voice, he added that it “wasn’t unusual” for the prime minister to be there. “He seemed to be a believer in letting his staff let their hair down a bit. It speaks to his temperament and leadership style, he wants to be liked by everybody.”

The documentary hears that [a security guard was laughed at](#) when he tried to stop the party of 30 people who had gathered for former director of communications **Lee Cain’s** leaving party.

- 
- 

[5d ago14.07](#)

The **Panorama** documentary on Partygate, fronted by BBC’s former political editor **Laura Kuenssberg** is broadcasting now on BBC Two.

Several figures are set to appear including former Tory leader **Iain Duncan Smith**, Conservative MP **Caroline Noakes** and Labour MP **Wes Streeting**. Former officials from No 10 will also be interviewed anonymously.

- 
- 

Updated at 15.05 EDT

[5d ago13.50](#)

More on former cabinet minister **Robert Jenrick’s** comments to **Andrew Marr** on **LBC** this evening, where he suggested support for people faced by mounting costs will be forthcoming.

Marr asked whether VAT cuts, warm fuel allowances and increases to universal credit were being considered by Sunak and the Treasury.

**Jenrick** replied: “I think all of those things will be under active consideration now and given the scale of what we’re going to encounter, or many people in society going to encounter, it’s going to have to be an intervention of some significance, but you’ll have to wait days or a couple of weeks. I don’t think it’ll be very long before the chancellor will come back and set out his plans.”

•  
•

[Newest](#)[Newest](#)

[Previous](#)

1  
of  
5

[Next](#)

[Oldest](#)[Oldest](#)

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/live/2022/may/24/boris-johnson-sue-gray-report-partygate-photos-uk-politics-latest>

**Boris Johnson**

## **Partygate: No 10 denies Boris Johnson asked Sue Gray to ditch report**

PM's spokesperson unable to say firmly whether Johnson may have wondered aloud whether publication should go ahead

- [Today's politics news – live updates](#)



Boris Johnson pictured drinking at a Downing Street gathering during lockdown. Photograph: ITV News

*[Jessica Elgot](#) and [Heather Stewart](#)*

Tue 24 May 2022 08.46 EDTFirst published on Tue 24 May 2022 04.13 EDT

Downing Street has denied that [Boris Johnson](#) asked Sue Gray outright to ditch her report on lockdown breaches in Downing Street, insisting the pair only discussed “process” at a recent meeting.

Johnson's official spokesperson said: "The prime minister did not ask her to drop the report or not proceed with the report. The prime minister commissioned the report. He wants the report to be published."

The spokesperson described the meeting between the pair – which No 10 conceded on Monday was initiated by Downing Street – as "a legitimate meeting about process".

However, he was unable to say firmly whether Johnson may have wondered aloud whether Gray should go ahead with publication in light of the Met investigation. "I don't recognise that characterisation," the spokesperson said, adding: "I'm not going to be getting into line by line what may or may not have been said."

[The Times](#) reported that Johnson questioned whether Gray's report should be published, given most of the information was already in the public domain.

The report, which is expected to be handed to No 10 on Wednesday, is said by sources to be deeply critical of the prime minister and senior civil service leadership over the culture that developed in No 10 and eventually led the Metropolitan police to issue 126 fines.

Further pressure was heaped on Johnson on Monday night after a photo was released showing him raising a glass at a leaving do in No 10 – an event for which others were fined but not the prime minister.

No 10 [admitted on Monday](#) that the meeting with Gray before her report was called at the prime minister's request, despite ministers having said the opposite in morning interviews.

Partygate: Boris Johnson under fresh scrutiny after new party pictures emerge – video report

On Tuesday, the cabinet minister Grant Shapps did not deny that Johnson had questioned whether it was worth publishing the report at all. He said: "I wasn't in the room so I don't know that's the case. Exactly what was discussed, I don't know."

“Occasionally things get reported that are not entirely accurate. The civil service were there to make sure that all the correct processes were followed, so I have no particular reason for concern about the two of them meeting.”

Shapps, the transport secretary, said he thought the pictures obtained by ITV News did not change what the public already knew about the gathering. “I don’t think the fact of the pictures, us seeing them for the first time, changes what the police and Sue Gray already know.

“I see his red box is there, which is his work box, it looks to me like he goes down on his way out of the office and thanks the staff and raises a glass, and doesn’t in his mind recognise it as a party. And indeed the police have looked into this and spent a lot of time and resources.”

However, those present say that it was instigated by Johnson, who gathered staff around, poured drinks and made a speech for his departing head of communications, Lee Cain – though staff in the press office already had regular Friday wine. Attenders said Johnson stayed for up to 25 minutes.

An unnamed witness to the event told the BBC’s Panorama: “There were about 30 people, if not more, in a room. Everyone was stood shoulder to shoulder, some people on each other’s laps … one or two people.”

The Guardian understands the police were handed details of the leaving drinks and the circumstances of Johnson’s attendance.

Shapps said he could not deny the pictures were “very difficult to look at” but said Johnson had “popped down there to raise a glass and say thank you to a long-term member of staff who is leaving”.

Sign up to First Edition, our free daily newsletter – every weekday morning at 7am BST

He added: “I couldn’t see my own dad for four months during this period because he was in hospital and we thought we’d lost him at one point.”

The mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, said the police should explain why they did not fine Johnson for the event, and said there were questions over

whether the prime minister had misled parliament.

“I saw the photograph of Boris Johnson raising a glass, clearly bottles of wine laying around, others with wine in their hand, on a day when he said in the House of Commons, and I speak as a former parliamentarian and I know the importance of not lying or misleading in the House of Commons, that there wasn’t a party,” he said.

“Sue Gray will publish her report this week and of course the prime minister will have to answer for himself, but I think the police should explain why they reached their conclusions and provide that clarity.”

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/may/24/partygate-boris-johnson-meeting-sue-gray-lockdown-parties-downing-street>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

## Metropolitan police

# Met faces questions about credibility of Partygate inquiry after photos emerge

Former senior officer Brian Paddick asks what more evidence the police needed to issue PM another fine

- [Today's politics news – live updates](#)



A photograph obtained by ITV News shows Boris Johnson raising a glass at a party on 13 November 2020, which he previously denied had taken place.  
Photograph: ITV News

*Vikram Dodd Police and crime correspondent*

Tue 24 May 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 24 May 2022 05.15 EDT

The new photos from the Partygate saga have left police facing questions about the credibility of their investigation and a former police chief demanding that they explain themselves urgently.

Last week, the [Metropolitan police](#) ended its investigation into a string of Downing Street and Whitehall parties having issued Boris Johnson with only one fine. Westminster insiders say the prime minister had been a willing participant at several social gatherings that breached lockdown rules, yet the police decision appeared to suggest he had broken no rules.

The former Met police deputy assistant commissioner Brian Paddick said public confidence in the Met was being further damaged by the revelations.

Lord Paddick, a Liberal Democrat peer, said it should have been obvious to the Met that photos would become public and undermine the credibility of their decision-making, which was already hugely debated.

Paddick said: “It is naive of the Met to think the person who supplied them with the photos would not supply them to the media if the police decided not to take action against him over other events.

“The public will want to know what more evidence the police needed to give the prime minister a fixed-penalty notice, when the photos appear to show beyond reasonable doubt that he should have been issued with one.”

Partygate: Boris Johnson under fresh scrutiny after new party pictures emerge – video report

The Met on Monday declined to answer any further questions after the photos emerged showing Johnson at an event for which he was not fined. The prime minister has a glass in his hand, and is surrounded by others clutching glasses. Copious bottles of wine and other drinks can be seen. The Met said: “We are not adding to our last statement.”

The Independent Office for [Police](#) Conduct (IOPC) has been urged to investigate why Johnson was not fined for the event. The Lib Dems’ deputy leader, Daisy Cooper, wrote to the police watchdog’s director general, Michael Lockwood, on Monday night asking it to require the Met to clarify its decision-making process.

Cooper said: “The Metropolitan police has so far failed to offer any statement of clarification regarding their decision-making process. They

have not set out the evidential thresholds which they used to determine whether FPNs should be issued.



‘It is naive of the Met to think the person who supplied them with the photos would not supply them to the media,’ said Lord Paddick. Photograph: Murdo MacLeod/The Guardian

“The result of this lack of transparency is that the release of photographs such as that of the prime minister drinking in Downing Street, on an occasion for which he was not fined, will likely create considerable public confusion.

“In particular, it is hard to understand why some individuals, in particular more junior members of staff, who attended the same gatherings as the prime minister received questionnaires and FPNs, while the prime minister did not.”

The Met is already expected to face questions before the London assembly, which has a role in holding Britain’s largest force to account.

Sign up to First Edition, our free daily newsletter – every weekday morning at 7am BST

Paddick said the Met's silence had to end, since apparently clear-cut evidence was emerging: "The police need to explain why when, given this evidence, they did not issue the PM with another fixed-penalty notice."

Johnson was issued with a fine for an event in the cabinet room at No 10 on his birthday, which was said to be a surprise.

As part of the evidence-gathering process for the Met investigation, called Operation Hillman, a team of 12 officers studied 510 photographs and CCTV images.

The Met initially declined to investigate, but then in January reversed its decision, after Sue Gray's inquiry for the Cabinet Office unearthed material of concern.

Acting deputy commissioner Helen Ball said the 126 fines issued followed police obtaining "clear-cut" evidence of breaches.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/may/24/met-faces-questions-about-credibility-of-partygate-inquiry-after-photos-emerge>

**Boris Johnson**

## **Partygate: what were you doing on 13 November 2020?**

Whatever you were doing or not doing, we would like to hear your memories of 13 November 2020



A photograph obtained by ITV News shows Boris Johnson raising a glass at a party on 13 November 2020, which he previously denied had taken place.  
Photograph: ITV News

**Guardian community team**

Tue 24 May 2022 04.21 EDT Last modified on Tue 24 May 2022 04.23 EDT

New photographs have emerged showing Boris Johnson [at an event on 13 November 2020, for which he was not fined](#), after the Metropolitan police last week ended its investigation into a string of Downing Street and Whitehall parties.

At the time, England was under a national lockdown meaning only two people from different households could meet outdoors socially distanced.

We would like to know what you were doing on 13 November 2020.

## Share your experiences

You can get in touch by filling in the form below or contact us [via WhatsApp](#) by [clicking here](#) or adding +44(0)7766780300. Your responses are secure as the form is encrypted and only the Guardian has access to your contributions.

One of our journalists will be in contact before we publish, so please do leave contact details.

*If you're having trouble using the form, click [here](#). Read terms of service [here](#) and privacy policy [here](#).*

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/may/24/partygate-what-were-you-doing-on-13-november-2020>

## 2022.05.24 - Spotlight

- [The long read Nazi or KGB agent? My search for my grandfather's hidden past](#)
- ['I'm in awe' Trans actor Yasmin Finney on joining Doctor Who](#)
- ['I haven't got a pretty face' Brendan Gleeson on fame, middle age and tapping into his mean side](#)
- ['How did he get away with this?' What the papers say about new Johnson Partygate photos](#)

# Nazi or KGB agent? My search for my grandfather's hidden past

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/24/nazi-or-kgb-agent-my-search-for-grandfathers-hidden-past>

## Television

Interview

# ‘I’m in awe’: trans actor Yasmin Finney on joining Doctor Who

[Rachel Aroesti](#)

She made viewers swoon in *Heartstopper*. Now she’s heading for the Tardis. The actor talks about teenage trauma, TikTok trolling, and juggling two armies of fans



Yasmin Finney: ‘I’ve had all the hate in the world through TikTok.’

Photograph: YellowBellyPhoto



Tue 24 May 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 26 May 2022 08.54 EDT

Yasmin Finney is not at home. Instead, the 18-year-old Mancunian is holed up in a drab-looking hotel room. Is she in London for Tardis-related reasons, perhaps? “Well,” says Finney, stifling a smile and looking around with a sense of mild desperation. “Yes, that’s something that came out this week,” she finally replies, with the care of somebody who has likely signed an exceptionally rigorous confidentiality agreement or two.

It’s been a big week for the teenager, who only recently made her screen debut as trans schoolgirl Elle Argent in Netflix’s very sweet – and very popular – romcom [Heartstopper](#). That show came with its own ardent fan following but, in the days before we speak, Finney ascended to a new level in the world of cult British TV. She is set to join Russell T Davies’ rebooted Doctor Who, starring Sex Education’s [Ncuti Gatwa](#) as the first black Doctor.

Finney’s character is called Rose, which was also the name of the companion famously played by Billie Piper in the mid-00s. The relevance of this is currently unknown. What we do know is that Finney was recently spotted filming scenes alongside David Tennant, AKA the Tenth Doctor, and Catherine Tate, AKA the Tenth Doctor’s companion, Donna Noble. In other

words, there are more than enough cryptic developments to keep Whoniverse obsessives in a tizzy until the end product finally airs in 2023.



‘There was no way anybody else could play this character’ ... Finney as Elle in Heartstopper. Photograph: Netflix

Finney squirms at the mere mention of [Doctor Who](#) – and what little she has to say about her casting only confuses matters further. “I didn’t know for a long time,” she says over Zoom, through curtains of sleek blond hair, “but I *did* know. I don’t want to give too much away.” My chances of gleaning anything meaningful seem practically zero. Was it mere coincidence that Davies’ mid-00s Doctor Who collaborator Euros Lyn also directed Heartstopper? “That was a huge coincidence!” exclaims Finney, before admitting that, actually, Lyn did recommend her to producers who were “looking for a trans girl”. But she doubts Lyn knew the precise nature of the project under discussion.

Regardless of how she got there, Finney is clearly in her element. She loved watching Tennant and Tate as a child – she was one when the former took over as the Timelord – and is finding it “a bit surreal to be acting with them. It’s insane and I’m learning so much.” She’s also very excited to be involved with this thrillingly progressive new Doctor Who era alongside Gatwa and, of course, returning showrunner Davies, the writer who has almost single-

handedly made British TV a more queer-friendly (and straightforwardly better) place, with such shows as *It's a Sin*, *Years & Years* and *Queer As Folk*.

Finney fully appreciates Davies' significance: "I am in awe of the fact that I've been seen by such a legend." In fact, her only source of stress has been a very pleasant one: "I was worried about having two huge fanbases following me and whether they'd get along. But I think it's going pretty well so far!"



'We've got a group chat we message on every day' ... the cast of *Heartstopper*. Photograph: Netflix

Reckoning with internet fanbases is nothing new for Finney: she had one before she was famous, thanks to a popular TikTok account she started in school and used to document her trans experience. Now, thanks to *Heartstopper* – a hit for Netflix, which last week commissioned two further seasons – her following is gargantuan and intensely communicative (she has 1.7m followers on TikTok and 1.3m on Instagram). The series is based on [Alice Oseman's cult internet comics](#), first published in 2016, about two schoolboys who fall in love. Fans follow the show's stars forensically on social media, just as invested in their real-life friendships as their fictional ones. So have the actors really remained close mates since filming wrapped?

Finney looks at me with horror-tinged disbelief. “Of course we’re really friends! We’ve got a group chat we message on every day.”

Most of the Heartstopper team were acting novices, cast via open auditions on Zoom. Finney was alerted to a call for a trans girl of colour by her TikTok followers. Although she had never heard of the comics, she says: “I just knew I would get it – it was a calling. There was no way anybody else could play this character.” She identified strongly with Elle, who transfers from an all-boys grammar to the girls’ school next door, and has a budding romance with close pal Tao. So strong was her connection, in fact, that the role – her first proper acting job – didn’t actually involve much acting, “because Elle literally is me”.

At the time of her audition Finney was studying drama at college, but had little hope of making it. “I was like, ‘There’s no trans roles, there’s nothing. I’m basically setting myself up to fail.’ I didn’t see myself reflected in the UK media anywhere.” Instead, she intended to “just do TikTok for the rest of my life”. That said, TikTok was not an entirely pleasant experience. Although Finney had a supportive fanbase, the response from strangers was brutal. “For the most part, it was hate back then. I can’t lie.” But she does see a silver lining, should mainstream success bring any unpleasantness. “It gave me a thick skin. I’ve had all the hate in the world through TikTok.”

That online barrage was accompanied by real-life abuse too. At her first school, Finney was “bullied left, right and centre. People didn’t like how camp and flamboyant I was – but of course that’s on them not me.” She then transferred to a “posher” school and “ended up transitioning towards year 10. And of course I got bullied for that.”



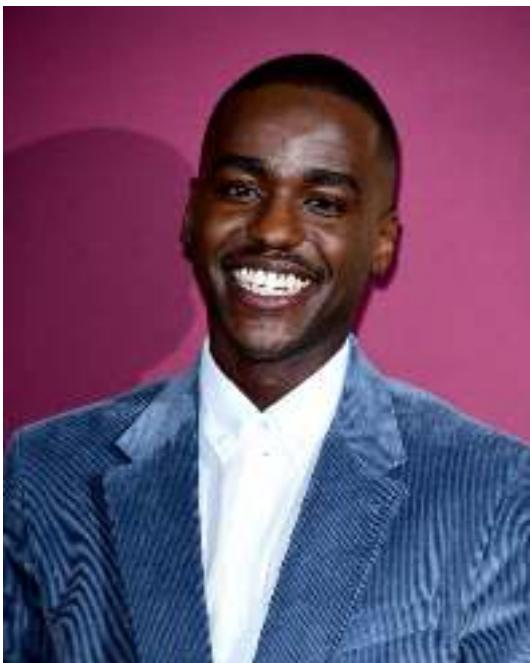
‘If Elle can do it, I can do it’ ... with William Gao in *Heartstopper*.  
Photograph: Netflix

She was also mocked for making TikToks. “Cut to two years later, people [from school] are on TikTok doing the same thing I was doing. And people who didn’t have very nice things to say about me are watching *Heartstopper* and congratulating me.” Finney is magnanimous about this turnaround. “I don’t want to blame them fully because I know that when you’re in high school, you just want to fit in.”

As *Heartstopper* fans will have gleaned, Finney’s experience differed from Elle’s. There is some homophobia in the *Heartstopper* universe but it’s generally a sunny and accepting place where Elle’s trans identity is largely unremarked upon. “It’s such a breath of fresh air,” says Finney. “Elle’s isn’t like any other trans story we’ve seen before – because it’s not focused on gender dysphoria or bullying. It’s something the little Yasmins can watch and think, ‘If Elle can do it, I can do it.’”

How might seeing Elle on screen in her early teens have changed Finney’s own experience? “I would think there’s hope – a black trans person on the screen, so young, so authentic and so natural.” She cannot stress the importance of this kind of visibility enough. “You do not understand: the amount of time I’ve spent searching for representation, clawing for it, and

trying to find somebody I could look up to as an idol, somebody that is a reflection of me.”



The next Doctor ... Ncuti Gatwa. Photograph: Ian West/PA

While playing aspirational trans characters is a boon, Finney is hoping that won’t be all her career is limited to. “I think we’ll really [have] change when I can play a character whose gender identity or sexuality isn’t specified. That’s when the industry will start to see trans actors as normal actors like everybody else, and we can play any role that we want to. When I can play a cis role, it will be sunshine and rainbows.”

Finney knows the complexities of identity-conscious casting, though. After all, if a trans actor can play a cis character, why not vice versa? The answer is two-fold. Firstly, there’s already a dearth of opportunities for trans actors. Secondly, when a cis actor plays a trans character, far more is at stake. Finney cites the example of Eddie Redmayne, who played a trans woman in [The Danish Girl](#). “He gave such a great performance. I don’t have a problem with that. What I have a problem with is when people search up the cast for The Danish Girl and they see Eddie Redmayne isn’t trans and it was all a lie. Sadly, it creates this image for trans people that we aren’t actually what we say we are.”

Still, Finney is not complaining about her trajectory. On the one hand, she's determined to dream big; on the other, her ambitions seem rather modest. "For the most part, I'm just happy to be seen," she says. "And I will play trans roles for the rest of my life if I have to because I think every trans story is valid. But bring on the next role: trans, cis, alien – whatever!"

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2022/may/24/im-in-awe-trans-actor-yasmin-finney-on-joining-doctor-who>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Advertisement

US edition

- [US edition](#)
- [UK edition](#)
- [Australian edition](#)
- [International edition](#)

[The Guardian - Back to home](#)[The Guardian: news website of the year](#)

[Brendan Gleeson](#)

Interview

## **‘I haven’t got a pretty face’: Brendan Gleeson on fame, middle age and tapping into his mean side**

[Steve Rose](#)



Brendan Gleeson: ‘There are people who are deeply flawed in every single corner of humanity.’ Photograph: Johnny Savage/The Guardian

The Irish actor talks about working with Mel Gibson, why Paddington 2 is a perfect movie, and how his new show about a divorcing couple has sparked trouble at home

[@steverose7](#)

Tue 24 May 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 27 May 2022 10.35 EDT

The initial plan was to interview [Brendan Gleeson](#) in central Dublin. A chat over lunch in a local pub or restaurant, then a few photos of him in his element. His agents politely point out this is not ideal. Why not? “Because he’s Brendan Gleeson!” He can no more walk around the centre of Dublin incognito and uninterrupted than could Bono, or the pope.

So our rendezvous is relocated to a seafood restaurant at the end of a fishing pier in a village outside Dublin. But even here, within seconds of Gleeson posing for photographs outside, a passerby comes up to say hi. Moments later, a woman shouts: “Oi, Brendan!” from her car across the street and comes over for a selfie and a chat about local broadband provision. Gleeson is obliging, but his agents weren’t kidding.

Gleeson has been a screen fixture in Ireland for more than 30 years, an anchor of the local film and television industry who has also worked with the best in the business internationally: Spielberg, Scorsese, Anthony Minghella, Ridley Scott, Danny Boyle, the Coen brothers, you name it. He has played Donald Trump and Winston Churchill. He’s a versatile actor, guaranteed to bring a bit of humanity and dramatic heft, more often than not spiced with a hint of menace, or at least grumpiness.



Gleeson playing Donald Trump in *The Comey Rule*. Photograph: Ben Mark Holzberg/AP

No wonder then, especially after he took on the character of “Mad-Eye” Moody in the Harry Potter films, anonymity has been hard to find in Ireland. “I remember Robbie Coltrane saying to me: ‘You can forget about walking through an airport again,’” Gleeson says over lunch. “It’s difficult to browse in a shop. It’s a big price to pay and I don’t like it.” It’s not that he doesn’t like people, he says; it’s more that he *does* like them. “It’s stopped me from being able to people-watch with any great success and comfort. And that’s part of what you really need to do to stay aware of what’s going on.”

In real life, Gleeson is neither menacing nor grumpy. He’s so talkative he barely remembers to eat his lunch. He apologises several times for “rambling on”. And he’s serious – until he isn’t. When I tell him his movie Calvary moved me to tears when I recently rewatched it, he immediately replies: “That bad, was it?” You rarely see him laugh on screen, but when he does it’s with his whole face. His eyes narrow and twinkle and his grin is a mile wide. This is exactly the reaction when I ask him about his latest role, and how close it is to the real him: “Ha ha! Ask my wife.”

The role is Scott, a somewhat curmudgeonly middle-aged man who is going through a divorce. The show is *State of the Union*, written by Nick Hornby

and directed by Stephen Frears. It's a bittersweet little comedy series of 10 10-minute encounters between a couple about to go into their weekly marriage counselling session. In the first season (which won three Emmys), [the couple was Chris O'Dowd and Rosamund Pike](#). This time, it's Gleeson and Patricia Clarkson. From the outset, Clarkson's Ellen is ready to move on. Gleeson's Scott has apparently not moved on since about 1975. He's looking forward to retirement, golf and fishing; she's keeping up with yoga and progressive politics.

"It should come with a health warning in the corner: 'Any couple who watches it, this could end in divorce,'" Gleeson says, his face consumed by laughter again. "I've had friends of mine saying: 'Jesus. I was looking forward to playing a bit of golf when I retired.'"

It made a few ripples in his own marriage, he admits. Gleeson and his wife, Mary, have been married for 40 years and have four grownup sons, two of whom, Domhnall and Brian, are successful actors. He started rehearsing for State of the Union at home, reading the script with his wife. "Myself and Mary used to sit down, and she'd say things like: 'I'd kill that fella.' And of course, if you're playing a part, you have to go into their corner. You have to fight for them. And ... there was a spillover. We actually did start fights!" He's laughing at the memory of it. "Some things [about Scott] are fundamentally against the way I am. So just to establish that. But some of the things, I would say: 'Hang on a second' – which would start the row with Mary – 'he does have a point.'"

For extra friction, State of the Union takes place in the type of coffee shop that doesn't serve cow's milk or even use the word "coffee" – it's all "Peruvian special blend". The barista, Jay (Esco Jouléy), is [Black, non-binary and asexual](#). Predictably, Scott and Jay get off to a bad start. It would be easy to label Scott as a privileged, white, middle-aged, cis, male bigot, as his wife does, but then Jay is not exactly pleasant to him either. Gleeson praises the way both sides are called out for their assumptions. "This blanket kind of pardon for everybody, because they are part of a group that had been discriminated against, while laudable in the beginning, it doesn't hold water," he says. "Because it's a ludicrous concept. There are people who are deeply flawed in every single corner of humanity." Through the 10 episodes,

Scott and Jay's relationship develops into something more interesting. Scott might be lazy and blinkered but he's actually not a bigot, Gleeson suggests. "That's what I thought was the most beautiful part of him."

Doing the show put Gleeson on a personal learning curve. He had never worked with non-binary people before, he says. "I did not use the pronouns 'them/they' for gender-fluid people because I haven't been in a situation where it was either expected or demanded or, in fact, even introduced as a possibility. So with Esco I kept, and I still do, just going to the wrong pronoun." He then does it straight away: "But he – *they!* – said: 'I don't care. I find it interesting who you see me as today.'"

Gleeson freely admits he found Jouléy's non-binary identity a challenge at first. "He [he means 'they'] used to dress differently and present himself differently every episode, which was fascinating." But also confusing. The tendency to mentally assign gender to people you meet is hard to shake at his age (67), he suggests. "Finally I got it, and it was exhilarating. It was thrilling to be brought into a new awareness in that way."



With Colin Farrell in *In Bruges*. Photograph: TCD/Prod.DB/Alamy

Gleeson can understand the tendency in men to just slow down and stop learning as they approach retirement age – more so than women, perhaps:

“There is nothing wrong with just sitting back and smelling the coffee.” Even if it’s Peruvian special blend, perhaps. But that doesn’t seem to apply to him personally. He’s as busy as ever. Or at least as busy as he wants to be. The dialogue recording he was doing in Dublin that morning was for *The Banshees of Inisherin*, his long-awaited reunion with Colin Farrell and writer/director Martin McDonagh. The last time the three of them worked together was 14 years ago on *In Bruges*, an odd-couple comedy [about hitmen hiding out in the Belgian town](#), and a high point of modern Irish cinema. All he can say about the new film is that it’s “about two friends going in two different directions and the pain of it”.

McDonagh and his older brother, John Michael McDonagh, have provided quite a few of these high points of modern Irish cinema, and Gleeson has figured in most of them. It began with Martin’s Oscar-winning short *Six Shooter* in 2004. With John, Gleeson made 2011’s *The Guard* – a different type of odd-couple comedy, with Don Cheadle – and 2014’s *Calvary*, in which he plays a kindly village priest who is condemned to die for the sins of the Catholic church. Between them, the McDonagh brothers seem to have found a rich seam of Irish storytelling, balancing earthy comedy and even action thrills with trickier spiritual and existential questions. It’s a tone Gleeson seems perfectly suited to. Do they take it in turns? Do they argue over him?



The Guard. Photograph: Allstar/Optimum Releasing

“No, they don’t fight over me!” All the same, he’s discreet about them. “To try to explain two brothers, and then to meet the two brothers, would be a very, very silly thing to do.”

Working with McDonagh and Farrell again was a delight. “We had all learned a little bit, maybe, in the meantime and matured in different ways, but ultimately, the centre of everything was absolutely as if *In Bruges* happened yesterday.”

This could be his last collaboration with McDonagh, says Gleeson with some regret: “His muse will take him elsewhere.” After the success of *In Bruges*, McDonagh migrated to Hollywood, where he struck Oscar gold with 2017’s *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri*. “Was I aggrieved I wasn’t in it? No! Was I jealous? Yes. Would I like to have been in it? Of course. But I understand why not, too.”

Gleeson can take it at this stage in his career. He started late: he did not take up full-time acting until he was 34. Before that he was a teacher. He had performed on stage since school days, and continued acting in amateur groups including Paul Mercier’s revolutionary Passion Machine theatre company, which specialised in accessible, original stories of modern Irish life. “I really did think that the professional stage was for other people,” he says. “I’m not sure why, it just felt as if it was a little ... exotic. And I would go then to plays and think: ‘I’m not sure that was the right take on that at all.’ I kind of felt like: ‘I could do better than that.’”



With Kelly Reilly in *Calvary*. Photograph: Allstar/Momentum Pictures

He could. He graduated from stage to screen, including a part in the top Irish soap opera *Glenroe*. That was his first taste of celebrity. A stronger dose came in 1995, with *Braveheart*, in which he played Mel Gibson's stalwart, rock-throwing sidekick Hamish. This was back when Gibson was a major force in cinema, with a relatively unblemished copybook. He was "a force of nature", Gleeson recalls. "He had a really collaborative spirit, very driven, very much in charge, but his energy levels were unbelievable." He's still proud of the film, if not his part in it. "I didn't really realise I was supposed to lose any weight. I think Mel assumed I would have known that I had to be all buffed up and stuff like that."

Gleeson's next big hit was 1998's *The General*, for which John Boorman won best director at Cannes. Gleeson played the notorious Dublin criminal Martin Cahill – a charming but intimidating character, the first of many Gleeson would play. When I observe that he often plays menacing characters, he jokes: "That's because I haven't got a pretty face, you see."

He credits Boorman with helping him tap into his mean side when they started preparing for *The General*. "He said I was doing a good mimicry, but I had to go deeper than that. I didn't quite understand what he meant. And then between that and the start of filming, I started to get really bad dreams."

Things that had happened in his childhood resurfaced. Dublin was not always a safe place to grow up. “Things like bullying, a fella set a dog on me one time, or I got knocked down by a bus on my way to school. Little bits of things like that, but I suddenly started accessing that whole area of intimidation, nightmares and stuff. That’s where you have to go.” So if anything, Gleeson’s capacity for menace comes from having been on the receiving end of it. “It’s not difficult for me, because I saw it coming at me.”



As Knuckles McGinty in *Paddington 2*. Photograph: Jay Maidment/Warner Bros/Allstar

Gleeson has played against his menacing persona to fine effect, both in the Harry Potter movies and [in that other modern children's classic, Paddington 2](#), where he portrayed Knuckles McGinty, the grouchy prison cook and chief brawler (whose softer side is brought out by Paddington's transformative marmalade). He hasn't yet seen the recent [Nicolas Cage movie The Unbearable Weight of Massive Talent](#), which includes a running gag about how Paddington 2 is one of the greatest movies ever made. “They’re absolutely right though,” he says. “That is a perfect movie! Honestly I’m as proud of that as anything I’ve done.”

Gleeson’s career may not be slowing down, but he’s more relaxed about it than he used to be. “I don’t want to bother trying to make a silk purse out of

a sow's ear at all at this point.” He’s become better at taking a little time to smell the coffee. At least until something like State of the Union, or a McDonagh brother, or Paddington 2 comes along. “The excitement you get when you get something through the door that absolutely sings. And that you have to rise to it, rather than trying to drag it up by its bootstraps. When I smell it, when it jumps through the window, it’s just not going to go away.” You can have a fulfilling career *and* smell the coffee, he suggests. “Curiosity is the thing, I think. That’s where I am at the moment.”

Series two of State of the Union starts on 24 May at 10pm on BBC Two

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2022/may/24/i-havent-got-a-pretty-face-brendan-gleeson-on-fame-middle-age-and-tapping-into-his-mean-side>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

## Boris Johnson

# ‘How did he get away with this?’ What the papers say about new Johnson Partygate photos

Boris Johnson shown raising a glass at event during a national Covid lockdown, in newly released photos



British newspaper headlines for 24 May, 2022 Photograph: The Guardian

*[Samantha Lock](#)*

*[@Samantha\\_Lock](#)*

Mon 23 May 2022 23.12 EDT Last modified on Tue 24 May 2022 00.01 EDT

Images have emerged of [Boris Johnson](#) raising a glass at a No 10 party during a national Covid lockdown, sparking fresh acrimony across the UK front pages on Tuesday.

The prime minister is facing fresh claims of lying to MPs after four pictures, first published by ITV News, showed him [toasting a senior aide at a Downing Street leaving drinks event](#).

“Fresh danger for Johnson over No 10 drinks pictures”, the **Guardian** front page reads, alongside a photo of the prime minister raising his glass. The paper reported the Metropolitan police were under pressure too after Johnson escaped a fine despite attending the leaving do for director of communications Lee Cain.

Guardian front page, Tuesday 24 May 2022: Fresh danger for Johnson over No 10 drinks pictures [pic.twitter.com/smXhWqSOVD](#)

— The Guardian (@guardian) [May 23, 2022](#)

The **Mirror** asks: “How did he get away with this?” in its headline, with a subhead saying: “Johnson pictured drinking champagne at office party during lockdown … but no fine.”

Tomorrow's front page: How did he get away with this?  
[#TomorrowsPapersToday](#) <https://t.co/BaU2FFmPIN>  
[pic.twitter.com/JDzaiRYpUz](#)

— The Mirror (@DailyMirror) [May 23, 2022](#)

**The Times** goes with: “Partying PM ‘misled Commons’” and also displays the parliamentary [exchange from last December](#) in which the prime minister, when asked by the Labour MP Catherine West about events on the date in question, insisted “the rules were followed at all times”.

Tuesday’s TIMES: “Partying PM ‘misled Commons’ “.  
[#TomorrowsPapersToday](#) [pic.twitter.com/oLfkI7IORM](https://pic.twitter.com/oLfkI7IORM)

— Allie Hodgkins-Brown (@AllieHBNews) [May 23, 2022](#)

The **Telegraph** focuses on the Met's response to the ongoing Downing Street scandal. "Pressure on Met over pictures of PM raising a toast in No 10," its headline reads.

"Police asked why Johnson avoided Covid fine for aide's lockdown leaving party that was 'so obviously a breach'," the paper adds.

The front page of tomorrow's Daily Telegraph:

'Pressure on Met over pictures of PM raising a toast in No 10'[#TomorrowsPapersToday](#)

Sign up for the Front Page newsletter<https://t.co/x8AV4O6L2Y>  
[pic.twitter.com/kXZdiZ2kjx](https://pic.twitter.com/kXZdiZ2kjx)

— The Telegraph (@Telegraph) [May 23, 2022](#)

The customarily loyal **Express** joins in focusing on the questions the police face over their inquiry, with its headline: "Nothing to see here! Yard says Boris broke no rules". It notes that the Metropolitan police believe the prime minister was not partying at the leaving do.

Tuesday's Daily EXPRESS: "Nothing To See Here! Yard says Boris Broke No Rules" [#TomorrowsPapersToday](#)  
[pic.twitter.com/UWlFYLtJZc](https://pic.twitter.com/UWlFYLtJZc)

— Allie Hodgkins-Brown (@AllieHBNews) [May 23, 2022](#)

**Metro** puns with "Lockdown in one, PM", adding its own voice to the general query: "How did Boris not get fined for this booze-up?"

Tomorrow's Paper Today □

□Lockdown In One, PM  
How did Boris not get fined for this booze-up?  
[pic.twitter.com/WeCg2PQ2VX](https://pic.twitter.com/WeCg2PQ2VX)

— Metro (@MetroUK) [May 23, 2022](#)

The **Independent** takes a slightly more matter-of-fact approach. “PM pictured drinking at lockdown party in No 10,” its headline reads.

Tuesday’s INDEPENDENT Digital: “PM pictured drinking at lockdown party in No 10” [#TomorrowsPapersToday](#) [pic.twitter.com/7suaYrHkDE](https://pic.twitter.com/7suaYrHkDE)

— Allie Hodgkins-Brown (@AllieHBNews) [May 23, 2022](#)

“Lockdown party photos hit PM,” says the **i**, noting the PM is awaiting Tory and public reaction to the latest Covid revelation.

Tuesday's front page: Lockdown party photos hit PM [#TomorrowsPapersToday](#)

Latest from [@ChaplainChloe](#) [@HugoGye](#) [@RichardVaughan1](#): <https://t.co/nX5RALjZt0> <pic.twitter.com/nf99VqM9aE>

— i newspaper (@theipaper) [May 23, 2022](#)

Staying away from the subject entirely, the **Daily Mail** opts to splash on a possible rail strike, warning of “power blackouts, petrol shortages and empty shelves” alongside a picture of the Queen riding in a buggy at the Chelsea Flower Show.

Tuesday's [@DailyMailUK](#) [#MailFrontPages](#) <pic.twitter.com/27rRURbr61>

— Daily Mail U.K. (@DailyMailUK) [May 23, 2022](#)

**The Sun** makes only a fleeting mention of the No 10 allegations, with its front page dedicated to an off-duty policewoman celebrating on the football

pitch. Directing readers to a page six story on Johnson, the front page reference is: “Only here for the cheers”.

On tomorrow's front page: Off duty top cop caught on CCTV celebrating on the turf after taking part in pitch invasion  
<https://t.co/i1Iaccrn8Q> [pic.twitter.com/9T09ga3GEu](https://pic.twitter.com/9T09ga3GEu)

— The Sun (@TheSun) [May 23, 2022](#)

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/may/24/how-did-he-get-away-with-this-what-the-papers-say-about-new-johnson-partygate-photos>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

## 2022.05.24 - Opinion

- In the Passport Office queue I see distress, despair and the dilapidated state of Britain
- The UK's view of Rwanda is deeply ignorant – I once fell prey to it myself
- State schools are not the wild west and ‘Britain’s strictest headmistress’ is not Clint Eastwood
- Sunak says he can’t help the cost of living crisis. What about these five simple steps?

[\*\*Opinion\*\*](#)[\*\*Civil service\*\*](#)

## **In the Passport Office queue I see distress, despair and the dilapidated state of Britain**

[\*\*Polly Toynbee\*\*](#)



From mangled visas to delayed driving licences, public service cuts are ruining what's left of the essential services we all use



‘By 2016 the civil service was already cut to its smallest since the second world war.’ Photograph: Dominic Lipinski/PA

Tue 24 May 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 24 May 2022 07.31 EDT

At Globe House, the London Passport Office, I want to see where rightwing anarchy leads. The queues outside are a publicly visible sign of the dilapidated state, people indignantly eager to tell stories that seem to signal the collapse of public services, things once solid crumbling away.

The first person I meet is a father from Chichester with his small son, on a last try for the boy’s passport for a family holiday to Greece that was booked three years ago. “It’s lost if we don’t go tomorrow.” A renewal applied for in February was “lost in the post” despite proof of postage. Then they were told a Passport Office IT “systems upgrade” in March had lost it. “Then they wanted another copy of our marriage certificate. My wife spent hours on the phone daily to get an appointment.”

Next they were told the passport was in Newport, Wales, so he headed there at 4am. But in Newport, the Passport Office said it was in Glasgow. When he reached the Glasgow office by phone, they said it wasn’t there: “A nice girl said she’d only worked there three days.” He kept calling. Finally they

told him to collect it in London today. “Maybe it’ll be there, maybe it won’t,” he says, in an incredulous daze.

Even worse cases include a couple desperate to see their son, who has been taken seriously ill in Sierra Leone. They show me a photo of him unconscious in hospital covered with tubes. They have flights booked for that night, but a passport is lost in the system: they hope for compassion if they ever reach the inquiry desk.

The Home Office’s bad management is longstanding, but austerity and now ideological anti-statism have [made things worse](#). The chaos over [visas for war-stricken Ukrainians](#) lifted the lid on a shockingly punitive culture and a shrunken state’s incapacity.

Look elsewhere and you see government services in meltdown. Pity the drivers unable to work while waiting for licences in the [DVLA logjam](#), or businesses in cashflow crises waiting for delayed refunds owed by HMRC: that service had its staffing levels and resources [cut by 17%](#) between 2010 and 2018, worsening the gap in uncollected taxes. Meanwhile, a [56% cut](#) in trading standards officers from 2009 to 2016 helped [cost the Treasury £2.3bn](#) in lost tax from rogue cigarette sales in 2019-20 alone.

Most things falling apart are invisible, with no queues to be seen, just an erosion of the basics that began with the first swing of the post-2010 austerity axe, long before Covid. Barely a week goes by without revelations of decrepitude: last week the National Audit Office [found regulators struggling](#) since Brexit to take on inspections that had previously been done by the EU. The Competition and Markets Authority, the Health and Safety Executive and the Food Standards Agency can’t recruit enough staff, lacking lawyers, vets and toxicologists.

“Taking back control” requires more controllers. Instead, the government has just announced a random [cull of 91,000 civil servants](#), a fifth of the entire service. There’s no need for “deregulation” or “bonfires of red tape” when incapacity quietly stops inspections anyway.

Remember all that Tory “elf and safety” mockery over myths such as banning conker fights? Since 2009, council health and safety inspectors have

been cut by 54% and prosecutions by health and safety authorities have fallen 38%. Interventions from the Equality and Human Rights Commission have fallen by 27% and construction site inspections have dropped 18%. These are samples of enforcement from [Unchecked UK](#), an organisation funded by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, the Ecology Trust and others. Their findings on cuts to environmental inspections of water, air and agriculture are hair-raising.

This week I spoke to environmental health officers around the country: one said just the day before she'd found unregistered food outlets whose owners were utterly ignorant of hygiene rules. Despite ever-increasing numbers of food purveyors, there are far too few inspectors. Huge numbers are living in private rented housing, and councils have no idea who or where their landlords are. The public accounts committee has reported [589,000 rented homes](#) with dangerous hazards, with too few inspectors expert in complex law to process cases against rogue landlords.

Yet again a [promised employment bill](#) was missing-presumed-dead from the Queen's speech. The average employer can expect a check by HMRC's puny minimum wage inspection team [once every 500 years](#). These are just a few of essential functions to be eroded once again by Jacob Rees-Mogg's "bloodbath for the civil service", as the Daily Mail put it gloatingly. Jill Rutter of the Institute for Government tells me there was no assessment of need before adopting this measure, just a crude cut back to the service's size before Brexit and Covid. But by 2016 the civil service had already been [cut to its smallest](#) since the second world war.

The cuts will come through hiring freezes and voluntary redundancy, a recipe for losing the brightest and most expert civil servants. With areas such as the north-east of England most heavily reliant on public jobs, forget "levelling up". Will [new offices](#) for the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy in Salford be allowed to hire locally?

The government will pay a political price for this. The kitsch "nanny state" and "red tape" obsession is a freakish Westminster Tory cult, not what most people want. [Polling in Tory blue heartlands](#) for Unchecked UK matches its polling in Tory "red wall" seats: most Tory voters reject any weakened environmental and health and safety protections. Most who voted to leave

the EU wanted higher UK standards. Tory voters may dislike the EU, but they don't want to get food poisoning – and they do want their new navy passports to arrive so they can visit it.

- Polly Toynbee is a Guardian columnist
- 

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/may/24/passport-office-britain-dilapidated-public-service-cuts>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

## [OpinionRwanda](#)

# The UK's view of Rwanda is deeply ignorant – I once fell prey to it myself

[Giles Foden](#)

The refugee deal with President Kagame reveals a profound misunderstanding of history



Priti Patel with the mayor of Kigali, Pudence Rubingisa, left, visiting premises allocated for refugees in Rwanda on 14 April 2022. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Tue 24 May 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 24 May 2022 07.21 EDT

It's easy to fall prey to misconceptions about Rwanda. I've done so myself while writing about the small country – about twice the size of Yorkshire – to which we are dispatching our "migrant problem". With flights to Kigali imminent, and the president, Paul Kagame, proposing alleged UK-based "génocidaires" be extradited [to face trial](#), I wonder if we really understand what we're getting into.

Faults in Priti Patel's policy should not need rehearsing. Yet so great is western ignorance and amnesia about Rwanda (and the wider Great Lakes region of Africa) that the arguments against require reinforcement. For there has, since the genocide, been a "[blank ahistoricism](#)" about the country, as the Rwanda expert Michela Wrong has put it.

The arguments against this devil's bargain with the Rwandan government include: its assassination or abduction of rivals abroad, notably allegations surrounding the cases of [Patrick Karegeya](#) (Kagame's former intelligence chief, strangled in a Johannesburg hotel – the government has denied any involvement) and [Paul Rusesabagina](#) (subject of the film Hotel Rwanda, tricked into flying to Rwanda from Texas); the suppression of activists and journalists within Rwanda; a poor history of hosting migrants (many Eritreans and Sudanese, sent from Israel, [fled Rwanda for Uganda](#) – others started the journey to Europe); a likely lack of oversight of UK funds ([initially £120m](#)) paid to Rwanda; and, not least, the difficulty of [fending off challenges](#) by – to use Johnson's judiciary-hating phrase – "lefty lawyers".

It's fallacious to say, as Patel has done, that the policy is right simply because no one is offering alternatives. It's instructive, too, that fellow Conservative Andrew Mitchell, first among those few MPs who know Rwanda, does not support this policy. Maybe he agrees with David Davis that the scheme is "[moral delinquency](#)". These are not the usual bedfellows of lefty lawyers.

My own fitful learning began more than 30 years ago, in October 1990. From a house on the Uganda-Rwanda border, while writing The Last King of Scotland, I watched canvas-sided lorries traverse the valley below. They were carrying troops of the [Rwandan Patriotic Front](#) (RPF) to incursion points from Uganda into Rwanda. This force, consisting mainly of exiled Tutsi veterans of the Ugandan wars that followed Idi Amin's despotism, was on that occasion repulsed. Next developed 18 months of guerrilla warfare, led by Kagame, from an RPF base in the cross-border Virunga mountains. Later came the RPF's militarised response to the genocide of 1994, again led by the same man who will host some [50 migrants](#) the British government is hoping to send in coming weeks.

No one should doubt that Hutu supremacists were responsible for the genocide and Kagame's forces ended it. These facts should not mask the continuing cauldron of complexity into which we are now diving headlong. In respect of extrajudicial killings since the genocide, the Rwandan government has honoured itself almost as much as Putin's Russia. Its history of this is not limited to notable opponents. During the first and second [Congo wars](#) (1996-1997 and 1998-2003), attacks on Hutu civilians who had fled to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), committed by proxy Rwandan militias and the Rwandan army, [cost the lives](#) of tens of thousands.

Data for the execution of Hutu refugees are recorded in Gérard Prunier's *From Genocide to Continental War: The Congolese Conflict and the Crisis of Contemporary Africa* (2009). Western nations turned their eyes from Rwanda's "refugee management programmes" during that period. Unwilling to risk a fragile post-genocide stability, they also had political and natural-resource interests in DRC. And they did not understand the complexity. Neither did I at the time – not enough, or too late.

What happened in the Congo wars, forming the historical basis of my scales-fallen-from-eyes novel, *Freight Dogs*, is why I doubt Johnson and Patel's assertion that Rwanda is transformed into "one of the safest countries in the world". It's not just Conservatives who don't get it: those two wars involve a particularly British disregard of the Great Lakes. The second war officially ended in July 2003, with the worst massacres long dispatched; only in April had the Blair government, focused on Iraq, begun [to half consider them](#). Five years later, as new violence erupted, [calls for EU intervention](#) were [blocked by Britain](#).

Rwanda was the prime mover in much of this, although at least eight other African nations were implicated in the second war, along with myriad armed groups. This little reported suite of antagonisms caused a death toll of 5.4 million. That figure includes mortality from dysentery, malaria and malnutrition, as refugees fled fighting. It remains nonetheless the deadliest global conflict since the second world war, causing chaos in DRC, a country nearly four times the size of Ukraine, with about 50 million more people. One might speak of black lives not mattering. Rage about this was why I wrote my novel, which took all too long, because the subject is indeed so complex.

Despite [talks last month](#) to get Rwanda's proxy rebel group, M23, to lay down its arms, conflict continues in eastern DRC, albeit much less so than formerly. On Monday and Sunday, M23 attacked UN forces in the region. Uganda, not Rwanda, has borne the brunt of a consequent refugee crisis in the Great Lakes – among other factors, it is perceived as safer than Rwanda.

Uganda hosts the [largest population of refugees](#) in Africa: more than 1.5 million, of which nearly 460,000 are from DRC, along with many from other nations, including Rwanda itself. Given Rwanda's role in causing DRC and its own citizens to flee, is it wise to be sending people there? Or anywhere in the Great Lakes, a region that has so often fallen victim to itself and the asymmetric morality western nations apply to it.

To do so as neighbouring east Africa faces a severe drought, with the UN's World Food Programme saying [20 million people](#) are at immediate risk of hunger, which will cause further flows of refugees, shows how wrong this policy is. We are a small island with a relatively small migrant problem. Even smaller Rwanda, so often misconceived, should not be coming into the solution at all.

- Giles Foden is the author of Freight Dogs, Zanzibar and The Last King of Scotland
- *Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a letter of up to 300 words to be considered for publication, email it to us at [guardian.letters@theguardian.com](mailto:guardian.letters@theguardian.com)*

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/may/24/west-view-rwanda-uk-refugee-deal-president-kagame>

[Opinion](#)[Education](#)

## **State schools are not the wild west and ‘Britain’s strictest headmistress’ is not Clint Eastwood**

[Zoe Williams](#)



The right wing press believes Katharine Birbalsingh has done something magical by creating a safe learning environment in a state school. But that just betrays their ignorance



Katharine Birbalsingh – headteacher at Michaela community school in north London. Photograph: David Levene/The Guardian

Tue 24 May 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 24 May 2022 07.22 EDT

The documentary Britain’s Strictest Headmistress hit the small screen on Sunday. It continues to do the diligent work of Katharine Birbalsingh, in mythologising herself so furiously that, if you didn’t have a memory or know any better, you would think she invented the phrases “please” and “thank you”.

Birbalsingh is not a bad figurehead for the age we are living through, that of asymmetric polarisation. She can come out with any idea she likes – [girls don't like maths](#) or [liberals don't like Shakespeare](#) - but express any hint of dissent, ask even the mildest question about the evidence base, and you might be referred to by her defenders as the hysterical mob. It’s generally safer to just leave her be, which is fine, because more interesting than her didactic method is the response to it from rightwing commentary.

The consensus in this camp is that Birbalsingh has done something incredibly unusual, magical even, in creating a safe learning environment. And yet this wouldn’t fly without an audience that had never set foot inside any other state school.

I went to a private school myself, so I can track the logic precisely. They start with the premise that private education must be better, since how else could you explain the superior results, university places and jobs? They set this against their own experience of private school, which was probably mixed – some good teachers, some bad, and quite a bit of bullying – and they proceed to the conclusion that state schools must be much worse: “thicker” kids, worse behaviour and a total lack of aspiration. Sprinkle on a bit of half-remembered Grange Hill, and wham – regular state schools are the wild west and Katharine Birbalsingh is Clint Eastwood.

- Zoe Williams is a Guardian columnist
  - ***Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a letter of up to 300 words to be considered for publication, email it to us at [guardian.letters@theguardian.com](mailto:guardian.letters@theguardian.com)***
- 

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/may/24/britain-strictest-headmistress-katharine-birbalsingh-state-school>

## OpinionCost of living crisis

# Sunak says he can't help the cost of living crisis. What about these five simple steps?

[George Dibb](#)

Even business leaders are starting to clamour for the fairer, green solutions staring the chancellor in the face



‘Business leaders were spooked when Rishi Sunak’s CBI speech left many people wondering if he understood the scale of the challenge.’ Photograph: Peter Nicholls/Reuters

Tue 24 May 2022 05.13 EDT Last modified on Tue 24 May 2022 12.44 EDT

Rishi Sunak has claimed there’s nothing he can do about the external global circumstances driving the cost of living crisis, but he’s dodged the real question: how can he best respond, and avoid an escalating crisis and a

costly recession? In fact, there are fair, green solutions to this crisis staring us right in the face.

And they're solutions that should get support from business. Over the past few days, the trickle of increasingly panicked messages from businesses on the cost of living crisis has become a flood. Already alarmed by the Bank of England's warning of a looming recession and "apocalyptic" price rises, business leaders were spooked when Sunak's speech at the CBI last week left many people wondering if he understood the scale of the challenge. At the weekend, the [chief executive of E.On](#) – a company not known for its economic radicalism – declared that "the most important thing is that the government intervenes" and the chancellor must "tax those with the broadest shoulders".

Consumer spending drives the economy. If people are struggling to pay their gas bills, they have less money in their pockets to spend on the high street or a restaurant meal. Which is why, as the CBI's director general, Tony Danker, has said, Sunak's first step should be investing in social security via increases in universal credit and legacy benefits to prevent families falling into destitution. This would also help to stabilise the economy, not fuel inflation. Income tax cuts wouldn't help here. They'd give a big bonus to the rich, but the poorest, already facing the choice between heating and eating, wouldn't benefit at all.

Second, we need a serious industrial strategy to boost confidence, give long-term business certainty and restore investment in the UK's productive capacity. Sunak promised to increase private investment with a "super-deduction" incentive, but in fact it fell in the last quarter. To make this long-term vision work, Sunak should [break up the Treasury](#) and form a new Ministry for Economic Strategy with the target to drive investment-led, green growth.

Third, rather than continuing to slip on our green ambitions, we must double down. Every home newly insulated and each wind turbine erected across the UK will reduce household fuel bills. We need to make this investment before 2050 anyway – so let's do it now, to support the economy and bring down electricity bills sooner. As Danker said, non-inflationary, green investment

opportunities are there for the taking, but government must “confirm them, launch them and fund them”.

To do this we should [build on the lessons learned during the pandemic](#) and form a government taskforce to drive public and private sectors to collaborate better, spur business innovation and unblock the supply chain. We need an effective civil service, not one with a recruitment freeze and job cuts hanging over it. That collaboration, after all, not greed or capitalism, is what got us Covid vaccines and could bring lower energy bills too.

Next, the government must make clear to businesses that just as they were supported in the pandemic, now companies must themselves act responsibly. Andrew Bailey, the governor of the Bank of England, [misrepresented the problem](#) when he said wage restraint was most important in stopping inflation. In fact, companies can reduce their profits too, to keep prices down – as the Bank has since acknowledged.

Profits have [gone up over recent decades](#), particularly in uncompetitive, concentrated sectors. In a particularly egregious example, petrol stations [haven't passed on](#) the fuel duty cut to customers, benefiting their bottom line at the public's expense. [Evidence from the US](#) suggests that recent rising prices have been disproportionately driven by rising profits, not wages. The real issue is that we've been too relaxed about some companies in some sectors building too much market power for too long. Their excessive market power is pushing prices higher still.

At the same time, the risk of a wage-price spiral is low because of a collapse in trade unionism. The last time inflation was at 9%, [more than half of workers were in a trade union](#); today it's less than a quarter. Consequently, not only are wages failing to keep pace with inflation, but we're seeing their biggest fall since records began. Instead of forcing workers to take the strain, companies should show profit restraint and cut their dividend payouts.

Finally, as fossil fuel companies pile up huge, unexpected profits from the very crisis that is pushing [millions into absolute poverty](#), it's fair for the government to redistribute these into welfare and income support. Even the [former Treasury minister Jesse Norman](#) and the CEO of E.On seem to agree.

Like Italy, we should levy a windfall tax on oil companies whose profits have soared merely because of Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine. Extraordinary unearned profits call for extraordinary measures.

Sunak needs to realise that intervening now to avert a recession, help the worst-off families and secure a green transition is the best way to support everyone. This is the most responsible thing to do. In fact, as the penny-pinching chancellor should realise, we simply cannot afford not to.

- George Dibb is head of the IPPR Centre for Economic Justice

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/may/24/sunak-cost-of-living-crisis-business-green>

## 2022.05.24 - Around the world

- [Donald Trump New York subpoenas longtime assistant Rhona Graff in business dealings inquiry](#)
- [Joe Biden Ukraine invasion shows need for ‘free and open’ Indo-Pacific, president tells Quad summit](#)
- [Explainer What is the Quad, and how did it come about?](#)
- [Airbnb Lockdowns force shutdown in China](#)

**Donald Trump**

## New York subpoenas Trump's longtime assistant in business dealings inquiry

Rhona Graff will be questioned about the former president's involvement in the Trump Organization's financial records



Donald Trump's longtime executive assistant Rhona Graff has been subpoenaed by New York's attorney general's office. Photograph: Dominick Reuter/AFP/Getty Images

*Associated Press*

Mon 23 May 2022 21.19 EDT Last modified on Tue 24 May 2022 09.21 EDT

The New York attorney general's office has subpoenaed Donald Trump's longtime executive assistant and plans to question her under oath next week as part of its civil investigation into the former president's business dealings.

The subpoena for Rhona Graff was disclosed by a lawyer for the office of the attorney general, Letitia James, in court papers opposing Trump's latest bid to rid himself of a contempt of court order for being slow to respond to a subpoena for documents and other evidence.

Graff's deposition is scheduled for 31 May, special litigation counsel Andrew Amer said in the court filing.

Amer said James's office plans to ask Graff about a variety of issues, including Trump's involvement in the preparation of annual financial statements that have been a focus of the attorney general's investigation.

Graff left Trump's company, the Trump Organization, in April 2021, but was among several people involved in keeping his records who provided affidavits to Trump's lawyers late on Friday as they sought to have his contempt order lifted.

Graff, who started working for Trump in 1987, has been described as his gatekeeper and right hand. Trump's former personal lawyer, Michael Cohen, wrote in his book that she had her own office at Trump Tower with a large filing cabinet containing folders on various issues pertaining to Trump.

Amer said James's office wants to question Graff under oath, in part, because her affidavit only described the company's retention and preservation practices for some of Trump's records, and lacked detail about how his statements of financial condition were handled.

"Did [Trump] ever review the statement in draft form before he signed the final version each year?" Amer wrote, listing questions left unanswered by Graff's affidavit.

"Did he annotate any drafts with comments and/or questions?" Amer continued. "If so, what happened to those drafts? In what form was the final version of the statement presented for Mr Trump's approval in each year? How did he make his approval clear? Ms Graff's affidavit does not say."

A message seeking comment was left with a lawyer who represented Graff in past legal matters.

James has said her three-year investigation uncovered evidence the Trump Organization misstated the value of assets such as skyscrapers and golf courses on financial statements for more than a decade. Trump denies the allegations and has called James's investigation "racist" and a politically motivated "witch-hunt".

That subpoena sought records pertaining to Trump's annual financial statements, development projects, even communications with Forbes magazine, where he worked to burnish his image as a wealthy businessman.

Once Graff testifies, Amer said the attorney general's office will advise Engoron if she has provided satisfactory testimony, answering questions not addressed in her affidavit, and whether Trump's contempt order should then be lifted.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/may/23/donald-trump-rhona-graff-new-york-subpoena-trump-organization>

**Joe Biden**

## **Joe Biden: invasion of Ukraine shows need for free and open Indo-Pacific**

Leaders of US, India, Japan and Australia meet in Tokyo for Quad summit  
Beijing claims is an attempt to contain China



Joe Biden at the Quad summit in Tokyo. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

*[Justin McCurry](#) in Tokyo and agencies*

Tue 24 May 2022 04.14 EDTFirst published on Tue 24 May 2022 00.30 EDT

The turmoil caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine has underlined the need for a free Indo-Pacific region, [Joe Biden](#) has said at a meeting with regional partners that Beijing has condemned as part of a US-led attempt to contain China.

Biden and the leaders of a loose alliance known as the Quad – India, Japan and Australia – reaffirmed their commitment to a “free and open” Indo-Pacific during talks in Tokyo on Tuesday. The comments came one day after the US president said Washington would be [ready to intervene militarily to defend Taiwan](#), prompting China to accuse him of “playing with fire”.

Biden later appeared to attempt to play down his remarks, saying the US policy of “strategic ambiguity” on Taiwan remained unchanged, according to media reports.

Washington is required by law to provide Taiwan with weapons for self-defence, but under a decades-long policy of strategic ambiguity, it has never explicitly committed itself to intervening militarily to protect the island in the event of a Chinese attack – a stance that Biden appeared to have contradicted.

But on Tuesday, Biden, asked if there had been any change to the US policy on Taiwan, responded: “No.”

“The policy has not changed at all,” he said. “I stated that when I made my statement yesterday,” he said after a round of talks with his Quad colleagues.

The four leaders – Biden, Japan’s prime minister, Fumio Kishida, the Indian prime minister, Narendra Modi, and Australia’s new prime minister, Anthony Albanese – were eager to present a united front. But India’s refusal to condemn Russia’s invasion of Ukraine or impose sanctions forced the Quad to issue an ambiguous condemnation of the Kremlin.

Their joint statement stopped short of explicit criticism of Russia’s actions in Ukraine, saying only that they opposed “all attempts to change the status quo by force, particularly in the Indo-Pacific”.

They also opposed “the militarisation of disputed features, the dangerous use of coastguard vessels and maritime militia and efforts to disrupt other countries’ offshore resource exploitation activities” – an apparent reference to Chinese activity in the South and East China Seas.

The statement avoided explicit condemnation of either China or Russia, despite Biden's earlier warning that like-minded countries had to "make sure we deliver" in what he described as a battle of "democracies versus autocracies".

With Modi sitting nearby, Biden said the leaders were "navigating through a dark hour in our shared history" due to Russia's war on Ukraine. He added that it was "more than just a European issue, it's a global issue". Modi did not address it in his public remarks as the summit got under way.

The US strategy was for a "free, open, connected, secure and resilient Indo-Pacific", Biden said. "Russia's assault on Ukraine only heightens the importance of those goals, the fundamental principles of the international order."

Kishida said the Russian invasion "shakes the foundation of international order" and was a direct challenge to the principles of the United Nations.

"We should not allow similar things to happen in the Indo-Pacific region," he said.

While [Japan](#) and Australia have joined the US in condemning the Russian invasion and imposing sanctions, India, which buys most of its military hardware from Russia, has so far refused to do either.

The divisions over Russia highlight the political limits of the Quad, whose focus is on practical cooperation in areas such as coronavirus vaccines, infrastructure, climate change, space, cybersecurity and critical and emerging technologies.

China will have closely followed Tuesday's summit, only the second in-person meeting since the Quad's first formal summit last year.

China has described the Quad as an attempt to form an Asian version of Nato, although the four members have not agreed a mutual defence pact.

Quad members say the group is meant to deepen economic, diplomatic and military ties among the four countries. Biden said the grouping was of growing importance, calling it a “central” partnership. “In a short time, we’ve shown the Quad isn’t just a passing fad. We mean business,” he said.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/may/24/russias-invasion-of-ukraine-underlines-need-for-free-and-open-indo-pacific-biden-says>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

## World news

# What is the Quad, and how did it come about?

Leaders of the US, Japan, Australia and India have gathered in Tokyo for a summit of the Quad. What are its origins?



US president Joe Biden is welcomed by Japan's prime minister, Fumio Kishida, in Tokyo for Tuesday's Quad summit. Photograph: Zhang Xiaoyu/AP

*Associated Press*

Mon 23 May 2022 22.34 EDT Last modified on Mon 23 May 2022 22.36 EDT

Leaders of the US, Japan, Australia and [India](#) gathered in Tokyo on Tuesday for a summit of the Quad. What is the group, where did it come from and why do diplomats keep coming up with strange names for various partnerships?

## What is the Quad?

Formally the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, the Quad began as a loose partnership after the 2004 Indian ocean tsunami, when the four countries joined together to provide humanitarian and disaster assistance. It was formalised in 2007 by then Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe but fell dormant for nearly a decade, particularly amid Australian concerns that it would irritate China.

The group was resurrected in 2017, reflecting changing attitudes towards China's growing regional influence. Both the Trump and Biden administrations saw the Quad as key to a pivot towards placing more focus on the Indo-Pacific region, particularly as a counterweight to China's assertive actions. The Quad leaders held their first formal summit in 2021 and met again virtually in March.



Anthony Albanese, Joe Biden, Fumio Kishida and Narendra Modi at the Japanese prime minister's office. Photograph: Zhang Xiaoyu/EPA

## Is it an 'Asian Nato'?

China has complained that the group represents an attempt to form an “Asian Nato”, though unlike that alliance there is no mutual-defence pact in effect. Quad members say the group is meant to deepen economic, diplomatic and military ties among the four countries. And while they don’t often explicitly say it, those partnerships are meant to be a bulwark against Chinese aggression. In a March 2021 declaration laying out the “spirit of the Quad”, the leaders said: “We bring diverse perspectives and are united in a shared vision for the free and open Indo-Pacific. We strive for a region that is free, open, inclusive, healthy, anchored by democratic values, and unconstrained by coercion.”

## **Who are the new faces?**

Tuesday’s meeting marks the first in-person gathering of the group for the Japanese prime minister, Fumio Kishida, who took office in October 2021, as well as for Australia’s new prime minister, Anthony Albanese, who was sworn in on Monday, two days after Australia’s parliamentary election and one day before the summit.

## **What about India?**

The Indian prime minister, Narendra Modi, is attending as he faces increasing global scrutiny over his government’s crackdown on minorities, and some authoritarian tendencies. The other members of the Quad have been united in standing up against Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, especially with sanctions, but India increased its purchases of Russian energy supplies after the war began. Moreover, the invasion has led to food shortages that are causing price spikes, yet India banned wheat exports following a heatwave that could make this global challenge much tougher to resolve.

## **Who else is involved?**

South Korea has expressed interest in joining the Quad, though US officials have said they are not contemplating adjusting the membership. The group has held “Quad-plus” meetings that have included South Korea, New Zealand and Vietnam, which could form the basis for future expansion or partnership.

---

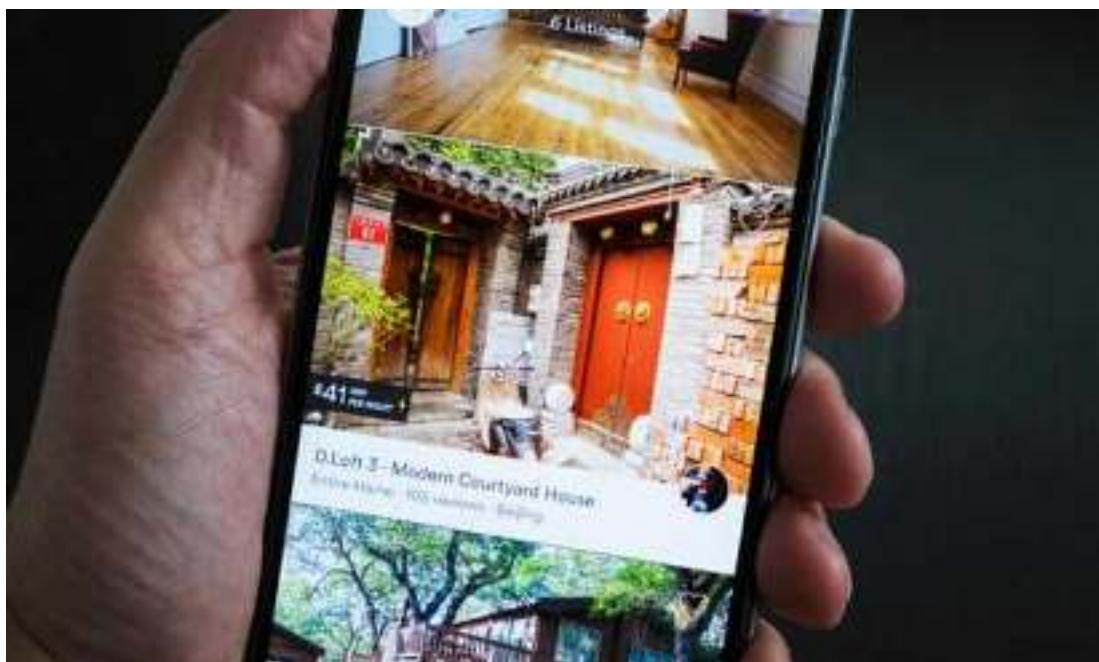
This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/24/what-is-the-quad-and-how-did-it-come-about>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

## [Airbnb](#)

# Airbnb to close in China amid repeated Covid lockdowns

With pandemic restrictions showing no sign of ending, home rental service says it will cease taking bookings for accommodation inside China from 30 July



Airbnb launched in China in 2016 and is now closing down its business there amid coronavirus lockdowns. Photograph: FocusDigital/Alamy

*[Helen Davidson](#) and agencies  
[@heldavidson](#)*

Tue 24 May 2022 01.42 EDT Last modified on Wed 25 May 2022 00.10 EDT

Airbnb is closing down its business inside China indefinitely, as the country's zero-Covid policy, lockdowns and travel restrictions continue.

On Tuesday Airbnb told its China-based users it would cease taking all bookings for accommodation and experiences in [China](#) from 30 July. The ability to book for dates beyond 29 July was suspended on Tuesday morning, according to screenshots of the Airbnb notice shared across Chinese social media. An attempt by the Guardian to make bookings from outside China after that date produced an error message.

According to a source familiar with the decision, who confirmed the shutdown, Airbnb's domestic business in China is suffering under China's pandemic restrictions, with no indication that authorities intend to move towards co-existence with the virus or opening its borders.

As a wave of Omicron cases has spread across China, the government has [doubled down on its policy](#) of eliminating Covid-19. Major cities [including Shanghai](#) and Beijing have been subjected to city-wide or localised lockdowns, and there are widespread travel restrictions between cities and provinces.

The accommodation provider has operated inside China since 2016 with domestic listings across the country. In that time about 25 million guests have made bookings, according to the company, but it is costly and complex to operate and faces strong local competition. The revenue from China-based stays account for approximately 1% of global takings, the source told the Guardian, and Covid-19 has worsened the issues and heightened their impact.

Chinese media outlet, Pheonix news, reported Airbnb would maintain an office with “hundreds” of employees in Beijing.

The company declined to comment further on the record.

The news became a trending topic on China's Weibo social media platform on Tuesday, with many comments focusing on how little a share of the market Airbnb held, even before the pandemic.

Chinese residents face heavy restrictions on international travel, which has affected the global tourism industry. Between 2010 and 2019, the number of

Chinese tourists travelling overseas nearly tripled to 155 million.

But as the rest of the world reopens, Airbnb claims it reached a record high number of bookings in the first quarter of this year, with more than 102 million bookings for accommodation and experiences. “Guests are booking more than ever before,” Airbnb told shareholders in a letter. “Looking ahead, we see strong sustained pent-up demand.”

The company said trends of people booking stays away from urban areas and staying relatively close to home continued, but guests were also returning to cities and making cross-border trips.

*Additional reporting by Xiaoqian Zhu*

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2022/may/24/airbnb-to-close-in-china-amid-repeated-covid-lockdowns>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

# Headlines

- [Live Sue Gray report: minister says ‘extraordinary pressure’ on No 10 staff during pandemic helps explain Partygate](#)
- [Partygate UK government briefings accusing Sue Gray of ‘playing politics’ condemned by minister](#)
- [Taiwan US would defend island if attacked by China, says Joe Biden](#)
- [Australia New PM flags ‘difficult’ China ties as he heads to Tokyo for Quad meeting](#)
- [Australia Teal independents: who are they and how did they upset Australia’s election?](#)

[Skip to key events](#)

[Politics live with Andrew Sparrow](#)[Politics](#)

# Partygate: pictures emerge showing Boris Johnson drinking at No 10 leaving do during lockdown – as it happened

- Latest updates: ITV obtains photographs of [Boris Johnson drinking at a Downing Street event](#) that appears to be a party. This live blog is now closed, [read our full report here](#).
- [Latest Boris Johnson photos bring Partygate scandal back into focus](#)
- [How Johnson told MPs there was no party in No 10 on 13 November](#)
- [Meeting between PM and Sue Gray instigated by No 10](#)
- [Summary of Downing Street lobby briefing](#)
- [Cummings says he expects Partygate pictures to emerge ‘very quickly’](#)
- [Summary of Treasury minister Simon Clarke’s morning interviews](#)
- [PM told by committee to issue 11 corrections over false jobs claims](#)
- [Britons want to carry on working from home, ONS survey says](#)

Updated 5d ago

[Nicola Slawson \(now\)](#) and [Andrew Sparrow \(earlier\)](#)

Mon 23 May 2022 18.48 EDTFirst published on Mon 23 May 2022 04.24 EDT

Partygate: Boris Johnson under fresh scrutiny after new party pictures emerge – video report

[Nicola Slawson \(now\)](#) and [Andrew Sparrow \(earlier\)](#)

Mon 23 May 2022 18.48 EDTFirst published on Mon 23 May 2022 04.24 EDT

## Key events

- [5d agoFull story: Latest Boris Johnson photos bring Partygate scandal back into focus](#)
- [6d ago'The Met didn't want to upset No. 10,' says Lord Paddick over Partygate](#)
- [6d agoFull story: Photos show Boris Johnson with glass of wine at No 10 party he was not fined for](#)
- [6d agoLabour says there's 'no doubt now' Johnson lied about Partygate](#)
- [6d agoHow Johnson told MPs there was no party in No 10 on 13 November - the day he was pictured drinking at leaving do](#)
- [6d agoNo 10 plays down significance of pictures showing PM drinking at No 10 leaving do](#)
- [6d agoPictures released showing PM drinking at No 10 leaving do during lockdown in November 2020](#)

Show key events only

## Live feed

Show key events only

From 6d ago

[11.15](#)

## Pictures released showing PM drinking at No 10 leaving do during lockdown in November 2020

ITV News' **Paul Brand** has obtained [photographs of Boris Johnson drinking](#) at a Downing Street event that looks very much like a party.

The pictures were taken at a leaving do for Lee Cain, the PM's director of communications, on 13 November 2020.



Photograph: ITV news

The images will fuel claims that Johnson was lying when he told MPs more than a year later that all the Covid guidance was followed in Downing Street and that people abided by the rules.

EXCL: [@ITVNews](#) has obtained pictures of Boris Johnson drinking at a No10 party during lockdown in November 2020.

The photos cast fresh doubt on the PM's repeated claims he was unaware of rule-breaking in No10 during the pandemic.

See all images here:<https://t.co/sUJiWpxqmm>  
[pic.twitter.com/iXopuPIQu7](https://pic.twitter.com/iXopuPIQu7)

— Paul Brand (@PaulBrandITV) [May 23, 2022](#)

- 
- 

Updated at 14.26 EDT

[5d ago](#) **18.48**

Here's a round up of the key developments of the day:

- **New photos have emerged of Boris Johnson raising a glass of wine in front of a table strewn with bottles at the leaving do of a senior aide – an event for which the Metropolitan police decided not to issue the prime minister with a fixed-penalty notice (FPN).** Others who attended the leaving do were handed FPNs during the Met's investigation, and the images will raise new questions about why Johnson escaped sanction. The pictures were obtained by ITV News.
- **Questions are being raised about whether the photos prove Johnson lied at the dispatch box.** On 8 December last year the Labour MP Catherine West specifically asked Boris Johnson at PMQs if there was a party in Downing Street on 13 November [2020]. Johnson replied: "No, but I am sure that whatever happened, the guidance was followed and the rules were followed at all times."
- **Labour says the new photographs prove beyond doubt that Boris Johnson lied to MPs.** This is from Angela Rayner, the party's deputy leader: "While the British public were making huge sacrifices, Boris Johnson was breaking the law."
- **The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) has been urged to investigate why Boris Johnson was not fined for the event** at which he was pictured apparently raising a toast and drinking sparkling wine. The Lib Dem deputy leader, Daisy Cooper, has written to IOPC director general Michael Lockwood about the issue.
- **No 10 has played down the significance of the new Partygate photographs,** arguing that the Met police had access to photographs when it carried out its investigation.
- **Lord Brian Paddick, a former Metropolitan police deputy assistant commissioner, has told Andrew Marr that the Met “didn’t want to upset” No 10 over Partygate** and has compared the situation to the phone hacking scandal.
- **The former leader of the Scottish Conservatives Ruth Davidson said it was clear Boris Johnson had lied to parliament** and that his position was untenable.

- **The Met's decision-making process during the Operation Hillman inquiry into events in No 10 and Whitehall has been questioned by lawyers**, with the Good Law Project's Jolyon Maugham suggesting he would take legal action.
- **Simon Clarke, the chief secretary to the Treasury, said publication of the Sue Gray report was being held up by a debate about who to name, and whether photographs would be included**. He said the “extraordinary pressure” that No 10 staff were under during the pandemic helped to explain why the Partygate lockdown breaches happened.
- **The PM's spokesperson admitted that Downing Street instigated the meeting between Boris Johnson and Sue Gray that took place a few weeks ago**. This came after Simon Clarke wrongly claimed earlier in the day that Gray had been the one to instigate it.
- **Boris Johnson “pressurised Sue Gray to drop” her report into Partygate during a secret meeting earlier this month, The Times is reporting**. A source told the paper that the prime minister asked if there was “much point” of publishing the report given that “it’s all out there”.
- **Dominic Cummings, Boris Johnson’s former chief adviser who is now determined to be his nemesis, posted about Partygate on his subscription-only Substack account this morning**. He correctly predicted that pictures would start to emerge. Among other things, he said Johnson attended a second birthday party in 2020, as well as the one for which he was fined, that has not been reported.
- **Johnson said that he was not “intrinsically” in favour of new taxes, but that a windfall tax was not off the table**. Asked about the increasing clamour (particularly within his own party) for a windfall tax, he replied: “I’m not attracted, intrinsically, to new taxes. But as I have said throughout, we have got to do what we can - and we will - to look after people.”
- **Simon Clarke rejected claims that Rishi Sunak’s wealth meant he was not suited to be chancellor** when asked about the revelation that Sunak’s family is now on the Sunday Times rich list, and that he is three times as wealthy as Ed Sheeran.
- **Jacob Rees-Mogg, the minister for Brexit opportunities and government efficiency, may be anxious to get workers back into the office, but a large number of Britons like working from home**,

figures from the Office for National Statistics out this morning suggest. They show that almost a quarter of employees now describe themselves as hybrid workers – working partly in the office, and partly at home.

- **Boris Johnson has been urged by a Commons committee to issue 11 corrections** relating to occasions when he falsely claimed employment is higher now than it was before the pandemic.

That's it for tonight. Thanks so much for joining us today. Our Ukraine liveblog is still going. You can follow along here:

- 
- 

Updated at 19.16 EDT

[5d ago](#) [17.59](#)

Tory MP **Peter Bone** has said on Newsnight that **Boris Johnson** and the Met police believe the party was not in fact a party but a work event.

Bone said:

I think we can all agree it was a work event.

Tory MP Peter Bone on Newsnight: “the Prime Minister thought it was a works event. The Met Police thought it was a works event. Therefore it was a works event...unless you’re going to say that the Met isn’t telling the truth and PM not telling the truth, it wasn’t a party.”  
<https://t.co/0bQ9egwdBr>

— Lewis Goodall (@lewis\_goodall) [May 23, 2022](#)

- 
- 

Updated at 18.09 EDT

5d ago 17.38

**Boris Johnson** “pressurised **Sue Gray** to drop” her report into Partygate during a secret meeting earlier this month, [The Times](#) is reporting.

A source told the paper that the prime minister asked if there was “much point” in publishing the report given that “it’s all out there”.

On Monday Downing Street was forced to confirm that the meeting between Johnson and Gray, the civil servant leading an inquiry into Partygate, was [instigated by No 10](#) and not Gray, contradicting the account of a senior minister.

Exclusive with [@oliver\\_wright](#)

Boris Johnson suggested Sue Gray should drop her full report given police investigation during secret meeting earlier this month, Times told

He is said to have asked her if there was much point in publishing it given that ‘it’s all out there’ <https://t.co/Zv3sYHcl5I>

— Steven Swinford (@Steven\_Swinford) [May 23, 2022](#)

- 
- 

Updated at 19.18 EDT

5d ago 16.34

**Dan Hodges** of the Mail on Sunday points out that [Boris Johnson](#) will have to explain how he could have not realised he was at a party when he was surrounded by people drinking alcohol.

Can we just be clear. The issue is no longer whether Boris broke the law. Or if he thought he'd broken the law. It's about whether he

seriously stood in the middle of a leaving party, with booze cluttering every surface, raised a glass and thought “this is not a leaving party”.

— (((Dan Hodges))) (@DPJHodges) [May 23, 2022](#)

•  
•

[5d ago](#) [15.29](#)

## Full story: Latest Boris Johnson photos bring Partygate scandal back into focus



Peter Walker

Over the almost six months of Partygate, the same narrative has played out repeatedly: just as [Boris Johnson](#) seems to have put the saga behind him, new images emerge to refocus everyone’s minds, with a corrosive effect on the prime minister’s image and ratings.

Last Thursday when the Metropolitan police inquiry formally closed with just one fine for Johnson, Conservative MPs were exchanging admiring – or in some cases exasperated – messages about how the “greased piglet” had [slipped free yet again](#).

There was still the [full report to come](#) from the senior civil servant Sue Gray. But supporters of the prime minister were clear – a single fine for a brief appearance at an impromptu birthday celebration did not merit a leadership challenge. Time to move on.

The Daily Mail [headline](#) on Friday shouted: “What a farcical waste of time and £460,000.”

Just three days on, [photos showing Johnson in a packed room](#) raising his glass and making a speech during the leaving drinks of the former communications chief Lee Cain on 13 November 2020 make the prime minister’s life difficult again in several interconnected ways.

Even after Gray submits her report, Johnson faces an inquiry by a committee of MPs into whether he misled the Commons when he said he knew nothing about social gatherings – an offence which, if demonstrated, would normally lead to resignation.

The photos notably weaken Johnson’s defence, not least given a parliamentary [exchange from last December](#) in which the prime minister, when asked by the Labour MP Catherine West about events on the date in question, insisted “the rules were followed at all times”.

More widely, photos and other images seem to resonate with voters in a way that even [repeated descriptions](#) of suitcases of alcohol being wheeled into No 10, and Wilfred Johnson’s swing broken by drunken revellers, do not.

Read more here:

•  
•

5d ago **15.26**

A spokesperson for London mayor **Sadiq Khan** said the final report of Sue Gray – the senior civil servant investigating lockdown violations in Whitehall – must be published in full.

The spokesperson said:

The mayor has always been clear that nobody is above the law and that those who broke the rules, at a time the public were being asked to make huge sacrifices, must be held accountable for their actions.

The mayor understands why Londoners are seeking clarity given these latest revelations. The details of the investigation are a matter for the Met Police and it would be wrong for the mayor – who oversees the Met as police and crime commissioner for London – to intervene in an inquiry investigating his political opponents.

- 
- 

Updated at 15.26 EDT

5d ago **15.24**

Here's a reminder of what some people who followed the rules lost out on while **Boris Johnson** was photographed drinking sparkling wine:

This is appalling. This is the night my mum died suddenly. I couldn't visit my shocked and grieving dad that night/weekend because the rules prohibited it. I couldn't go back to his house after her funeral. Angry doesn't even begin to explain how I feel. <https://t.co/NjoZcImoWQ>

— Sussex Gardener (@TheSussexGarden) May 23, 2022

- 
-

[5d ago](#)[14.57](#)

The Tory MP **Sir Roger Gale** told Times Radio “there is one answer” when a prime minister misleads parliament from the despatch box.

He said:

It’s absolutely clear that there was a party, that he attended it, that he was raising a toast to glass one of his colleagues.

And therefore, he misled us from the despatch box. And, honourably, there is one answer.

He also said:

We have to have somebody at the helm that we can really rely on, and whose word we can rely on. That doesn’t appear to me to be Mr Johnson.

**Paul Brand** of ITV News has called Gale’s comments the “first demand for a resignation from Tory MPs over latest Partygate pics”.

NEW: First demand for a resignation from Tory MPs over latest partygate pics.

Roger Gale tells [@TimesRadio](#) the photos are "damning" and "we have to have somebody at the helm that we can really rely on, and whose word we can rely on. That doesn't appear to me to be Mr. Johnson."

— Paul Brand (@PaulBrandITV) [May 23, 2022](#)

- 
- 

Updated at 15.03 EDT

[6d ago](#)[14.41](#)

The Met's decision-making process during Operation Hillman inquiry into events in No 10 and Whitehall has been questioned by lawyers, with the Good Law Project's **Jolyon Maugham** suggesting he would take legal action.

He said:

We have now had advice from our QC and junior.

We will be sending a further judicial review pre-action protocol letter to the Met in relation to the apparent failures in its investigation into the Prime Minister later this week.

**Adam Wagner**, a barrister and the author of a forthcoming book on the coronavirus laws, said that at the time of the November 13 event “it was illegal to ‘participate’ in a gathering if that gathering was not reasonably necessary for work”.

He said:

Others got FPNs for this gathering so assume police considered it was illegal Why not the PM?

He added it is “impossible to understand how attending, raising a glass and making a speech wouldn’t be ‘participating’”.

Meanwhile, the police watchdog has been urged to investigate Scotland Yard’s handling of the partygate investigation

Liberal Democrat deputy leader **Daisy Cooper** writing to Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) calling for them to examine the Met’s Operation Hillman inquiry.

However, the IOPC is unlikely to agree to her request as most complaints should be directed to the force responsible, with the watchdog usually only considering the most serious cases, such as those involving a death or serious injury following contact with the police, PA News reports.

Cooper's request could also be ineligible because complaints can only be made by someone who has directly witnessed an incident or is directly affected by it.

•  
•

[6d ago](#)[14.35](#)

The former leader of the Scottish Conservatives **Ruth Davidson** said it was clear **Boris Johnson** had lied to parliament and that his position was untenable.

She told Channel 4 News:

There is now photographic evidence that when the prime minister stood up in parliament and was asked directly was there a party in No 10 on this date and he replied 'no', he lied to parliament.

I don't think his job is tenable and his position is tenable. The office of prime minister should be above being traduced by the person who holds it.

•  
•

Updated at 15.05 EDT

[Newest](#)[Newest](#)

[Previous](#)

1  
of  
5

[Next](#)

[Oldest](#)[Oldest](#)

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/live/2022/may/23/sue-gray-report-partygate-boris-johnson-downing-street-uk-politics-latest>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

## Gray report

# Meeting between Boris Johnson and Sue Gray was instigated by No 10

PM's spokesperson says No 10 officials suggested meeting, after conflicting briefings about who sought it

- [Today's politics news – latest updates](#)



Sue Gray's report on lockdown breaches at No 10 is expected this week and could prove highly damaging to the prime minister. Photograph: GOV.UK/PA

*Peter Walker* Political correspondent  
[@peterwalker99](#)

Mon 23 May 2022 08.30 EDTFirst published on Mon 23 May 2022 03.38 EDT

Downing Street has confirmed that a meeting between [Boris Johnson](#) and Sue Gray, the civil servant leading an inquiry into Partygate, was instigated by No 10 and not Gray, contradicting the account of a senior minister.

After conflicting briefings about who sought the meeting, held earlier this month, Simon Clarke, the chief secretary to the Treasury, told Sky News that he understood it was “was instigated” by Gray.

Asked about this, Johnson’s official spokesperson said Gray’s team made “a technical request for a meeting”, but conceded that the actual idea of a meeting had been suggested by No 10 officials.

“This was not at the request of the prime minister,” he said. “It wasn’t framed in that way. It was suggested it might be helpful to have that meeting. Obviously, Sue Gary is independent, it is up to her whether she proceeds with any meetings in regard to her investigation.”

Asked who had suggested it, the spokesperson said: “No 10 officials.” In contrast, asked the same question earlier, Clarke had said: “It is my understanding that the meeting was instigated by Ms Gray.”

Johnson’s spokesperson denied Clarke had been misleading: “He said that the formal, technical meeting request came through from Sue Gray. But it was initially suggested by officials in No 10 that it may be something that she might want to consider. But I think we’re getting into quite granular-level detail here.”

No 10 has vehemently rejected the idea that Johnson meeting Gray at his or his officials’ request meant the prime minister was leaning on an official ahead of the publication of her full report into illicit gatherings in and around Downing Street during Covid lockdowns. The report is expected imminently.

### Boris Johnson refuses to answer questions on Sue Gray meeting – video

The meeting was sought because it “helps with our planning purposes”, the spokesperson said: “It was discussed that it might be useful to give an overview of what Sue Gray and her team were planning with regards to

publication and timings of publication following the conclusion of the report.”

With the conclusion last week of the Metropolitan police inquiry into the gatherings, in which 126 fixed-penalty notices were issued, including one to Johnson, Gray’s full report, which had been paused after police began their work, is being revised and finalised.

No 10 does not expect it to come on Monday. With Johnson scheduled to give a Commons statement immediately after it is published, and MPs due to pay tributes to the Queen on Thursday before recess, it seems more likely to be published on Tuesday or Wednesday.

[Monday's Daily Mail](#) cited a series of anonymous government “insiders” accusing Gray, the senior official tasked with investigating the Downing Street gatherings, of “playing politics and enjoying the limelight a little too much”.

Asked if Johnson agreed with this, his spokesperson said: “No.” He added: “I wouldn’t normally get into source-quote briefings, but this is an independent investigation which is being led and overseen by an experienced civil servant working in line with their civil service code obligations.”

Sign up to First Edition, our free daily newsletter – every weekday morning at 7am BST

Speaking to Sky, Clarke had defended the meeting between Johnson and Gray: “There are lots of practical questions here that need to be bottomed out in terms of, for example, who can be named in this report and the extent to which photographic evidence can be included. It is important that those practical dimensions are resolved.

“The question of whether any of them are named in this report, the question of what evidence is included within it, are not straightforward here, and are genuinely sensitive for people’s lives and careers and public profiles.

“I do not think that this meeting was anything other than a discussion of technicalities of the process. It would be genuinely wrong to impugn that there has been any pressure put on the nature of this report, in any way.”

Saying he had “absolute” faith in Johnson, irrespective of what Gray’s report laid out, Clarke said Johnson had apologised for his own penalty for breaching lockdown rules, and that the 126 fines issued should be seen in a wider perspective.

“I think we also need to remember, without excusing what happened, but by way of context, the extraordinary pressure that group of people were under during the course of the pandemic,” he said.

“They were working the longest imaginable hours under the most enormous amount of pressure. That in no way diminishes the seriousness of what happened, but it does provide some context.”

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/may/23/uk-government-briefings-accusing-sue-gray-of-playing-politics-condemned-by-minister>

## [Taiwan](#)

# US would defend Taiwan if attacked by China, says Joe Biden

President says US's responsibility to protect island is 'even stronger' after Russia's invasion of Ukraine

Joe Biden says US would defend Taiwan if attacked by China – video

*Justin McCurry in Tokyo, Vincent Ni and agencies*

Mon 23 May 2022 19.26 EDTFirst published on Mon 23 May 2022 02.42 EDT

Joe Biden has said the US would intervene militarily to defend Taiwan if it came under attack from China, in an unusually forceful presidential statement in support of self-governing that drew a defiant response from Beijing.

Speaking in Tokyo on the second day of his visit to [Japan](#), and against the backdrop of growing concern over Chinese military activity in the region, Biden said the US's responsibility to protect the self-ruled island – which China considers a renegade province – was "even stronger" after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"That's the commitment we made," Biden said, after he told the Japanese prime minister, Fumio Kishida, that Washington backed Japan's permanent membership of a reformed UN security council and Tokyo's plans to beef up its security with record levels of defence spending, as it seeks to counter a nuclear-armed North Korea and an increasingly assertive [China](#).

The US president said any attempt by China to use force against [Taiwan](#) would "just not be appropriate ... it would dislocate the entire region and be another action similar to what happened in Ukraine".

In Beijing, the foreign ministry spokesperson, Wang Wenbin, said the Taiwan issue was “a purely internal affair for China”.

“On issues touching on China’s core interests of sovereignty and territorial integrity, China has no room for compromise or concession,” Wang said.

Wang said China would always defend its interests with the force of its 1.4 billion population. “No one should underestimate the firm resolve, staunch will and strong ability of the Chinese people in defending national sovereignty and territorial integrity,” he added.

The Chinese State Council’s Taiwan Affairs Office said the US was “playing with fire”, state media reported. The US was “using the ‘Taiwan card’ to contain China, and will itself get burned,” said Zhu Fenglian, a spokeswoman for the office.

Sign up to First Edition, our free daily newsletter – every weekday morning at 7am BST

In accordance with Beijing’s “one-China principle” – or “one-China policy” in Washington – the US acknowledges Beijing’s position that there is only one Chinese government and does not have formal diplomatic relations with Taiwan. But it maintains unofficial contact, including a de facto embassy, and supplies Taiwan with military equipment for self-defence.

“America is committed to a one-China policy but that does not mean China has the jurisdiction to use force to take Taiwan,” Biden said, adding: “My expectation is that will not happen.”

The president’s national security aides shifted in their seats and studied Biden closely as he responded to the question, with several looking down as he gave his answer on Taiwan’s defence. Within minutes, the state department began walking back the president’s comments.

Analysts say that Biden was unlikely to be announcing a new policy towards Taiwan during his trip to Japan, but Monday’s remark did provide a window into the president’s instincts in the event of a Chinese attack.

Taipei welcomed Biden's remarks and thanked him for "reaffirming" Washington's commitment. "The challenge posed by China to the security of the Taiwan Strait has raised great concern in the international community," Taiwan's foreign ministry said.



The Taipei 101 tower, once the world's tallest building, dominates the city skyline. China's growing influence in the region has emerged as a key theme of Biden's visit. Photograph: Carl Court/Getty Images

In August, a senior Biden administration official was forced to point out that [US policy on Taiwan had not changed](#) after the president appeared to suggest the US would defend the island if it were attacked, a deviation from a long-held US position of "strategic ambiguity".

China's growing influence in the region, including military drills near Taiwan and air and maritime activity around an [island chain in the East China Sea](#) administered by Japan, has emerged as a key theme of Biden's visit, even overshadowing North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programmes.

On Monday, Biden and Kishida committed to working closely in response to China's "increasingly coercive behaviour that runs counter to international law", according to a White House account of their meeting.

Later, Biden voiced support for Japanese plans to bolster its defences. Japan's ruling party is considering calls for the country to acquire the ability to conduct a first strike against enemy bases if it believes it is in danger of imminent attack – a move that some say violates its “pacifist” postwar constitution.

“I applaud Japan’s determination to strengthen its defence – a strong [Japan](#), and a strong Japan-US alliance, is a force for good in the world,” Biden said.

Kishida said he would “fundamentally” reinforce Japan’s defences, adding: “I have said all options are on the table, including the capability for Japan to carry out first strikes on enemy bases.”

China responds to Biden's pledge to defend Taiwan if invaded – video

In the afternoon, Biden was due to launch a regional trade pact designed to show the US’s commitment to the region and bring stability to commerce after disruption caused by the war in Ukraine.

The Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) will help the US and Asian countries work more closely on supply chains, digital trade, clean energy, worker protections and anticorruption efforts. But IPEF members will not negotiate tariffs or ease market access – a move that would be unpopular at home among voters who believe granting greater access to the US market would put American jobs at risk.

China responds to Biden's pledge to defend Taiwan if invaded – video

The pact, which is unlikely to include any binding commitments, is being seen as an attempt by the US to exert some economic influence in the region five years after Donald Trump pulled out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement. And it will not include the world’s second-biggest economy, China, which on Monday condemned Biden’s renewed focus on US military and economic involvement in the region as doomed to fail.

“The so-called Indo-Pacific Strategy is, in essence, a strategy of creating division, inciting confrontation and undermining peace,” China’s foreign

minister, Wang Yi, said, according to the state media outlet Xinhua. “No matter how it is packaged or disguised, it will inevitably fail in the end.”

Wang said Tuesday’s planned meeting in Tokyo between the leaders of the Quad countries – the US, Japan, India and Australia – was an attempt by Washington “to form small cliques in the name of freedom and openness”, while hoping “to contain China”.

North Korea continued to cast a shadow over Biden’s visit, even as he preferred to focus on trade and jobs. Asked on Sunday if he had a message for North Korea’s leader, Kim Jong-un, Biden said only: “Hello … period.”

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/23/us-would-defend-taiwan-if-attacked-by-china-says-joe-biden>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

## [Australia news](#)

# Australia's new PM flags 'difficult' China ties as he heads to Tokyo for Quad meeting

Ahead of meeting with Biden, Kishida and Modi in Tokyo, Anthony Albanese warned Australia would always stand up for its values against China



Australian prime minister Anthony Albanese boards the plane to Japan to attend the Quad leaders' meeting in Tokyo. Photograph: Lukas Coch/AAP

*[Calla Wahlquist](#) in Melbourne  
[@callapilla](#)*

Mon 23 May 2022 00.17 EDT Last modified on Mon 23 May 2022 06.35 EDT

Anthony Albanese has flown to Tokyo to take part in the Quad leaders' meeting, just hours after being sworn in as the new Australian prime

minister and warning that relations with China would remain “difficult”.

The Labor party defeated the Coalition government, led by Scott Morrison, on Saturday. It is not yet known whether the Labor party, which Albanese leads, [will reach the 76-seat majority needed](#) to govern in its own right.

In his first press conference as prime minister, Albanese said he had received a guarantee of supply from independent and minor party MPs to ensure he can govern no matter the outcome.

The 59-year-old said he and a small interim ministry – including the new foreign minister, Penny Wong, who will travel with Albanese to Tokyo – had been quickly sworn in to ensure Australia could participate in the bilateral meetings with the US president, Joe Biden, the Indian prime minister, Narendra Modi, and the Japanese prime minister, Fumio Kishida.

“The meetings that we will have, not just with the United States but importantly with our hosts in Japan and India, are going to be very important, in a good way, to send a message to the world that there’s a new government in Australia,” Albanese told reporters.

“It’s a government that represents a change, in terms of the way that we deal with the world on issues like climate change, but also a continuity in the way that we have respect for democracy and the way that we value our friendships and longtime alliances.”

Albanese said Australia’s relationship with China, which has [soured in recent years](#), “will remain a difficult one” but signalled his government would take a less aggressive approach to pursuing Australia’s national interest.

“It is China that has changed, not Australia, and Australia should always stand up for our values, and we will do so in a government that I lead,” he said.

It is only the fourth time in Australia’s history that Labor has won government from opposition, and the first time that victory has been less

than emphatic.

The result comes despite a swing away from both major parties towards independent candidates and the Australian Greens, both of which campaigned for stronger targets to reduce global heating.

Albanese delivered his press conference on Monday in front of not just the Australian flag, but the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags as well. It was a small change that signalled his government's commitment to seeking [constitutional change in line with the recommendations put forward](#) at a national summit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in 2017.

Seeking a referendum to change the Australian constitution to enshrine an Indigenous voice to parliament was the first commitment Albanese made in his victory speech on Saturday night.

Labor's incoming Indigenous affairs minister, Wiradjuri woman Linda Burney, said the reform would "change the face of this country" and help Australia "grow up" as a nation.

Votes are still being counted across Australia. Some conservative MPs have refused to concede their seat until the postal votes, which are higher than usual due to Covid-19, have also been counted.

As of Monday, it appeared that independent candidates [targeting the conservative Liberal party's wealthy inner-city heartland](#) on a policy of climate action, political integrity and gender equality have claimed five seats from the Coalition in Melbourne, Sydney and Perth. They have also won the seat of Kooyong, held by former Australian treasurer Josh Frydenberg.

Western Australia, a state which traditionally held more Liberal-voting seats, [recorded a 10.7% swing towards the Labor party](#), spurred on by the popularity of its Labor state premier, Mark McGowan.

And Queensland, the state that awarded Morrison victory in 2019, voted heavily for the Australian Greens, earning it the new nickname "Greensland". The minor party won two inner-city Brisbane seats – in the process ousting the woman who would have been Albanese's environment

minister – to have three MPs in the lower house of parliament. It is also on track for a record vote in the Senate.

Morrison stepped down as leader of the Liberal party after conceding the election to Albanese on Saturday night. His position is likely to be [taken by the former home affairs minister, Peter Dutton](#).

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/may/23/australias-new-pm-flags-difficult-china-ties-as-he-heads-to-tokyo-for-quad-meeting>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

---

Advertisement

US edition

- [US edition](#)
- [UK edition](#)
- [Australian edition](#)
- [International edition](#)

[The Guardian - Back to home](#)[The Guardian: news website of the year](#)

[Australian election 2022](#)

## Teal independents: who are they and how did they upend Australia's election?



Successful Teal independent candidates (clockwise from top left) Zali Steggall, Kylea Tink, Sophie Scamps, Allegra Spender, Monique Ryan and Zoe Daniel. Composite: Bianca De Marchi/AAP/Mark Metcalfe/Getty/James Ross/Joel Garrett/AAP

What does historic move of voters away from the two major parties mean for the future of Australian politics?

- [Australia federal election 2022 LIVE – latest news, updates and results](#)
- [Election 2022 results: live votes tracker and federal seat counts](#)
- [Get our free news app; get our morning email briefing](#)

*Calla Wahlquist*

*@callapilla*

Mon 23 May 2022 04.59 EDT Last modified on Wed 25 May 2022 04.01 EDT

There was a historic move of voters away from the two major parties in Saturday's Australian election, and towards independent and Greens candidates who campaigned primarily on a stronger response to the climate crisis. So who are these new MPs, and what do they mean for Australian politics as the [new Labor government under Anthony Albanese](#) takes power?

## Who are the ‘teal’ independents?

Independent candidates who ran on a strong climate platform in formerly safe [Liberal party](#) seats have been labelled the “teal” candidates, because they represent a voting base with conservative fiscal politics – blue is the traditional colour of the centre-right Liberal party – combined with green views on climate.

Teal has become the preferred colour for many of the independent campaigns, starting with [Zali Steggall](#), who defeated the former prime minister Tony Abbott in the seat of Warringah, on Sydney's northern beaches, at the 2019 election.

Most of the teal independents, although notably not Steggall, received some campaign funding at this year's election from a group called Climate 200. It was established by the Melbourne philanthropist Simon Holmes à Court in 2019 and provided funding to independent candidates who made climate action, political integrity and gender equality the main planks of their

campaign – and who could match Climate 200’s contribution with their own fundraising.

### Decline in vote for major parties

Steggall comfortably retained her seat in Saturday’s election. That much was expected, but there was also a spectacular upheaval across formerly rock-solid Liberal seats in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth.

In Sydney, two more electorates on the leafy north side of the harbour – North Sydney and Mackellar – were won by the independents Kylea Tink and Sophie Scamps, a local GP. [Wentworth](#), which covers Sydney’s eastern harbour suburbs and Bondi beach, also fell, to the independent Allegra Spender, the daughter of the designer Carla Zampatti and John Spender, a former Liberal shadow minister in the 1980s. The electorate is the wealthiest in the country, and was previously represented by the former prime minister Malcolm Turnbull.

In Melbourne, Monique Ryan, another doctor, won the [similarly blue-blood seat of Kooyong](#) from the now former treasurer, Josh Frydenberg, who would have been the favourite to lead the Liberal party following its national defeat had he held the seat. Zoe Daniels, a former journalist with the ABC, won the [bayside seat of Goldstein](#) from the prominent backbencher Tim Wilson.

And in Western Australia, Kate Chaney, the niece of another former Liberal minister, Fred Chaney, is all but certain to claim victory [in the seat of Curtin](#).

Campaigns in [more than 20 seats were loosely characterised as teals](#) (not all used the colour, or took money from Climate 200), but any wins beyond Steggall holding her seat would have been considered implausible only months ago – for five to succeed constitutes a political earthquake.

Other than their policies, the teal successes had several things in common. First, they were focused on inner-urban, prosperous seats, held mainly by Liberals on the moderate wing of the party. The campaigns ruthlessly highlighted the moderates’ inability to influence the direction of the Liberal party – and [even more so its National party coalition partner](#) – on climate

action. Second, they were the product of months if not years of grassroots organisation, which worked to select credible, professional candidates and provide a small army of committed volunteers. And third, almost all those candidates were women, who effectively channelled anger at the [perception Scott Morrison's government had ignored or belittled them.](#)

## **How well did the Australian Greens do?**

Adding to the independent triumphs, the Greens recorded their most successful electoral result, adding at least two lower house seats in Brisbane to the one they already held in Melbourne. Max Chandler-Mather won the seat of Griffith from Labor's Terri Butler – the party's environment spokesperson, who would have become the minister had she won – thanks to a [massive and long-running community-led campaign.](#)

In the adjacent seat of Ryan, in Brisbane's western suburbs, Elizabeth Watson-Brown defeated the sitting Liberal MP. The Greens also retain hopes in the seat of Brisbane, previously held by the Liberals, but are more likely to lose out to Labor in a close three-way battle.

The Greens also strengthened their presence in the Senate, gaining a seat each in Queensland and New South Wales, with a strong possibility of a third in South Australia, which would take their representation to 12 in the 76-strong upper house.

The Greens leader, Adam Bandt, who was returned easily in his electorate of Melbourne, described it as “a Greenslide”. “This result is a mandate for action on climate and inequality. Our vote went up because we said politics needs to be done differently,” he said.

Sign up to First Edition, our free daily newsletter – every weekday morning at 7am BST

## **What does this mean for the parliament?**

It is not clear whether Labor will gain the 76 seats needed to govern in majority, although the party's strong result in Western Australia makes that the most likely result.

If it falls short, Albanese will need to secure the support of some members of the crossbench to pass legislation. That will either involve negotiating with the teal independent candidates, the three Greens MPs, other independent MPs, or some combination thereof.

Even if Labor secures the numbers for majority government, the teal MPs will be able to shape legislation in the lower house, which could involve strengthening Labor's climate offerings.

The Greens will have those same levers to pull, as well as potentially holding the balance of power in the Senate. They have listed their priorities as placing a ban on any new coal or gas developments and adding dental care to the country's universal Medicare scheme.

## **What does this mean for the Liberal party?**

With the exception of Wentworth, which was held briefly by the independent Kerryn Phelps following Turnbull's exit from politics, it is the first time any of the seats have been out of Liberal hands.

The seats targeted by independent campaigns – leafy wealthy suburbs packed with private schools in Melbourne, rich harbourside postcodes in Sydney and the most upmarket suburb in Perth – were the power base of the moderate wing of the Liberal party. After Saturday's election, that has been destroyed.

On election night, the South Australian senator Simon Birmingham, the most senior moderate left in the Liberal party, said the party was [losing its base and needed to return to the centre](#). “It’s a clear problem we are losing seats that are heartland seats, that have defined the Liberal party for generations,” he told the ABC. “There is clearly a big movement against us and a big message in it. We need to heed the message.”

But others in the Coalition have drawn the conclusion that it needs to move further to the right. The National party leader, Barnaby Joyce, has already suggested his party may [drop support for the target of net zero emissions by 2050](#), which was reluctantly conceded by his party in the leadup to the Glasgow climate summit.

## Are all independent MPs teals?

No, the teal independents will be joined on the crossbench by Dai Le, who ran a grassroots campaign to [defeat the Labor frontbencher and former NSW premier Kristina Keneally](#) in the Sydney seat of Fowler. Keneally had been parachuted into the previously safe seat in the ethnically diverse and less well-off south-western suburbs, despite living in a privileged enclave on the other side of the city.

The independent member for Indi in regional Victoria, Helen Haines, was also re-elected. Haines succeeded Cathy McGowan as the independent candidate in the seat at the previous election. McGowan's campaign model, built around having kitchen table conversations with the electorate, was the template for many of the new grassroots independents who translated the model from the country to the city.

There are also two other long-term independents: Andrew Wilkie, who has represented the Tasmanian seat of Clark since 2010; and the [idiosyncratic Bob Katter](#), who has been the member for Kennedy in Queensland since 1993.

Haines and Wilkie have progressive voting records; Katter conservative.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/may/23/teal-independents-who-are-they-how-did-they-upend-australia-election>

## 2022.05.23 - Spotlight

- UK inflation What it means for house prices, savings and pay rises
- 'People are under pressure' The shop staff paying for strangers' groceries or turning a blind eye to theft
- 'I feel totally seen' John Crace on how guided breathing soothed a lifetime of anxiety
- Transport Building the Elizabeth line

## Inflation

# UK inflation: what it means for house prices, savings and pay rises

We answer readers' questions about how the rise in cost of living will affect them



UK inflation has an impact on supermarket prices, pay, savings and house buying. Composite: Bloomberg/Alamy/Getty Images

*[Hilary Osborne](#) and [Larry Elliott](#)*

Mon 23 May 2022 02.00 EDT

There is no escaping inflation: whether it's energy, food, transport or entertainment you are paying for, prices are going up – and at pace.

Once again this week's headlines have been dominated by the latest figures – on Wednesday we learned that inflation had [reached a 40-year high of 9%](#). Plus, there have been warnings of worse to come. But what does it all mean?

We asked readers what questions they had about inflation and its impact, and have tackled them below.

First, a bit of background.

The rise in the cost of living is captured in the monthly inflation rates reported by the [Office for National Statistics](#). There are several different rates recorded by the economists: the consumer prices index (CPI), retail prices index (RPI), and CPIH (CPI including owner occupiers' housing costs). It is CPI that hit 9% last month. CPIH was 7.8%, while RPI hit 11.1%.



The cost of food, energy, transport, entertainment and more is going up.  
Photograph: Neil Hall/EPA

The rates are different because of the goods that are included in the price tables, and also because of the way the figures are calculated. RPI tends to be the highest. It is set to be scrapped in 2030 but is currently still used to set the student loan interest rate and annual increases in train fares.

### **Q Would 0% inflation be good?**

**Hilary Osborne:** inflation is the rate at which prices are going up – it does not tell you how high prices are historically, just how much higher or lower they are than last year. So if this time next year inflation is 0%, that means prices will still be higher than in the same period in 2021.

That said, no one targets getting inflation to 0% or even below. Inflation of 2% is generally considered good – this is the rate that the [Bank of England](#) and other central banks target. This rate is high enough to encourage people not to sit on all of their cash and wait for prices to go down but low enough to allow people to plan and wages to keep up.

Banks generally react to rising inflation by adjusting interest rates upwards – the idea is that this will encourage people to save their money rather than spend it and reduce demand for goods and services.

**Q The current inflation isn't caused by an increase in demand or in wages – it's caused by a rise in supply costs. This is in part caused by the war and Covid and the resulting shortages and supply chain problems but isn't the real problem that commodity-producing corporates are taking advantage of their virtually monopoly positions?**

**Larry Elliott:** this is right on the money. Traditionally, higher interest rates work when the economy is overheating and – the housing market apart – there is no evidence that it is. The UK's national output of goods and services is only just above its pre-pandemic levels, so effectively two years of growth have been lost.

The Bank of England has admitted it can do little in the face of rising energy costs, and originally thought it would be possible to wait for inflation to come down without doing very much. It has now been spooked by evidence that inflation will stay higher for longer, and some signs that higher energy prices are feeding through into other parts of the economy. The risk of driving the UK into recession is clearly there. A windfall tax on the energy companies is going to happen, whatever the government currently says.

**Q I'm a first-time buyer who has saved almost all of my target deposit. I want to get on to the property ladder to stop paying rent, and because**

**my money is currently in the bank doing nothing. Is this a wise time to buy or should I hold off?**

**LE:** the housing market is starting to cool down a bit but it is far too early to say there is going to be a property crash. For that to happen, there would need to be a sharp rise in mortgage rates and unemployment rather than the more modest increases that are currently predicted. That said, the willingness of people to take on big financial commitments is understandably weak at present, which suggests that house prices are not going to do much in the next year or so.



Many people want to know what's going to happen to house prices.  
Photograph: Neil McAllister/Alamy

**Q Why is the annual increase in state pensions based on the CPI rate in September of each year? Would an average of inflation taken over the calendar year be a more equitable rate for the increase in April?**

**HO:** September's figure is used to give the government time to set up the change in payments. Steve Webb, a former pensions minister who is now a partner at the consultancy LCP, says that after the September figure is published in October, the Department for Work and [Pensions](#) needs to look at its data and announce plans to parliament – usually in November's budget.

The actual legislation to implement the changes doesn't get debated until the start of the following year.



The triple lock on the state pension was not used this year. Photograph: Trevor Chriss/Alamy

"There's a lot of parliamentary process to go through (we are talking about billions of pounds of public spending) and time to change rates, especially for legacy benefits on old computer systems," he says.

Each month's figure is based on a comparison with prices the year before, so is always taking account of 12 months of changes. When inflation is fairly stable, September's figure is arguably as good as any. Usually, the triple lock – the promise that pensions will rise in line with inflation, average earnings or 2.5% – irons out some of the ups and downs but this was not used this year.

A simple average of last year's monthly CPI rates actually results in a smaller increase than the 3.1% rise this year because inflation was below 1% in the first part of 2021.

**Q I work as a postman and we have only been offered a 3.5% pay rise. If we get a bigger increase, will that have an impact on inflation?**

**LE:** higher pay awards are not causing inflation. Wages are a price like any other and reflect market forces. Higher pay will mitigate some (but not all) of the hit to living standards caused by rising inflation and should encourage people currently not working to look for jobs. That should help ease labour shortages, one of the supply-side constraints affecting the economy.

**Q My son is buying a house. I am worried the likely rise in mortgage interest rates as a result of inflation will affect his budget. Can anyone give us some guidance on the outlook for peak interest rates?**

**HO:** sadly, no one can tell you where interest rates will end up, although many people will speculate. Some economists have forecast the base rate going up from 1% now to 3% next year but most are not predicting such a big rise. The [money markets](#) currently suggest that the base rate will peak at just above 2% in about two years' time. Mortgage rates are likely to be higher.

If your son already has a mortgage approved, then his budget should have been closely inspected by the lender and he should be well cushioned against interest rate rises. Before banks and building societies agree to a mortgage, they stress-test applicants, typically at a rate above the standard variable rate. They also look at income and outgoings when assessing if a mortgage is affordable. He will probably also have chosen a fixed-rate mortgage to protect himself against rises in the short-term.

If he is about to apply, rising rates will have an impact on what he is allowed to borrow.



If you have already had a mortgage approved, your budget should have been closely inspected by the lender. Photograph: Eric Farrelly/Alamy

## **Q Is it worth saving these days?**

**HO:** it's a good question, given that any money held in a savings account is effectively falling in value. With inflation running so high, the cash you have saved will buy you less than this time last year because there are no accounts that will have paid you enough interest to keep up.

However, as Sarah Coles from the investment firm Hargreaves Lansdown points out, there's a good reason to hold savings. "The last couple of years have shown us just how unpredictable life can be, and how much difference it can make to have something to fall back on when we're hit with the unexpected," she says. "Everyone of working age should be working towards a savings safety net of three to six months' worth of expenses in an easy access account – which rises to one to three years' worth when you have retired."

This cushion means that if you are hit with an unexpected bill, you will not have to borrow to pay it.



Money held in a savings account is effectively falling in value. Photograph: OsakaWayne Studios/Getty Images

“At the moment, any money in a savings account will be losing spending power after inflation but you should still make sure it works as hard as possible for you,” she says. She suggests an instant access account from Al Rayan Bank paying 1.31%. For a higher rate, she says you can earn 2.27% on a one-year fix with Al Rayan Bank, or 2.75% on a two-year fix with Market Harborough building society.



There is a limit to what the Bank of England can do about inflation.  
Photograph: Daniel Leal-Olivas/AFP/Getty Images

**Q Inflation is 9% for the average person but how do I know what the impact is on me, as I may have a bigger mortgage than someone else, or buy different things?**

**HO:** your personal inflation rate will depend on what you spend your money on – and how much goes on each element. Everyone buys energy but some people buy more of it, and some people have to use proportionally more of their income to pay for it. There are calculators where you can work out your personal inflation rate. The ONS [has one on its website](#) that lets you fill in exact numbers, as does the [investment firm Rathbones](#). These will help you see where your money is going and will be helpful for financial planning.

**Q Is there another way for the Bank of England to fight inflation apart from raising the base rate?**

**LE:** there is a limit to what the Bank can do, given the tools at its disposal. In essence, it can make the cost of borrowing more expensive by raising interest rates, or it can suck money out of the economy through a process known as quantitative tightening, which involves selling the bonds it has

accumulated since the financial crisis of the late 2000s. However, base rates and QT are blunt instruments. It is the chancellor, Rishi Sunak, who the country should look to for action.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/may/23/uk-inflation-house-prices-savings-pay-rises>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Advertisement

US edition

- [US edition](#)
- [UK edition](#)
- [Australian edition](#)
- [International edition](#)

[The Guardian - Back to home](#)[The Guardian: news website of the year](#)

[Cost of living crisis](#)

**‘People are under pressure’: the shop staff paying for strangers’ groceries or turning a blind eye to theft**



‘People don’t realise how much prices have gone up until they get to the till.’ Illustration: Steven Gregor

As prices rocket, supermarket workers tell of customers unable to pay at the tills, fighting over discounts and ‘forgetting’ to scan everything from fabric softener to baby food



[Emine Saner](#)

[@eminesaner](#)

Mon 23 May 2022 05.00 EDT

Last week, during his shift overseeing the self-scan section of a large supermarket in London, James let a woman walk out with three multipacks of children’s yoghurts. He had randomly checked her shopping and found that among the items she hadn’t scanned and paid for were the yoghurts, as well as some pouches of baby food. He felt horrible, he says, to have quickly run through his own judgments of how “worthy” he considered her to be – that she was young and had three children under five with her, that she was holding Healthy Start vouchers, which allow people on universal credit and other benefits to buy nutritious food, that the rest of her shopping was healthy with no junk food or alcohol, and that she was really embarrassed and upset. “I couldn’t bring myself to take these four or five items off her so I let it go,” he says. “It wasn’t a huge loss to the company. It wasn’t like they were luxury items. I just said: ‘Don’t worry, but next time someone else

might not let it slide.”” He knows he could have been sacked for it. “I’d just have to feign ignorance or stupidity if I got caught.””

At another supermarket, in a town across the country, Alexander watched as a young couple found they couldn’t pay for their shopping at a checkout close to his. They had spent more than £100, paid for some of it in cash, and tried to put the rest on a credit card – not unusual, he says, but the card was declined. “For the next half an hour, they took over the checkout, which we had to close, and somebody had to stand with them while they were making phone calls, presumably to locate some money or fix a problem with the card,” he says. The woman, who was pregnant, was getting more and more distressed and broke down in tears. “It was sad to see. If a credit card doesn’t work, most people have another card, but clearly they had no means of paying.” Eventually they left without half of their shopping.

Inflation has hit a 40-year high of 9%, partly driven by food prices rising at the highest rate since 2011. Then there’s the increasing cost of other essentials – housing, energy, petrol, phone and broadband bills. People – and disproportionately those in the poorest households – are being squeezed, and those who work in supermarkets are seeing it every day. Last week, Andy Cooke, the new chief inspector of constabulary, said police officers should use their “discretion – and they need to use discretion more often” when dealing with crimes of poverty, particularly stealing to eat. Then the policing minister Kit Malthouse said police officers should “not be ignoring these seemingly small crimes”.



The poorest households are being squeezed, and those who work in supermarkets are seeing it every day. Photograph: PhotoAlto/James Hardy/Getty Images

But it isn't just stealing. Supermarket workers tell of watching people put products back that they can't afford, or make difficult choices about what to buy. There are many more, not obviously struggling people making small changes: cheaper sausages over the premium range, own-brand deodorant over the heavily marketed brand name. "People are putting back things such as strawberries, and they're buying bananas," says one man who works at a large Tesco. "Cherries are £15 a kilo and they're not really getting sold. Before, you'd see people come in for bread and milk and get a few little bits. Now it's bread and milk and they're done. There's a lot less 'luxuries' being bought."

A couple of weeks ago, John Allan, the chair of Tesco, said the supermarket was seeing "[real food poverty for the first time in a generation](#)" and reported that customers were asking checkout staff to stop scanning their shopping when it reached £40 because they didn't want, or couldn't afford, to spend more. Lila, who works for a supermarket on the south coast, also says more people are asking her to stop putting items through when the total reaches £40 or £50. "Then they'll take the alcohol or confectionery out and swap it for bread," she says. It's not as if they put their priority items first, she says,

more that “people don’t realise how much prices have gone up until they get to the till and then they’re like: ‘Oh, wow.’ It’s definitely changed the way people are shopping – they’re thinking: ‘Do I need this?’” One of Lila’s customers immediately put the total into a spreadsheet on her phone. “She said: ‘I have to do this now or I’ll forget, and it’s really important.’”

Even at the higher-end supermarkets, the higher prices have been noted, even if their customers are not particularly affected by them. “Sometimes, when I give them the bill at the end, I feel slightly guilty,” says Kay, who works on the checkout at Waitrose. “I just say, ‘Oh God, it’s really bad, isn’t it?’ And they go ‘yeah’, but most of them can afford it. They could shop somewhere else if they couldn’t afford it.” She has noticed an impact on the older people who use the supermarket for convenience. “We get to know the regulars and you do notice that they’re not putting so much in a basket.” And the staff now shop there less, she says, “including me. We get quite a good discount, but I’ve started shopping at Lidl and Aldi, whereas I would have [shopped at Waitrose] before. I have noticed the prices of things I would normally buy, which are another 30p or 50p higher.”



‘People are putting back things such as strawberries, and they’re buying bananas. There’s a lot less luxuries being bought.’ Photograph: Grace Cary/Getty Images

Thefts have increased, she says, and the supermarket has started to employ a security guard, but she adds it's not so much struggling customers slipping something extra into their bag without paying for it, as experienced shoplifters taking products such as meat, alcohol and razor blades to sell on. The picture is different elsewhere. One supermarket worker I speak to says that that morning, an elderly woman had claimed she had already paid for a bag of oranges which she had half-hidden in her trolley, but couldn't produce a receipt. "There was a bit of concern as to whether the lady had dementia, and so might have forgotten," he says, but after talking to her – and checking with their colleague on the checkout where she claimed to have paid – the staff believed it was more likely she had intended to take it without paying.

Nick works nights at a big supermarket, stacking shelves and restocking freezers. He has always found empty packets, their contents taken, hidden at the backs of shelves or under bags of frozen peas, "but lately it seems to have increased. Since the turn of the year, I'm finding more and more." Before, it might have been an opportunistic thief taking something such as jewellery or accessories from the supermarket's clothing department and dumping the tag somewhere in store, but he says, "that seems to have stopped. Now, it's everyday products." In the past few weeks, he has found empty packets of denture adhesive and pain relief medicine such as Voltarol, "which suggests it's pensioners who are doing it". Paracetamol has been taken "even though it's only about 20p". Baby clothes are another thing commonly stolen, he says. "Last weekend, I found tags from baby socks."

Supermarket workers tell of people getting to know the time when items get reduced and using physical force to get to them. "My colleague normally does them, and there might be 10 or 12 customers around her," says Alexander. "She has had to shout at them to stand back because she has found it oppressive, and it seems to be getting worse."

At the large supermarket where he works in London, James has seen the same. In the past couple of months he has seen the number of people queueing double, and waiting at 3pm on a Sunday by the big doors to the warehouse for the trays of reduced items to come out, particularly meat. "There will be people waiting for whichever poor soul has got to put them out and he doesn't even get to the fridge," he says. "Before he gets there,

people are ripping the trays off him. There's less shame in it – not that there should be any shame in it, but people are caring less about how it looks.” There are the regulars who have long waited for the yellow-stickered items, but now there are more people “elbowing in on their patch. It gets a bit territorial.” He remembers people pushing to get to the reduced trays of strawberries, and the manager having to call the security guard to keep people back.

packets of precooked meat, in a world where some families can't afford to put the oven on, are another regular item that customers ‘forget’ to scan

There has been a change in atmosphere, James says. Customers are ruder and more aggressive. He doesn't know if it's a hangover from the stressful days of lockdown shopping, when people were fearful and navigating new rules, or if the cost of living is taking its toll – probably both, he says. “They're a lot more short with you, more dismissive of you as a person.” He thinks supermarket workers, even though most are on little more than the national minimum wage themselves, are experiencing people's anger at the rising prices. “You're in a uniform, they don't see you as a person, they see you as an extension of this company you work for, so people shout at you.” Customers annoyed that a product is no longer on special offer will shout at him, he says. “Fuses of people are short. People are under pressure.”

Many customers that he recognises have been coming in later, which he has put down to them working longer hours. The other thing he has noticed – perhaps because parents are at work for longer – is an increase in children, about 11 or 12 years old, doing small basket shops. “They always pay in cash, and quite a few times they run short. They're about 50p short and they're like: ‘Can you take this off?’” he says, of children asking to put things back that they have already scanned. He carries a cash float, usually coppers and small change other customers have left, and – after checking with his boss – often pays for their items.

Theft, James says, “is massively up” since the beginning of the year, probably by about half. Some of this is down to experienced shoplifters, he says, “the people who try to leave with a vacuum cleaner or a TV, or walk

out with a trolley full of fish; the ones in the nice cars and nice clothes. They're not the ones in need." But it's rare the police come out, he says – the shoplifter will be banned from the store, but he will see them back again in a few weeks. "The police won't really come out for anything other than violence. Usually nothing happens [to shoplifters] and for certain people, that's a risk worth taking."

What James has seen, though, is a rise in "genuine people struggling who are not 'shoplifting', but conveniently not paying for all of their shopping," he says. He can spot them – they look guilty when they're paying – and they're mortified when they're caught. At each shift he works, he says there are at least two or three incidences of this. "People 'forget' to scan expensive items, such as boxes of washing powder, things that don't need an approval [unlike alcohol]." Packets of precooked meat, in a world where some families can't afford to put the oven on, are another regular item that gets "missed". The typical customer, he says, tends to be a fairly young mother who "hasn't scanned a big bottle of Comfort, yet she's only got 10 items, so it's a bit of a 'happy accident'. When you point out it hasn't been scanned and you scan it, they're like: 'Oh, I didn't realise it was that price – I'm not going to take that now.' Then I feel bad because this lady's gone without fabric softener because she can't afford it – but then she did try to shoplift.

"It's difficult, and I try not to judge anyone because it's hard for people. You can tell which people are brazenly trying it on, and which people are struggling. Whichever way, it doesn't really matter because you still have to do what you've got to do." Except for the occasional time when he doesn't.

- *Names have been changed*
- 

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/may/23/people-are-under-pressure-the-shop-staff-paying-for-strangers-groceries-or-turning-a-blind-eye-to-theft>

Advertisement

US edition

- [US edition](#)
- [UK edition](#)
- [Australian edition](#)
- [International edition](#)

[The Guardian - Back to home](#)[The Guardian: news website of the year](#)

[How to manage anxiety](#)[Mindfulness](#)

## **'I feel totally seen': John Crace on how guided breathing soothed a lifetime of anxiety**



John Crace: 'I found a missing piece of the jigsaw.' Photograph: Alecsandra Raluca Dragoi/The Guardian

After 65 anxious years, trying every conceivable treatment and therapy available, just one session of breathwork was all that was needed to calm a troubled mind



*[John Crace](#)*

*[@JohnJCrace](#)*

Mon 23 May 2022 05.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 23 May 2022 12.47 EDT

I'd agreed to go along to a breathing workshop thinking no more than it couldn't do any harm and that it might make for a fun article. I left with the possibility that I had found a missing piece of the jigsaw. Something that might just make my depression and anxiety bearable. Shame it had taken me 65 years to get there.

Even now, several days later, I am struggling to understand quite what happened to me. All I can do is offer up my best impressions based on what I remember, as well as on what I don't, as thankfully I left my audio recorder running throughout the session. Together they may approximate to what for me was a remarkable truth.

I'd spent the first 20 minutes of my session talking to [Alan Dolan](#), aka the Breathguru, about his practice. What he did and how he'd come to be doing it for the past 20 years. Then he'd asked me if I was ready to begin. All I needed to do was to follow his instructions and to keep breathing into my abdomen and exhaling gently, as if fogging a mirror. The connected circular breath.

First I lay down on the grey sofa of the unremarkable King's Cross flat Dolan uses when he is in London – his normal base is in Lanzarote, where he runs retreats. Dolan arranged a cushion under my head to make sure I was comfortable and gave me a pre-session briefing. He would be touching various pressure points from time to time; if any area felt particularly sensitive, I wasn't to worry. It was just some old feelings that had been stored in the body being processed. My bullshit radar, which was already quite high, ratcheted up another level or two. Me and the New Age have seldom been on nodding terms.



The Breathguru ... Alan Dolan, left, leads John Crace in a breathing workshop. Photograph: David Levene/The Guardian

"Just close your eyes and do nothing," Dolan said. That was more like it. I could manage that. "Now just notice how things are feeling. Notice the sofa." He then threw in a question that took me off guard. If miracles were

possible, “What would I like to bring more of to me in my session?” I wasn’t to answer, but to think about it.

I did so for a moment before realising it was a no-brainer. I’d come to see Dolan because I was both curious and desperate. For the last year, I’ve been haunted by nightmares and every morning I wake up in a state of acute anxiety. I feel like I’ve failed before the day has even started and sometimes it can take several hours before I feel mentally strong enough to get out of bed. It’s no way to live. If miracles were possible, I just wanted my anxiety to stop. If only for a little while.

We returned to the mechanics of keeping my mouth open throughout the inhale and the exhale. This is different to other breathwork techniques, such as the method championed by James Nestor in his best-selling book *Breath*. It was surprisingly difficult to remember, especially when breathing out. I eventually got into a good enough pattern and at this point Dolan said he was going to make a short invocation. Neither I nor my audio recorder picked up exactly what he said. All I caught were the words “sacred space … guidance … support” and “I dedicate this session to all sentient beings”.

Again, I could feel myself resisting. Couldn’t we just be getting on with this without the hippy stuff? As if he could read my mind, Dolan said that it was fine to be thinking negative thoughts. They were bound to come up. The trick was to acknowledge them without dwelling on them too much. To let them pass through my mind. I gave myself a talking to. Dolan wasn’t doing this for his benefit. He almost certainly had far better things to be doing on a bank holiday afternoon than see me. So the least I could do was keep my negativity in check.

“That’s very good,” Dolan said, as he rechecked my breathing and started applying pressure to various areas of my body. When he touched the top of my left thigh and the groin, I winced. He encouraged me to listen to the sounds of the room and to be aware of my surroundings. And here’s where it starts to get seriously weird. Because when I play back the recording, all I can really hear is the noise of the traffic and the police sirens outside on the Pentonville Road. But at the time, everything felt perfectly silent and still. There was just me, my breath and Dolan instructing me it was safe for my body to tell its truths.

My head felt too heavy to lift while my body had become part of the sofa

What I now know from the recording was only a few minutes later but on the day felt like an age. I became conscious that there was yogic music with a woman chanting playing in the background. Weirdly, I had no recollection of it having started. Somehow it felt as if it had always been playing. What was even stranger was that I found it almost comforting. Normally that sort of thing sets my teeth on edge. But now I was in a state of deep relaxation. My head felt too heavy to lift while my body had become part of the sofa.

“Start breathing through the nose again,” Dolan instructed, as he gradually brought me round from the blissed-out trance in which I could happily have remained for the rest of the day. It was several more minutes before my body didn’t feel like a dead weight and I could raise myself into the sitting position. “You did well,” Dolan said. “You were very open. Very intuitive. You can read other people well. What you really need to learn is how to protect yourself.” “Mostly from myself,” I thought. Even so, I felt absurdly proud. As well as totally seen.

Dolan had one last surprise. He asked me to imagine my feet were connecting with the ground some five storeys below. That I was putting down roots and was in touch with the Earth’s gravitational pull. I swear that as I went through this visualisation I could feel my feet getting hot. Almost unbearably so. So hot, I had to lift them off the ground to cool off. My spiritual hocus meter was going to have to be recalibrated.“How was that?” Dolan asked.

“Wow,” I replied, fumbling for speech. “I feel deeply relaxed.” Though that scarcely began to describe how I felt.

“Perfect,” he replied. “Then my work is done.”

Mine might just be starting. Dolan had asked me what miracle I wanted and he hadn’t just delivered respite from my anxiety. He had taken me to an altered state of consciousness. One that could be attained through just a few minutes of connected breathing.

---

I was first diagnosed with [depression](#) and [anxiety](#) in the mid-1990s, though in hindsight it had dogged me through much of my adult life – not least in my 20s when [I medicated with heroin](#). An act of profound self-harm, punctuated with numerous overdoses. After I cleaned up with the help of Narcotics Anonymous, my mental health improved considerably for about 10 years; but around the time I turned 40 things began to seriously unravel. I started getting severe regular [panic attacks](#) and I became totally dissociated. The outside world didn't feel real and my conversation had become monosyllabic. I felt as if I was falling apart.

I was referred to a superb psychiatrist who had me admitted to hospital where I remained for more than a month as we waited for the antidepressants to take effect. Eventually I was allowed out, and some months later I returned to work. Ever since my mental health has at times been a struggle, despite having been in therapy for more than 30 years. I started before my first breakdown, along with exercising regularly and adjusting my medication as required under the guidance of my shrink.

But nothing I've tried has ever been foolproof, and there have been long periods when life has been a white-knuckle ride. Trying to remain at work, keeping the show on the road when inside I'm falling apart. It is not always possible though. Last year, during the second lockdown, the panic attacks and sense of despair became so intense that I could no longer cope and I was again admitted into a psychiatric institution. There I gradually improved enough to be allowed home but not so much as to feel any sense of normality again.

You could say I was ready for someone like Dolan. But I've tried all sorts of other coping mechanisms – alongside the meds, the group therapy and [exercise](#), and nothing has really worked. [Yoga](#) and [meditation](#) should have been a shoo-in but I could never make the time or fight off my own inner sense of ridiculousness at the thought of doing them. So I can't avoid the irony that something that most people would agree was far further out on the alternative therapies scale has been the one that has proved effective. Or that I came across it by chance and that it worked despite my psyche's best attempts to sabotage it.

Work it undoubtedly did, though. As it has for many of Dolan's other clients, from Russell Brand and some anonymous Hollywood A-listers to ordinary people like you and me. Since my one-to-one with Dolan, I have been using [the Breathguru app](#) to guide me through breathwork at home. It hasn't been as powerful as my original session, but Dolan assures me that this is quite normal. It is just a matter of finding 10 spare minutes every day and putting it to practice.

All that is needed is you, your breath and a pillow for your head to access a moment of profound calm. A feeling of peace and tranquillity when all seems well in a troubled mind. Who knows whether it will last, but I'm up for the journey. Join me. Cast off your chains. You have nothing to lose but your scepticism.

*Breathguru costs from £25 for an online group workshop to £200 for a one-to-one session. Visit [breathguru.com](#).*

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2022/may/23/i-feel-totally-seen-john-crace-on-how-guided-breathing-soothed-a-lifetime-of-anxiety>.

# Elizabeth line: Crossrail complete after decades of struggle – a photo essay

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/may/23/building-the-elizabeth-line-london-tube>

## 2022.05.23 - Opinion

- My teacher said I'd more likely be dead by 25 than a footballer. What if I had listened?
- Goodbye to the age of rage: why Piers Morgan's outrage journalism is flopping
- Too many have suffered under Ghana's abortion laws. Ending Roe v Wade risks our hope for change
- Is it really true? Surely there is a false dawn! Are they really gone? Prime minister Albo!

## OpinionCurriculums

# **My teacher said I'd more likely be dead by 25 than a footballer. What if I had listened?**

[Troy Deeney](#)

Imagine how children would flourish if they learned about Black achievements instead of oppression

- Troy Deeney is captain of Birmingham FC and an anti-racism campaigner



‘What about all the positive ways Black people have contributed to society? Where are the inventors, writers, artists and leaders?’ Footballer Troy Deeney at the launch of his campaign for a diverse curriculum. Photograph: James Manning/PA

Mon 23 May 2022 02.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 24 May 2022 06.37 EDT

There weren't many expectations of me when I was at school. Nobody I knew went to university so that wasn't something I even thought about. Where I grew up, the choices seemed to be: deal drugs, work for the nearby car plant or somehow use sport as a way out – although I was also told by one teacher I was more likely to be dead by 25 than be a professional footballer. When the expectations are that low, and you're told for so many years "you can't", you start to believe it. And then when I was 15 I was excluded from school, leaving without any GCSEs, just another of the [disproportionately high number](#) of mixed race and Black Caribbean boys to be removed from school.

I did become a professional footballer, joining a non-league side when I was working as a bricklayer and eventually joining Watford in 2010, and I've seen the power of using my platform and making a stand when my colleagues and I took the knee in the wake of the murder of [George Floyd](#) to support Black Lives Matter. Football was my way out, but I also wonder what I could have done if I'd been encouraged to engage at school and seen myself reflected in what I was learning – and how life might have been different for all the other kids who didn't have football.

This is why I have started to campaign for schools to better represent their students, with a diverse curriculum that covers Black, Asian and minority ethnic history and experiences. Instead of it being relegated to [Black History Month](#), which feels to me like a token gesture, the history and contributions of people of colour should be considered part of British history and embedded and mandated throughout the curriculum.

It is history that shapes our society today, and for children from ethnic minorities, it also shapes our identity. My memories of Black history at school was learning about slavery and the civil rights movement – vitally important subjects, but when that's all you learn, it reinforces the idea that Black people were considered *less than* white people.

What about all the positive ways Black people have contributed to society? Where are the inventors, writers, artists and leaders? I enjoyed maths, and was good at it, but it never occurred to me that I could do something with it because I didn't learn about scientists or mathematicians who looked like me. How many people know that the traffic light was invented by the prolific Black inventor, [Garrett A Morgan](#)? Something as simple as that could be so uplifting to a generation of kids who might think: I could be an inventor as well.

In September, Wales will make the teaching of a diverse curriculum mandatory, so there is a template of how we can do that without removing anything and at no additional heavy cost. I'd like to see the rest of the UK follow. I started a [petition](#), and I've had talks with Nadhim Zahawi, the education secretary, but progress is slow.

Despite the outpouring of support for the Black Lives Matter movement to mandate a more inclusive curriculum, little action has been taken so far. The idea seems to make some people uncomfortable – from the politicians who refuse to embrace it to the racist abuse I get daily on social media – perhaps because exploring the history and experiences of people of colour, and particularly Black British history, will highlight that Great Britain isn't as great in all aspects as we think.

The pushback isn't coming from teachers though. According to YouGov research I commissioned, 80% of primary and secondary school teachers surveyed believe that diverse and representative topics are vital and enriching for all students. But only 12% said they felt "empowered" to teach "optional" topics such as colonialism and migration, which destroys the government's argument that Black history is available to teach within the current national curriculum.

We live in a cancel culture, and I think this worries teachers, most of whom are [white](#), who are wary of saying the wrong thing (and of course I'd like to see many more Black teachers). It's why I love the work of organisations like [The Black Curriculum](#), run by Lavinya Stennett, who go into schools and help teachers with training.

Had I been given more knowledge about my heritage at school, I would have understood so much more about myself and my family – I could have had more understanding for my grandad, part of the Windrush generation who arrived in the UK and worked hard for the Royal Mail for 30 years. But I'm from a generation, just as he was, where people didn't talk about it. If I'd had more empathy for his experience, I would have known why he seemed miserable a lot of the time.

What I've seen is that teaching diverse history sparks conversation. In the Channel 4 documentary I've made, students at Harris City Academy in south London, the first secondary school to sign up to The Black Curriculum's teaching methods, told me it opened up a space where they could have difficult conversations. [Race](#) can be an uncomfortable topic for some people, but until we have more conversations that are uncomfortable, we're never going to get comfortable with the situation. I saw students who were engaged, had a wide understanding of the world, a pride in their own heritage and who felt inspired about their future. That's what I want for all children.

- Troy Deeney is captain of Birmingham FC and an anti-racism campaigner. *Troy Deeney: Where's My History?* is at 10pm on 23 May on Channel 4
- *Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a letter of up to 300 words to be considered for publication, email it to us at [guardian.letters@theguardian.com](mailto:guardian.letters@theguardian.com)*

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/may/23/black-history-diverse-curriculum-football-teacher>

[Opinion](#)[Television](#)

## **Goodbye to the age of rage: why Piers Morgan's outrage journalism is flopping**

[John Harris](#)



With sobering crises like Ukraine and the cost of living, it's no surprise the appetite for venting behind a microphone is waning



Illustration: R Fresson

Sun 22 May 2022 07.15 EDT Last modified on Mon 23 May 2022 08.57 EDT

TalkTV is in trouble. Despite the millions Rupert Murdoch has invested in his newly launched television channel, and the supposedly magnetic presence of Piers Morgan, its numbers have sometimes been [so low](#) that the official broadcasting rating agency has not registered a single viewer. Last Wednesday, [Piers Morgan Uncensored](#), the nightly showcase of debate and un-woke opinions intended to be TalkTV's centrepiece, was said to have attracted 24,000 people, and then lost over half of them, leaving it with an estimated audience of 10,000.

Over at [GB News](#), the similarly right-inclined talk-based outlet that has survived its equally disastrous launch, it was presumably pints of bitter and sausage rolls all round: that night its competing offering – hosted by the somewhat niche Canadian pundit Mark Steyn – reportedly won the ratings battle with a princely initial viewing figure of 54,000.

It was for research rather than recreation that I [watched](#) Morgan's show that night. It was an underwhelming experience: a very long hour of the host affecting to be what Noel Gallagher once memorably termed “a man with a

fork in a world of soup”, fuming about everything from the governor of the Bank of England (who is “running around like a … hyperbolic headless chicken”) to an unnamed police officer who had allegedly refused to work outside office hours.

During an item that began with Morgan complaining about the royal family apologising for the British empire, a journalist from the Sunday Times had to inform him that they had done no such thing; Morgan’s thoughts about the UK’s colonial legacy found no expression more eloquent than the claim that “there is good and bad in all these things”. For a programme intended to “upset all the right people”, it is weirdly anodyne: proof, perhaps, that if you sell yourself to the public as an irate scourge of snowflakes, “cancel culture” and all the rest, it is probably best not to look like someone going through the motions.

Even if Morgan’s show – and, indeed, TalkTV itself – prove beyond rescue, they are one small part of a change that may well be here to stay, born in the madly polarised world of American news broadcasting and then taken to its logical conclusion by social media. Thanks partly to an anarchic, amateurish spirit that seems truer to its Brexity values than the slickness of Murdoch’s new offering, GB News might just about endure: though its ratings are not exactly mass-market, they seem significantly higher than Talk TV’s (Nigel Farage’s Monday-Thursday show has recently attracted a peak audience of 99,500), and the channel exerts a much bigger influence through the clips it endlessly circulates online.

Talk-based radio has probably never been as high-profile as it is now, and the millions who listen to such voices as the US podcaster Joe Rogan – said to have sold his show to Spotify for £75m – shows that the market for a mixture of comedy, ranting, conspiracy theory and “debate” is huge. Scroll through your news feed, or flick through YouTube, and the sense of a profound shift in how many people receive and understand what some people still call “the news” will be confirmed: in an ocean of “talk”, the complexities and nuances of the real world are always in danger of disappearing.

The “legacy” media have long since been infected by the same virus. The best news broadcasting, it seems to me, is necessarily based around

reporting. Its polar opposite is exemplified by the insane levels of attention paid by orthodox news outlets to such people as [Farage](#) and Laurence Fox, and the comically mouthy pundits – from both left and right – who endlessly appear on TV news channels, and aim to sooner or later make it on to BBC One’s Question Time. The first demands resources, time, care and attention; punditry and polemic, by contrast, require little more than cab fares and paltry appearance fees. Herein lies one overlooked danger in the government’s hostility to the BBC and its plans to privatise Channel 4: if broadcasting is left to the market, the reduction of news to “talk” will only accelerate.

Clearly, there was never a golden age of bias-free reporting, the media has always promoted loudmouths, and its big players have long used their clout to exercise power without responsibility. But in the pre-“talk” era, the dominant model of success in news and current affairs began with vox pops and door-knocks, and moved on to dedicated work on breaking big stories.

That ideal still exists. But a much more alluring career path now centres on sitting behind an expensive-looking microphone, endlessly venting, and trying to pile on likes and subscribers. If something happens, the point is not to go out and understand it, but to quickly take a position and sound off about it: your job is not really to cover the news, but to see if you can make headlines yourself.

“Talk” culture, moreover, has long since bled into politics. The fact that the UK has a government led by a former newspaper columnist was always going to make us a case study in this syndrome, and so it has proved. Deporting refugees to Rwanda is the kind of idea that might have been proposed by a GB News host or some irate caller to LBC, and it is now being rolled out into the real world. Much the same point could be made about Brexit.

But the best example is surely Boris Johnson and his colleagues’ increasingly tedious “war on woke”, whereby ministers sound off about the [evils of working from home](#), the sanctity of statues and whatever else, and their words dissolve into the same white noise that emanates from the mouths of Morgan et al. Herein lies a model of government copied from

Donald Trump, whereby leaders are not there to actually do anything, but to endlessly orchestrate outrage and division to their advantage.

And yet. Morgan's ratings suggest that, in the UK at least, the appeal of endless "talk" has its limits. TalkTV's basic mistake, perhaps, has been a failure to understand that the politics of polarisation and fury peaked back in 2016; and that after our drawn-out exit from the EU and our grim national experience of the pandemic, most people are now weary and jaded, and in no mood to spend endless hours watching and listening to angry people. The vast majority either want to consume as little news as possible or tune into something calm, even-handed and rooted in reality.

The war in Ukraine has provided a sobering reminder of the importance of on-the-ground reporting and journalistic expertise. Something comparable applies to this country's cost-of-living crisis, which demands not hot takes, but sensitive coverage and serious solutions. In that context, who cares about a view of the world that seems to extend no further than a set of studio walls? What matters is the single mother who cannot feed her kids or heat her house, the family taking refuge in a Kyiv basement, and stories that prove one thing beyond doubt: that "talk" – whether "uncensored" or not – is not just cheap, but irrelevant.

John Harris is a Guardian columnist

***Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a letter of up to 300 words to be considered for publication, email it to us at [guardian.letters@theguardian.com](mailto:guardian.letters@theguardian.com)***

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/may/22/goodbye-to-the-age-of-rage-why-piers-morgans-outrage-journalism-is-flopping>.

## Women's right to chooseReproductive rights

# Too many have suffered under Ghana's abortion laws. Ending Roe v Wade risks our hope for change

Bisi Adjapon

In a country where stigma, poverty and religious beliefs compound anti-abortion laws, a rollback on US rights will only embolden extremists



Abortion is illegal in most cases in Ghana and women are often shamed for seeking contraception or forbidden to use it by their husbands. Photograph: Alastair Grant/AP

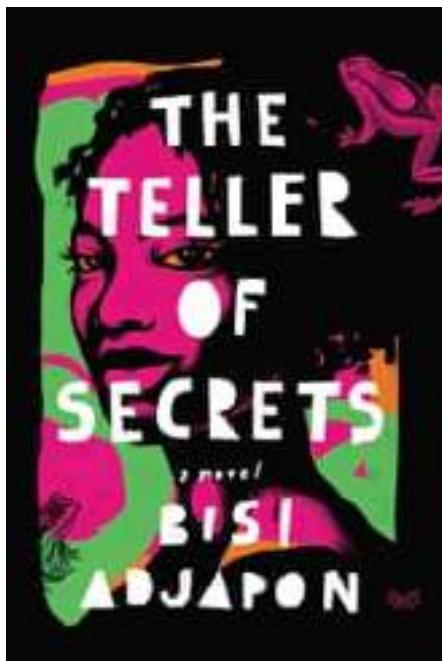
Global development is supported by



[About this content](#)

Mon 23 May 2022 01.30 EDTLast modified on Mon 23 May 2022 04.25 EDT

No one knew she'd had multiple abortions. Not even me, a lifelong friend. "I can't even count how many times I had to do it. He wouldn't let me use contraception and he wouldn't wear anything." Sitting opposite her at a restaurant, I felt deep anguish. This was a prominent Ghanaian official.



Cover of The Teller of Secrets a novel by Bisi Adjapon from Ghana.  
Photograph: Courtesy of HarperVia

She told me how my novel, The Teller of Secrets, had stirred memories she had tried to suppress. It was not the only shame-filled confession triggered by the book. An award-winning Ghanaian film-maker messaged me to share harrowing accounts of a Muslim woman's abortions she couldn't make public. Literary friends of mine have confided similar pain. Almost every African woman I know, mid-30s and above, has had an abortion or two, or more.

A male relative confessed to me, with minimal repentance, how he subjected women to abortions rather than permit contraception, even threatening to leave them if they didn't comply. In a culture where marriage validates women, they are often powerless to refuse. But nothing compares to the horror a child must feel when she finds herself pregnant, like when my 13-year-old niece was raped. Her mother, a staunch Christian, forced my niece to drop out of school and give birth, setting off a cycle of poverty, more children and a disastrous marriage that finally culminated in her tragic death. If her mother had allowed an abortion, I would have wept but refused to judge. I was in no position to help financially or adopt the baby. My niece is merely one illustration of child mothers.

Poor people send their daughters into servitude in wealthy homes where they're often forced to sleep with the master or older offspring. When a child is forced to give birth it can lead to a torn womb, or the wretched condition of fistula where the bladder is eroded.

It doesn't have to happen like this. Abortion is illegal in Ghana, except in cases of incest, rape, foetal abnormalities or when a woman's life is at risk. But ignorance, poverty, religious belief and stigma prevent girls and women from seeking abortion even when it would be legal.

Where it is illegal, money makes it possible. Many doctors willingly perform abortions for those with cash. Those who can't afford to pay subject themselves to dubious procedures under unsanitary conditions. Women guzzle whole bottles of gin or ingest harmful chemicals. Coat hangers have breached cervixes to provoke contractions. Women have had their wombs

scraped without anaesthesia, have bled to death or contracted infections that have scarred their innards and left them infertile. When such a woman is caught, she is shamed and punished. It is only when she dies that society's wrath turns to the impregnator. Someone has to pay, after all.

In a land where so-called churches sprout up seemingly daily, where pastors have flogged pregnant teens or stomped on stomachs, fear of God's wrath paralyses. Lately, there have been calls to legalise abortion, pointing to its lawfulness in western countries, especially in the US whose influence prompted Ghana to overhaul its educational system in 1988. So now there is unease at the potential overturning of Roe v Wade.

Anti-abortion zealots in the US consider some forms of contraception as equivalent to abortion. The draft supreme court opinion does not refer to it, but some legal experts fear it could mean reduced access to contraception. The Republican governor of Mississippi has refused to rule out banning some forms of contraception. Bill Gothard, whose curriculum is used by many home schoolers, exhorts women to abstain from destroying babies through contraception, but to rather procreate to raise an army for Christ. At a seminar I once attended in Virginia, he quoted from the Bible that women will be preserved through childbirth, concluding that having multiple births is a fountain of youth for women.

Anti-abortionists have called for defunding Planned Parenthood and so international family planning programmes, whose largest donor is USAid, are already under threat. These family planning clinics provide nutrition, prenatal care, counselling and baby-wellness to the poor. They reduce abortions, and maternal and infant mortality.

So here's the question: since women are the ones who get pregnant, shouldn't they have unfettered access to contraception? Shouldn't they exercise the right to pull out any unwanted seeds planted by those who value them as little more than soil to be cultivated at will? Shouldn't any female be the decider of what happens inside her body, of what affects her future? Overturning Roe v Wade will rip agency from all women and embolden extremists worldwide.

We must raise girls who feel valued, who don't view marriage as aspirational, who are financially independent. Health workers must be better educated to stop shaming girls for seeking contraception. Most of all, Ghana's national insurance scheme must cover reproductive health, so that women's fate is less reliant on foreign policies. A woman's right to choose is a right that must be defended.

- Bisi Adjapon is a Ghanaian American author who lives in Ghana. Her first novel The Teller of Secrets is published by HarperCollins.

*Sign up for Her Stage to hear directly from incredible women in the developing world on the issues that matter to them, delivered to your inbox monthly:*

Sign up for Her Stage – please check your spam folder for the confirmation email

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/may/23/too-many-have-suffered-under-ghana-abortion-laws-ending-roe-v-wade-risks-hope-for-change>

[First Dog on the Moon](#)[Australian election 2022](#)

## **Is it really true? Surely there is a false dawn! Are they really gone? Prime minister Albo!**

[First Dog on the Moon](#)



Actually they are called the Greals ...

- [Sign up here to get an email](#) whenever First Dog cartoons are published
- [Get all your needs met at the First Dog shop](#) if what you need is First Dog merchandise and prints

Mon 23 May 2022 03.16 EDT Last modified on Mon 23 May 2022 09.18 EDT

## Cartoon by First Dog on the Moon

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/may/23/is-it-really-true-surely-there-is-a-false-dawn-are-they-really-gone-prime-minister-albo>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

## 2022.05.23 - Around the world

- [Canada Storms leave at least eight dead amid trail of destruction](#)
- [Hepatitis Cases rising among children globally but cause remains a mystery](#)
- [Iran Country will ‘avenge’ killing of Revolutionary Guards colonel, says president](#)
- [Pakistan Town blames deadly cholera outbreak on government neglect](#)
- [US Man shot and killed on New York subway in latest ‘unprovoked’ attack](#)

## [Canada](#)

# **Canada storms: at least eight dead amid trail of destruction**

Huge clean-up after Ontario and Quebec hit by tornado-like weather, felling trees, uprooting utility poles and cutting power to more than 500,000



Vehicles are driven among downed power poles in Ottawa, Canada, after thunderstorms in Quebec and Ontario that killed at least eight people. Photograph: Justin Tang/AP

*Reuters in Toronto*

Sun 22 May 2022 23.06 EDT

The death toll from powerful thunderstorms in Canada's two most populous provinces has risen to at least eight, authorities said on Sunday, as emergency crews continued a massive clean-up to restore power to half a million people.

The storms, which lasted more than two hours Saturday afternoon and packed the power of a tornado, left a trail of destruction in parts of Ontario and Quebec. Wind gusts as strong as 132kmh (82mph) felled trees, uprooted electric poles and toppled many metal transmission towers, utility companies said.

Electricity companies were scrambling on Sunday to restore transmission lines. Most of the deaths from the storms occurred when people were hit by falling trees, authorities said.

The prime minister, [Justin Trudeau](#), said the federal government was ready to help those in need.

“We’re thinking of everyone affected, and thanking the crews who are working to restore power,” [Trudeau tweeted on Sunday](#).

Hydro One, Ontario’s biggest electricity distribution company, said in a tweet on Sunday that crews were responding to significant damage. Environment Canada had issued mobile alerts warning of the severe thunderstorms.

Hydro One crews had restored power to more than 360,000 customers, with over 226,000 customers remaining without power, the company said in a statement late on Sunday.

Restoration efforts were likely to continue for several days before power was restored to all customers, the company said.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/23/canada-storms-at-least-eight-dead-amid-trail-of-destruction>

## Children's health

# Hepatitis cases rising among children globally but cause remains a mystery

Researchers are investigating possible links to Covid-19, which has already been shown to cause liver problems in some patients



Health officials are urgently investigating the rise in hepatitis cases, which has led to more than 100 children needing hospital care. Photograph: Peter Byrne/PA

*[Melody Schreiber](#)*

Mon 23 May 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 23 May 2022 09.49 EDT

A dangerous and mysterious illness continues to spread among children, and so do questions over what's causing it, including possible links to Covid-19. But it's too soon to tell what is behind the cases, experts say.

More than [600 cases](#) of hepatitis with no known cause have been identified around the globe since October 2021, and many of the cases are in previously healthy children now stricken with severe illness.

The UK has the highest number of identified cases, with [197](#), while the US has [180 cases](#), most of which have been severe enough to require hospitalization.

Although more cases are being recognized, the cause is still a medical mystery.

“The playing field is changing on an hour-to-hour basis,” said Jason Kindrachuk, an assistant professor in medical microbiology and infectious diseases at the University of Manitoba and co-author of a new [commentary](#) on the status of these cases.

“Inch by inch, we’re starting to figure out what this problem is,” Kindrachuk said. “But I don’t think we have all those pieces of the puzzle yet to say, ‘OK, this is what we think is going on.’”

While mild liver inflammation isn’t uncommon among children, severe inflammation like this is. Normally the UK has eight to 10 liver transplants each year, but it has already [passed](#) those numbers, with 11 in only three months.

Globally, [26 patients](#) – 15 in the US – have required liver transplants. Nearly half of the deaths – five out of 11 so far – have occurred in the US, although the nation accounts for only one-third of identified cases.

The first cases in the US were reported in Alabama, but after the CDC issued a nationwide alert, cases were found in 36 states and territories.

Blood tests reveal the severe liver inflammation isn’t caused by the usual culprits, including the hepatitis viruses A, B, C, D and E.

Several possible causes are being investigated. This could be a new virus that hasn’t yet been unidentified. Or it could be an existing virus, or existing viruses grouped together, causing new symptoms.

One of the top viruses under consideration is adenovirus, a common family of viruses detected in the bloodstreams of many patients – especially the variant 41, which usually presents as a stomach bug. But the liver tissues that have been examined so far don't show signs of adenovirus, and it's unusual for this virus to cause hepatitis.

It's not unheard-of to discover rare effects from common viruses. In 2012, another common virus, an enterovirus, was found to cause a very rare condition known as [acute flaccid myelitis](#). These very rare conditions emerge when there is a high rate of cases, which could be the case with adenovirus – UK health officials, who track the virus, [found](#) a five-year high of cases in young children this winter.

Another cause could be long-term effects from Sars-CoV-2. In some cases, the children with hepatitis tested positive for Covid, but in others, there was no documented history of a Covid infection.

Covid infections have been widespread in children, and many of the patients are too young to be vaccinated against Covid. The CDC estimates that [75%](#) of American children have had the virus.

There are already links between Covid and liver problems. Unusual liver function, including the possibility for hepatitis after Covid infection, [has been documented](#) in children and adults throughout the pandemic.

Italian researchers [raised](#) the alarm about a possible Covid link to hepatitis in May 2021, after seeing a 10-year-old boy with liver problems during a Covid infection. Brazilian researchers also [documented](#) Covid-induced hepatitis in an immune-compromised child in September 2021.

Multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C), a dangerous inflammatory syndrome associated with Covid, may also injure the liver, [research](#) shows. Acute hepatitis is a leading sign of MIS-C, researchers [found](#) in August 2020.

One three-year-old girl was previously healthy, and she had a mild bout of Covid. But three weeks later, she developed hepatitis and acute liver failure, according to a new [study](#) published this month.

New research is building on this possible link with the recent hepatitis cases.

Indian researchers posted a preprint [study](#), which has not been peer-reviewed or published yet, on 9 May highlighting a rise in pediatric hepatitis cases after asymptomatic Covid cases. Out of 475 children who tested positive, 37 had symptoms of hepatitis – and they recovered well with treatment.

Another large new preprint [study](#) compared the liver function of thousands of children who tested positive for Covid with kids who had other respiratory illnesses.

“Children with Covid have a significantly higher risk” of abnormal liver function, said Rong Xu, professor of biomedical informatics at the Case Western Reserve University School of [Medicine](#) and co-author of the preprint study.

And, worryingly, these issues persisted for at least six months, she said.

But that doesn’t mean the hepatitis being seen now is linked to Covid. “For this study, we just found the association” of Covid and liver issues, she said. The next step would be seeing whether the children who have abnormal liver function after Covid subsequently experience other negative outcomes.

It could be that weakened immune systems, battered by Covid or other viruses, make the children more susceptible to hepatitis. Another researcher has [proposed](#) that Covid could create outsized immune reactions to other pathogens long after the initial infection.

This study, like others, is one link in the chain, experts said, but not a smoking gun.

“We’re always taking pieces of the puzzle and slowly building them together,” Kindrachuk said. “All these things have to be put on to the list of potential causal agents, and now we’ve got to try to do the difficult part, which is to say, ‘What is it?’”

Whether the cause is traced to an adenovirus, the coronavirus, some combination of the two, or another culprit entirely, the research emerging

points to possible long-term effects of viruses, especially as they spread widely and reveal rare side-effects.

Covid, for instance, has been shown to affect hearts, brains, lungs, livers and kidneys long after the initial infection ceases – and even in mild cases.

“I really worry about the long-term effects of Covid-19 on multiple organ systems of children,” Xu said.

The good news is that we know how to prevent cases of this and many other viruses, by employing masks, improving ventilation, washing hands, providing sick leave, vaccinating everyone who is eligible, and more, Kindrachuk said.

“We don’t have all the answers for what’s going on right now. But what we do have, certainly, is information on mitigation measures and protective measures that can reduce the incidence of infection.”

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/may/23/hepatitis-cases-children-rising>

## [Iran](#)

# Iran will ‘avenge’ killing of Revolutionary Guards colonel, says president

Guards say arrests linked to Israel made after shooting of Hassan Sayad Khodayari outside his home



Relatives gather around the scene of the shooting on Sunday of Revolutionary Guards colonel Hassan Sayad Khodayari. Photograph: Irgc Social Channel/EPA

*Agence France-Presse in Tehran*

Mon 23 May 2022 04.27 EDT Last modified on Mon 23 May 2022 04.53 EDT

Iran will avenge the killing of a Revolutionary Guards colonel [who was shot dead in Tehran](#), President Ebrahim Raisi has said.

Col Hassan Sayad Khodayari was killed on Sunday outside his home by assailants on motorcycles. [Iran](#) blamed “elements linked to the global arrogance”, its term for the US and its allies including Israel.

It was the most high-profile killing inside Iran since the [November 2020 murder of nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh](#).

Raisi said: “I insist on the serious pursuit [of the killers] by security officials, and I have no doubt that the blood of this great martyr will be avenged.

“There is no doubt that the hand of global arrogance can be seen in this crime,” he added, echoing what the Revolutionary Guards had said the previous day.



The Iranian president, Ebrahim Raisi, said ‘there is no doubt that the hand of global arrogance [a typical term for the US and Israel] can be seen in this crime’. Photograph: Vahid Salemi/AP

He was speaking shortly before visiting Oman, where he was to meet Sultan Haitham, the sultan of Oman.

Khodayari’s funeral was due to take place in Tehran on Monday at 5pm local time (12.30 GMT).

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps – the ideological arm of Iran’s military – described Khodayari as a “defender of the sanctuary”, a term used for those who work on behalf of the Islamic republic in Syria or Iraq.

Iran maintains significant political influence in both countries, notably having backed President Bashar al-Assad’s regime in Syria’s grinding civil war.

State television noted that Khodayari was “known” in Syria, where Iran has acknowledged deploying “military advisers”.

The state news agency Irna said Khodayari was killed by five bullets as he returned home at about 4pm on Sunday (11.30 GMT).

The agency published pictures showing a man slumped over in the driver’s seat of a white car, with blood around the collar of his blue shirt and on his right arm. He was strapped in with his seatbelt, and the front window on the passenger side had been shot out.

The Fars news agency reported that the state prosecutor had visited the scene of the killing and ordered the “quick identification and arrest of the authors of this criminal act”.

The Revolutionary Guards said they had arrested several “thugs linked to the intelligence agency of the Zionist regime”, as Iran calls its enemy Israel.

A statement said the suspects had been involved in a series of crimes, including “robberies, kidnappings and vandalism”.

Khodayari’s killing came as negotiations between Iran and world powers to restore a frayed 2015 nuclear deal have stalled since March.

One of the main sticking points is Tehran’s demand to remove the Revolutionary Guards from a US terrorism list – a request rejected by Washington.

Sign up to First Edition, our free daily newsletter – every weekday morning at 7am BST

The 2015 agreement gave Iran sanctions relief in exchange for curbs on its nuclear programme to prevent Tehran from developing an atomic bomb – something it has always denied wanting to do.

But the nuclear agreement was left hanging by a thread after then US president Donald Trump pulled out of it unilaterally in 2018 and reimposed biting economic sanctions on Tehran, prompting Iran to begin rolling back on its own commitments.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/23/iran-will-avenge-killing-of-revolutionary-guards-colonel-says-president>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

## Global development

# Pakistan town blames deadly cholera outbreak on government neglect

Residents of Pir Koh say poor water provision and a dirty water tank led to 26 deaths, the majority among children under seven



Local students started an online campaign to provide clean water.

Global development is supported by



[About this content](#)

[Shah Meer Baloch](#)

Mon 23 May 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 23 May 2022 12.34 EDT

Two weeks ago, Ruqiyya Bibi fell sick. The two-year-old was vomiting constantly; her father, Mohammed Iqbal, took her to a basic health unit in Pir Koh, a impoverished town with a population of 40,000 in the mountains of Balochistan, south-western [Pakistan](#).

Iqbal was told at first that his daughter had malaria but when treatment did not help, he took her to another doctor who said she had a blood condition.

“From Pir Koh to district headquarter hospital in Dera Bugti, no doctor knew she had cholera. No one even knew what cholera is,” Iqbal told the Guardian.

Last Wednesday, Ruqiyya died. According to local sources, as of Saturday 27 people had now died – 18 of them children – in a cholera outbreak linked to contaminated water that began in Pir Koh.

The government of Pakistan has said the official death toll stands at seven and that about 2,000 people had so far been infected, a figure disputed by

local activists who claim more than 5,000 people have been taken ill.



Labourers clean the water tank in Pir Koh. Photograph: Courtesy of Gulzar Bugti

As Pakistan experiences a brutal heatwave that has engulfed much of south Asia, Pir Koh is faced with a cholera outbreak and a water shortage crisis.

Mohammed Iqbal was not able to get enough water for his toddler's funeral rites.

Pakistan's prime minister, Shehbaz Sharif, has ordered "emergency relief measures" for Pir Koh; the chief minister of Balochistan, Quddus Bizenjo, announced 300m rupees (£1.2m) for the provision of clean drinking water. But people in Pir Koh say they have been left with dirty water for years.

The state-owned Oil and Gas Development Company Ltd (OGDCL) is in charge of purifying the town's water, which comes from a spring about 26km away, and sending it to people via pipelines.

A muddy and dirty water tank was cleaned by the administration after the outbreak, but local people who spoke to the Guardian said this came too late.

One said: “The state has long left us alone at the mercy of God and it has interests in exploitation of natural resources. When the people were dying, the authorities were absent from the scene.”

When the cholera outbreak began last month, Pir Koh’s hospital was not equipped to diagnose the patients.

The district health officer, Dr Azam Bugti, said that the first case was reported on 17 April but it took another week to confirm the outbreak as samples had to be sent to Pakistan’s capital for testing.

“The water crisis in Pir Koh is decades old, and after a drought the issue was exacerbated. The lack of rain this year has caused nearby ponds to dry up. Animals and people drink the same water here in Pir Koh,” said Bugti.

“We started treating the patients after the test results,” he said. “So far seven people have lost their lives. The situation was soon under control.”



Cholera patient in Pir Koh. Activists say the number of cases is double the official figure. Photograph: Courtesy of Gulzar Bugti

The chief secretary of Balochistan and a World [Health](#) Organization team visited the area on Thursday, said Bugti, after an online campaign was started by local students.

Gulzar Bugti – no relation – was home from university in Lahore when the crisis began. He and other students and family members started an online campaign and [took to the streets to call for help](#), accusing the administration of doing nothing.

“People did not have water even for full ablution, the last rite for the dead. There was no clean water to drink and the authorities were not active to devise any emergency plan,” he said.

Bugti and his friends raised money to provide storage facilities and water delivery tankers. He rejected the death toll issued by the authorities, giving a list of 26 names, 18 of them children under seven.

His group says there are about 5,000 cholera patients in Pir Koh – more than double the official figure.

“We demand the government come up with a long-term plan to tackle this humanitarian crisis,” he said.



A water tanker provided through an online campaign run by local students.  
Photograph: Courtesy of Gulzar Bugti

In a tweet on Sunday, the prime minister [told](#) Bugti: “We are working with the provincial government to find a permanent solution to the issue, so that people don’t face this problem again. The projects on clean drinking water will soon be completed.”

Cholera is spread mostly through dirty water and poor sanitation. Especially dangerous to children, it causes rapid dehydration through diarrhoea and vomiting and affects an estimated 3-5 million people worldwide, killing 28,800 to 130,000 people a year. Although it is classified as a [pandemic](#), it is rare in high-income countries.

Pakistan’s minister for climate change, Sherry Rehman, said recently that Pakistan was among the most water-stressed countries in the world, and highly vulnerable to climate stress.

The country’s major dams are at a “dead level right now, and sources of water are scarce as well as contested,” Rehman told CNN, adding: “This is an all-encompassing existential crisis and must be taken seriously.”

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/may/23/pakistan-town-blames-deadly-cholera-outbreak-on-government-neglect>

## New York

# Man shot and killed on New York subway in latest ‘unprovoked’ attack

Police investigate death of Daniel Enriquez on busy train on Sunday morning



People stand on a platform of a subway station in New York. Photograph: Frank Franklin II/AP

*Associated Press in New York*

Mon 23 May 2022 09.03 EDTFirst published on Mon 23 May 2022 04.45 EDT

An unidentified man shot and killed a passenger on a subway train in [New York](#) in what police officials said appeared to be an unprovoked attack.

The incident happened on a Q train travelling over the Manhattan Bridge at about 11.40am on Sunday, a time when the subway is often filled with families, tourists and people heading to brunch.

Witnesses told police the assailant was pacing the last car of the train, “and without provocation, pulled out a gun and fired it at the victim at close range”, said the New York police department chief, Kenneth Corey.

The 48-year-old victim died in hospital and was later identified by police as Daniel Enriquez of Brooklyn.

Enriquez had spent nine years working at Goldman Sachs, the bank’s chairman said in a statement to Reuters.

“He worked diligently to support our Macro Research team in New York and epitomized our culture of collaboration and excellence,” Goldman Sachs’s chairman, David Solomon, said in a statement. “We are devastated by this senseless tragedy and our deepest sympathies are with Dan’s family at this difficult time.

The gunman fled at Canal Street station in Manhattan. Police were reviewing security video to try to identify him.

Corey told reporters that although the circumstances were being investigated, witnesses could not recall any interactions between the gunman and the victim in the run-up to the shooting. A single 9mm shell casing was recovered at the scene.

Sign up to First Edition, our free daily newsletter – every weekday morning at 7am BST

The shooting came at a time when New Yorkers’ faith in the safety of the subway system had been rattled. Last month, a man opened fire on a Brooklyn train, scattering random shots that wounded 10 people.

The person charged in that attack, Frank James, had allegedly posted dozens of videos online talking about race, violence and his struggles with mental illness.

In January, a man with schizophrenia fatally pushed a woman in front of a moving train. He was deemed mentally unfit to stand trial.

Since taking office in January, the Democratic mayor of New York City, [Eric Adams](#), has made a crackdown on violent crime the primary focus of his administration.

The former New York City police captain rode the subway to City Hall on his first day as mayor. He said he did not feel safe on the train after encountering a yelling passenger and several homeless people, adding that the city needed to tackle “actual crime” as well as “the perception of crime”.

Most of the violence in the city in recent months has occurred in its neighbourhoods. But attacks on the subway, a network millions rely on, loom large in public perceptions of safety.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/may/23/man-shot-killed-new-york-subway-police>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

## Headlines thursday 26 may 2022

- [Live Partygate: more Tory MPs call on Boris Johnson to resign after Sue Gray report](#)
- [Gray report More Tory MPs call for Boris Johnson to quit over Partygate revelations](#)
- [Downing Street Support staff at No 10 ‘subjected to bullying for years’, union claims](#)
- [‘Failure of leadership’ What the papers say about the Sue Gray report](#)

[Skip to key events](#)

[Politics live with Andrew Sparrow](#)[Politics](#)

# Cost of living payments for millions as Sunak announces windfall tax on oil and gas profits – as it happened

This live blog has now closed, you can read [our main news story on Rishi Sunak's announcement here](#), and [analysis on what it means here](#)

- [Sunak engaged in ‘serious redistribution from rich to poor’, says IFS](#)
- [Reeves says Sunak U-turn shows Labour ‘winning battle of ideas’](#)
- [Tory MP Stephen Hammond says he’s called for confidence vote in PM](#)
- [David Simmonds joins Tory MPs publicly calling for PM’s resignation](#)
- [Tory MP John Baron says he can no longer support Johnson](#)

Updated 3d ago

*[Andrew Sparrow](#)*

Thu 26 May 2022 13.03 EDTFirst published on Thu 26 May 2022 04.25 EDT

Rishi Sunak announces £5bn windfall tax on energy firms to ease cost of living crisis – video

*[Andrew Sparrow](#)*

Thu 26 May 2022 13.03 EDTFirst published on Thu 26 May 2022 04.25 EDT

## Key events

- [3d ago](#)[Early evening summary](#)

- [3d ago Green party condemns decision to exempt renewables from new investment allowance for energy companies](#)
- [3d ago Sunak says his cost of living support package not announced as distraction from Partygate](#)
- [3d ago What thinktanks are saying about Sunak's cost of living support package](#)
- [3d ago Tory MP Stephen Hammond reveals he submitted letter calling for no confidence vote in 'indefensible' PM some time ago](#)
- [3d ago Cleaners and security guards to protest outside No 10 over abusive treatment of staff](#)
- [3d ago Sunak engaged in 'serious redistribution from rich to poor', says IFS](#)

Show key events only

## Live feed

Show key events only

[3d ago 13.01](#)

## Early evening summary

- [Rishi Sunak has announced a £15bn package of support for households struggling with the cost of living crisis, part-funded by a £5bn windfall tax on energy companies.](#) My colleague Hilary Osborne has more details of how the new payments will work here.
- **Sunak has confirmed that benefits will be uprated next year in line with the rate of inflation this September.** That is the normal practice, but with inflation at its highest level for 40 years, there has been concern the government might uprate in line with a lower rate. In his Q&A with Martin Lewis a few minutes ago Sunak stressed this in response to concerns that claimants were not getting enough help,

saying that because inflation would be high this year, that would mean a significant increase in the value of benefits next April. Sky's **Ed Conway** explains the significance of this here.

But arguably the single most expensive item was the bit which wasn't costed at all

That bit the chx rushed through in his speech: benefits/pensions will be raised in line with Sept inflation.

This will cost A LOT.

To see how much, let's shift the y axis. Here's today's measures:

[pic.twitter.com/48lalCaSzM](https://pic.twitter.com/48lalCaSzM)

— Ed Conway (@EdConwaySky) [May 26, 2022](#)

If inflation is as expected this autumn (c.10%) then a rough calculation suggests it could push up the pensions/benefits bill by maybe £25bn.

That's more than the ENTIRE package today (£15bn).

It's MASSIVE.

But because this isn't a Budget HMT doesn't have to show its workings... [pic.twitter.com/lGk2mrvkuH](https://pic.twitter.com/lGk2mrvkuH)

— Ed Conway (@EdConwaySky) [May 26, 2022](#)

- [The government's £15bn cost of living handout is not enough to help struggling families, and only a “drop in the ocean” compared with the pressures consumers are facing, the boss of Asda has said.](#)
- [The Metropolitan police investigated parties inside Downing Street “without fear or favour”, and found no evidence that Boris Johnson had breached Covid regulations more than once, the force’s interim head has insisted.](#)

- Four Conservative MPs have called for Boris Johnson to resign in the aftermath of the Sue Gray report, saying they cannot reconcile themselves with his previous statements on Partygate.
- The former Labour MP Claudia Webbe has lost an appeal against her conviction for harassing a love rival, but her sentence has been reduced.



Rishi Sunak making his announcement in the Commons today. Photograph: Parliament/Jessica Taylor

- 
- 

Updated at 13.26 EDT

3d ago12.54

And this is from the Green MP **Caroline Lucas** on the government's decision to exempt renewables from the new investment allowance for energy companies. (See 5.36pm.)

Can't quite believe what I'm reading □

The Govt really does say rebate on [#windfalltax](#) only applies if energy companies extract \*more\* oil & gas

Bone-headedly stupid, even by this Govt's standards, to be incentivising climate-wrecking fossil fuels[#keepitintheground](#)

— Caroline Lucas (@CarolineLucas) [May 26, 2022](#)

- 
- 

[3d ago](#)[12.39](#)

**Rishi Sunak** is taking part in a live Q&A with **Martin Lewis**, the consumer champion and founder of the MoneySavingExpert website. You can watch it here.

At 5.30pm this tweet will turn into a LIVE Q&A stream with [@rishiunak](#), where I put my and your questions to him on the [#CostOfLivingCrisis](#) announcements made today. PLEASE SHARE

(We can't do live subtitles, but will add them later and post a link)  
<https://t.co/L7i2jn7RIT>

— Martin Lewis (@MartinSLewis) [May 26, 2022](#)

- 
- 

[3d ago](#)[12.36](#)

# **Green party condemns decision to exempt renewables from new investment allowance for energy companies**

The investment allowance announced by [Rishi Sunak](#) today, which will allow energy companies to get a total of 91p of their tax bill for every £1 they invest in the UK and which has been introduced to partially offset the impact of the windfall tax, will not apply to investment in renewable energy, the government has confirmed. It will only apply to investment in oil and gas. **Joanna Penn**, a government whip in the House of Lords, confirmed this when she was taking questions on the plans, in response to a question from the Green peer **Natalie Bennett**. Bennett says it is unbelievable.

Unbelievably, [#Government](#) have confirmed that oil and gas companies can largely avoid the windfall tax by re-investing their profits.

And there will be no tax relief for investment in renewables!

You read correctly. NO TAX RELIEF FOR INVESTMENT IN RENEWABLES [#WindfallTax](#) [pic.twitter.com/M4CEjp95MI](https://pic.twitter.com/M4CEjp95MI)

— Natalie Bennett (@natalieben) [May 26, 2022](#)

:

:

Updated at 13.28 EDT

[3d ago](#)[12.25](#)

## **Sunak says his cost of living support package not announced as distraction from Partygate**

On a visit to a B&Q in Watford, **Rishi Sunak** rejected claims that his cost of living support package was announced today as a distraction from Partygate. When asked if it was, he replied:

I'm focused on delivering for people and that is what today was about.

And the timing of today is because we now have more clarity about what is going to happen to energy bills in the autumn.

We heard from Ofgem earlier this week about the potential scale of the increase.

And that is why we took decisive action to provide £15bn worth of support to help the country get through the challenging months ahead.

Sunak also said he respected the police decision to fine him for attending a surprise birthday event for [Boris Johnson](#) in the cabinet room during lockdown. Sunak was there inadvertently, because he had arrived for a separate meeting. Commenting on it today, Sunak said:

With regard to my situation, I fully respect the decision that the police came to. And I sincerely and deeply apologise for the hurt and anger that caused.

- 
- 

[3d ago](#)[12.09](#)



Sir Jeffrey Donaldson (right), the DUP leader, speaking to the media at Stormont today, with a picture of one of his predecessors, Ian Paisley, in the background.

Photograph: Brian Lawless/PA

•  
•

[3d ago](#)[12.07](#)



Libby Brooks

There were get well wishes at first minister's questions in Holyrood earlier as **Nicola Sturgeon** missed the session after testing positive for Covid last Friday.

Nearly a week on, Sturgeon says she has been “floored” by the virus and is planning to spend the rest of the week at home to recover.

Her absence comes in the week that Sturgeon became the longest-serving first minister of the Scottish parliament after 2,743 days in office, overtaking her predecessor Alex Salmond’s day tally on Wednesday.

While there has been much analysis of her time in power as Scotland’s first female FM – covering the SNP’s stellar electoral record, Brexit, the Salmond case and inquiry, and of course, the pandemic – Sturgeon’s voice has been conspicuously absent.

It’s worth noting how seldom Sturgeon has taken time off, full stop, over the period. Particularly during the early months of Covid, her work ethic made the Stakhanovites look like part-timers.

•  
Updated at 13.36 EDT

3d ago **11.53**

## What thinktanks are saying about Sunak's cost of living support package

Here is reaction to Rishi Sunak's cost of living support package from two thinktanks seen as being on the left.

From Torsten Bell, chief executive of the **Resolution Foundation**

The chancellor has announced a big and very welcome package of support for households facing fast rising energy bills. It almost doubles the level of energy support to over £30bn, and fills the huge gap in previous announcements with large targeted support for those hit hardest.

The decision to provide one-off payments this year to poorer households, pensioners and those with a disability is a good attempt to target those with higher energy bills – although the relative lack of support for larger families stands out.

The chancellor's commitment to uprate benefits next April in line with very high inflation also offers important security for lower income households that their living standards will be protected from surging prices tomorrow as well as today.

From Miriam Brett, director of research and advocacy at **Common Wealth**

*The biggest threat facing our future is the climate emergency and key to the transition is the need to create a green and just tax system. The UK is already an enormously profitable place for oil and gas companies. Today's announcement by the Chancellor on the investment allowance to encourage firms to invest in oil and gas extraction in the UK casts*

*fresh doubt on the UK government's willingness to tackle the climate and environmental crises.*

*Research by Common Wealth and NEF found that despite its climate commitments, the UK continues to offer a number of tax reliefs for both domestic production and consumption of fossil fuels. In the last five years, the value of UK support to fossil fuels amounted to an average of approximately £12bn a year. A rapid and just phase out of fossil fuel subsidies should be a core component of a just transition.*

And here is reaction from two thinktanks on the right.

From James Heywood, head of welfare and opportunity at the **Centre for Policy Studies**

This is a significant package of support targeted at those on the lowest incomes, and it will bring welcome relief to many families facing eye-watering increases in their bills. The Chancellor is right to use the means-tested benefits system to ensure cash goes to those who need it most, as we have been advocating for at the CPS. It is important to emphasise that these measures are pain relief, not a complete anaesthetic. The government cannot completely offset the impact of rising prices for every household - many still face an incredibly tough year ahead.

The reference in this quote to “pain relief” is a reminder than [in the Sunday Times](#) at the weekend Tim Shipman said Boris Johnson was willing to back Sunak’s plans for a windfall tax, but only if some of the money was spent on nuclear power stations and offshore windfarms, that would cut energy bills in the long run. Shipman quoted an adviser arguing that spending on “surgery” was ultimately more beneficial than spending on “pain relief”. If Shipman was right, today’s announcement shows that Johnson lost the argument.

From Mark Littlewood, director general at the **Institute of Economic Affairs**

*The worst way to make policy is to oppose something half-heartedly in principle, then procrastinate and finally change position as a result of political expediency. It is painfully obvious that in the battle of ideas, the government enters the arena wholly unarmed.*

*Rachel Reeves, the Shadow Chancellor, is right to say that this represents a policy victory for Labour. The default setting of the Conservatives now is to respond to virtually any problem by increasing taxes and spending even more money. The appetite and ability of the government to lower taxation or reduce the regulatory burden on businesses is approximately zero. The consequence will be a prolonged cost of living crisis and woefully disappointing economic growth.*

•  
•

3d ago[11.32](#)

## **Tory MP Stephen Hammond reveals he submitted letter calling for no confidence vote in ' indefensible' PM some time ago**

Another Conservative MP, **Stephen Hammond**, has come out to declare that they can no longer support [Boris Johnson](#). Hammond has been very critical of Johnson in the past over Partygate, but until now he has not publicly joined those calling for a no confidence vote.

Today, however, he suggests that Johnson is “indefensible” and he implies that he submitted a letter to the 1922 Committee calling for a vote on Johnson’s leadership some time ago. In [a statement](#) he says:

I have said consistently throughout I cannot and will not defend the indefensible. I am struck by a number of my colleagues who were really concerned that it’s almost impossible for the PM to say I want to

move on, as we cannot move on without regaining public trust and I am not sure that's possible in the current situation ...

Since 9 December I have been critical of the prime minister's behaviour and the culture that existed in No 10. All I can do as a backbencher is speak out and submit a letter. I guide everyone to my website statements where I have said for several months [I already have done all I can as a backbencher.](#)

Tom Larkin from Sky News, who is keeping a tally, says 19 Tories are now on the record calling for a no confidence vote. The true number is thought to be more than double that, because MPs can submit letters in secret. If 54 letters are submitted, the 1922 Committee has to hold a ballot.

•  
•

Updated at 13.36 EDT

[3d ago 11.14](#)

## **Cleaners and security guards to protest outside No 10 over abusive treatment of staff**

Emine Sinmaz

Cleaners and security guards contracted to work for the Ministry of Justice will protest outside Downing Street tomorrow following reports that support staff were mocked and left to mop up after lockdown parties.

Sue Gray's report into the Partygate scandal revealed that cleaners and security guards were subjected to a "lack of respect and poor treatment", and yet felt "unable to raise [this] properly" with the authorities.

The UVW (United Voices of the World) union, which represents outsourced cleaners at the MoJ, said its members will protest against the government's "culture of disrespect" at 5.30pm tomorrow.

Emanuel Gomes, one of its members, died in April 2020 just hours after cleaning an office in the MoJ. Originally from Guinea, the 43-year-old father and husband felt so ill he could barely stand but felt under pressure to continue working during lockdown because he did not receive sick pay, his family said. He had suspected coronavirus symptoms but his death was officially recorded as hypertension of the heart.

**Vicente Gomes**, a cleaner at the MoJ and a member of the UVW union, said:

Emanuel and I were from the same country, he was a good person. During the pandemic, while we didn't have masks and we were on poverty wages, the prime minister broke the law. This is very wrong, this is not normal, he knows the law.

Emanuel Gomes's cousin, **Vicente Mendes**, who is also a cleaner at the MoJ and a UVW member, said:

Emanuel didn't receive sick pay and he died without receiving anything. It can't be like this, I feel very sad.

**Petros Elia**, general secretary for UVW, added:

It is outrageous to have rowdy and illegal parties during the pandemic but to then expect cleaners to mop up after you and to pay them, as well as porters and security guards, poverty wages, and deny them full sick pay is abhorrent.

•  
•

Updated at 17.21 EDT

[3d ago](#) [11.05](#)

**Sunak engaged in 'serious redistribution from rich to poor', says IFS**

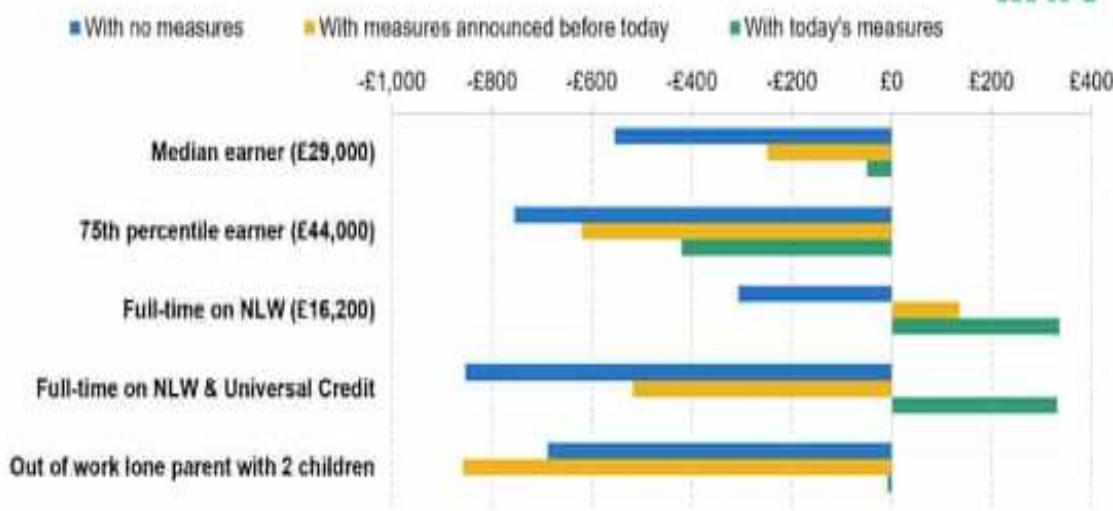
The **Institute for Fiscal Studies** has released [a full analysis](#) of the cost of living support measures announced by Rishi Sunak earlier. It says Sunak is involved in “serious redistribution from rich to poor”. This is from **Paul Johnson**, the IFS’s director.

Rishi Sunak has announced a genuinely big package of support for households. On average the poorest households will now be approximately compensated for the rising cost of living this year. The flat rate nature of payments to benefit recipients does mean, though, that the package is less generous to poor families with children than to those without. Even so, put these benefit increases alongside the tax rises just implemented, and Mr Sunak is engaging in some serious redistribution from rich to poor - albeit against a backdrop of rising inequality.

While this is coming at substantial fiscal cost, its supposedly temporary nature means he might not be too worried about the impact on the public finances. We will wait to see how the Bank of England responds to a big fiscal loosening in a period of high and rising inflation. If energy prices remain high, or rise even further, it may turn out hard to ensure these changes are genuinely temporary. And there are inevitably going to be families on modest incomes, who are just out of reach of the means tested benefit system, who will feel hard done by relative to the generous treatment of those families not so different from them who are receiving benefits.

The IFS also says that, as a result of the measures announced today, a worker on median earnings will have very little reduction in real-terms income this year compared with last year. Without any of the measures announced by Sunak this year, they would have faced a loss of more than £500. People working full-time on the “national living wage” will actually see an increase in their real-terms income, the IFS says.

### Changes in real take-home income, this year (2022/23) compared to last year



IFS analysis of impact of Sunak's measures on real take-home income  
Photograph: IFS

•  
•

Updated at 11.19 EDT

[3d ago](#) [10.49](#)

In the Commons MPs have this afternoon been paying tribute to the Queen, to mark her platinum jubilee. **Boris Johnson** opened the debate, and like other MPs he praised her lavishly. It would, of course, be far more interesting to hear what the Queen has to say about Johnson, but sadly that option is not available, and so here is an excerpt from Johnson's speech.

Since the Palace of Westminster was founded more than 1,000 years ago, it has seen war and peace, plague and plenty, the rise and fall of empires and all kinds of revolutions: scientific, industrial, political, ecumenical, stylistic.

And almost 50 monarchs – in trying to rank the achievements of those monarchs it must be admitted that not all of them set exemplary

standards of personal behaviour and quite a few were removed violently and prematurely from office.

But in our history, no monarch has ever served this country so long as this one with the first platinum jubilee ever but far more importantly, no monarch has ever served it so well.

•  
•

Updated at 11.10 EDT

[3d ago](#)[10.38](#)

## **Met had to issue Partygate fines on basis of law, not just photos that 'look bad', says acting commissioner**

In his evidence to the London assembly's police and crime committee, **Sir Stephen House**, the acting [Metropolitan police](#) commissioner, dismissed suggestions that his force was soft on Boris Johnson when investigating Partygate. He also insisted that, just because a photograph "looks bad", that does not mean a fine is justified. He explained:

I accept that many of the photographs that we are seeing look bad and Sue Gray's report has dealt with that.

We deal with the law, not what looks bad. And just because there is alcohol present, can I just remind people that the Covid regulations are about breaching Covid regulations, they're not about whether there's drink there or not.

We have to put fixed-penalty notices to people that we think will win in court. And there has to be evidence behind it and there is not always evidence and ... a photograph can be somewhat deceptive in these areas.

We need evidence and they need to be proving there is no reasonable excuse behind what was going on.

We have not, I repeat this, we have not shied away from issuing a fixed-penalty notice where we thought it was deserved.

We have policed without fear or favour and I would not have presided over anything less than that.

•  
•

Updated at 10.49 EDT

[3d ago](#)[10.29](#)

The Lib Dems say that under their plans a windfall tax on the energy sector would have raised £11bn, not the £5bn that [Rishi Sunak](#) expects his to raise. **Christine Jardine**, the Lib Dem Treasury spokesperson, said:

This is more a levy lite than a windfall tax. The chancellor could have raised double the cash from oil and gas companies if he had the bottle.

The Lib Dems want to impose a 25% windfall tax on the excess global profits of oil and gas producers headquartered in the UK. Sunak's tax is a 25% tax on UK oil and gas profits, but the investment allowance will enable firms to cut their liabilities if they are investing in the UK.

•  
•

Updated at 10.37 EDT

[Newest](#)[Newest](#)

[Previous](#)

1  
of  
6

[Next](#)

[Oldest](#)[Oldest](#)

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/live/2022/may/26/boris-johnson-sue-gray-report-partygate-rishi-sunak-uk-politics-live>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

**Boris Johnson**

## **Four more Tory MPs call for Johnson to quit over Partygate report**

Latest calls from within party for prime minister to stand down come day after Sue Gray report published

- [Latest UK politics news: live updates](#)



Johnson still faces an investigation by the Commons privileges committee into whether he misled parliament by denying that rules were broken in No 10. Photograph: Sue Gray report/Cabinet Office/PA

*[Aubrey Allegretti](#) and [Jessica Elgot](#)*

Thu 26 May 2022 12.00 EDTFirst published on Thu 26 May 2022 05.48 EDT

Four Conservative MPs have called for [Boris Johnson](#) to resign in the aftermath of the Sue Gray report, saying they cannot reconcile themselves

with his previous statements on Partygate.

The former health minister Stephen Hammond said he had submitted a letter of no confidence in the prime minister to the chair of the 1922 Committee after the investigation confirmed a string of lockdown-busting parties took place in Downing Street.

Two others, David Simmonds and John Baron, said they had lost confidence in Johnson. A fourth, Angela Richardson, who quit as a parliamentary private secretary earlier in the year, said she would have resigned if she had been in Johnson's position.

Nineteen MPs have publicly called for Johnson to quit, although two more have submitted and then withdrawn letters of no confidence, and at least three others have called for Johnson to resign but said they would not submit letters.

Hammond, who has a majority of just 628 in Wimbledon, said in a statement that the conclusions of the Gray report were damning.

"I cannot and will not defend the indefensible," he said. "I am struck by a number of my colleagues who were really concerned that it's almost impossible for the PM to say 'I want to move on', as we cannot move on without regaining public trust and I am not sure that's possible in the current situation."

Hammond hinted he had already submitted his letter to Sir Graham Brady, the chair of the 1922 Committee. "All I can do as a backbencher is speak out and submit a letter. I have said for several months I already have done all I can as a backbencher."

Backbenchers Baron and Simmonds, who is the prime minister's constituency neighbour in west London, said Johnson's behaviour was so egregious that the prime minister should resign.

Baron, a former shadow minister, said he did not believe Johnson was unaware of the "shameful pattern of misbehaviour during the pandemic as

the rest of us kept to the Covid regulations”.

“A bedrock principle of our constitution is that we can trust the responses we receive in parliament to be truthful and accurate,” Baron said in a statement.

“Parliament is the beating heart of our nation. To knowingly mislead it cannot be tolerated, no matter the issue. Whether or not the prime minister is an asset to the party or the country is of less importance.”

The MP added that the prime minister “no longer enjoys my support” – but did not say whether he had submitted a no-confidence letter, 54 of which are needed to trigger a vote on Johnson’s leadership.

Simmonds, the MP for Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner, said it had become clear that “while the government and our policies enjoy the confidence of the public, the prime minister does not”.

He added: “It is time for him to step down so that new leadership can take forward the important work of the government in ensuring that our people and country prosper.”

Richardson said in a statement that she was dismayed by the behaviour uncovered in the report. “Trust has been broken and it saddens me that the culture in No 10 and the length of time the inquiry has taken has eroded trust in your political representatives. It reflects badly on all of us.

“Sue Gray reflects many people’s view when she says: ‘The senior leadership at the centre, both political and official, must bear responsibility.’ I am clear that had this been a report about my leadership, I would resign.”

Sign up to First Edition, our free daily newsletter – every weekday morning at 7am BST

Julian Sturdy, the MP for York Outer, called for Johnson to quit on Wednesday, just hours after the report was published.

Johnson still faces an investigation by the Commons privileges committee into whether he misled parliament by denying on multiple occasions that any

rules were broken in No 10.

Chris Bryant, a Labour MP who recused himself from leading the investigation, said the committee would be able to gather evidence, including from cleaners and security staff who were mentioned in the Gray report as having cleaned up wine stains or come across late-night gatherings.

No 10's chief of staff, Steve Barclay, insisted on Thursday it was only a "small minority" of people working in the building who had broken the rules, and added Johnson was not aware of many of the more debauched details that emerged on Wednesday, including wine being spilled up walls, vomiting and a fight.

Tory MPs go to great lengths to defend Johnson over Sue Gray report – video

He said Johnson thought the leaving parties were permissible because staff were working "closely together for long hours" and that the prime minister was "going to events for a short period of time during the working day".

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/may/26/boris-johnson-partygate-tory-call-to-quit-sue-gray-report>

## Gray report

# Support staff at No 10 ‘subjected to bullying for years’, union claims

Sue Gray report found cleaners and security guards have been subjected to ‘lack of respect and poor treatment’



‘There’s been a culture of bullying, harassment and sexism in No 10 for many years,’ a union member has claimed. Photograph: David Cliff/AP

*[Rajeev Syal](#) and [Ben Quinn](#)*

Thu 26 May 2022 02.00 EDT

Support staff at No 10 and the Cabinet Office have been subjected to bullying and harassment for years, according to a union member in Whitehall.

The claim comes after [Sue Gray’s report](#) into the Partygate scandal disclosed that cleaners and security guards have been subjected to a “lack of respect

and poor treatment”, and yet felt “unable to raise [this] properly” with the authorities.

A member of the Public and Commercial Service (PCS) union working in the Cabinet Office said: “The prime minister’s apology is too little, too late. There’s been a culture of bullying, harassment and sexism in No 10 for many years.”

Incidents recalled to the Guardian by staff include sexually derogatory comments made by senior civil servants about female staff in front of union members; and swearing and drinking alcohol in front of cleaning staff.

In the [conclusion of her report](#), Gray states: “I found that some staff had witnessed or been subjected to behaviours at work which they had felt concerned about but at times felt unable to raise properly.

“I was made aware of multiple examples of a lack of respect and poor treatment of security and cleaning staff.

“This was unacceptable. I am reassured to see that steps have since been taken to introduce more easily accessible means by which to raise concerns electronically, in person or online, including directly with the permanent secretary in No 10.

“I hope that this will truly embed a culture that welcomes and creates opportunities for challenge and speaking up at all levels.”

Addressing MPs in the Commons, [Boris Johnson](#) offered an apology to the security and cleaning staff for their “appalling” treatment.

He insisted he had “no knowledge” of such treatment, saying he was “surprised and disappointed” to hear about them.

According to the union member, poor treatment of staff was apparent under his predecessor’s premiership and has continued under Johnson.

“It was going on behind Theresa May’s back before he took office, yet he did nothing to address it. His empty words will be no consolation to the

hard-working cleaners and security guards who have suffered under his leadership,” they said.

A union representing cleaners in other government departments, meanwhile, said it was “not in the least bit surprised” about the revelations in the [Gray report](#).

“We have many members who work as cleaners and security guards, and these workers face disrespect on a daily basis in offices across London, not just in Downing Street,” said Petros Elia, general secretary for the United Voices of World (UVW) union. “Most of the cleaners and security guards out there are ethnic minority workers, Black, brown and migrant people, who are disproportionately impacted by poor working conditions and racialised inequalities.”

The UVW’s members include cleaners at the Ministry of Justice who staged a walkout during the pandemic after the union repeatedly raised concerns over workers’ safety, a lack of PPE and failure to promise full sick pay those who might need to self-isolate.

A Cabinet Office spokesperson said: “We do not tolerate bullying, harassment or discrimination in any form of anyone in our workplaces, whether staff or contractors.

“Our latest data shows reported incidents in the civil service have fallen to their lowest recorded level, with a large increase in the number of people who believe appropriate action was taken, but we know there is more work to be done.

“The Diversity and Inclusion Strategy builds on the progress made in recent years by setting out clear and specific actions for departments, including regular reviews of progress and running campaigns across government that support staff in raising concerns.”

---

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

## Gray report

# ‘Failure of leadership’: what the papers say about Johnson and the Sue Gray Partygate report

Many front pages take Boris Johnson to task for the lockdown-busting gatherings, but others try to draw a line under the affair



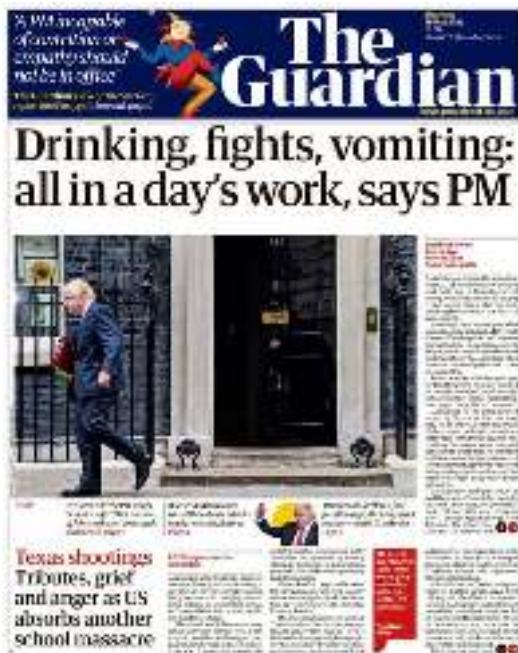
How some of the UK front pages saw the Gray report on Thursday.  
Composite: Daily Express / The Northern Echo / Daily Record / Daily Mirror / i (newspaper) / Metro / Daily Mail

## Martin Farrer

Wed 25 May 2022 21.53 EDTLast modified on Wed 25 May 2022 22.01 EDT

The front pages of the British newspapers offer very contrasting shades of Gray in their handling of the report into the Partygate scandal and its implications for Boris Johnson’s tenure in 10 Downing Street.

[“Drinking, fights, vomiting: all in a day’s work, says PM”](#) is how the **Guardian** sums up the prime minister’s attempt to brazen out the publication of Sue Gray’s report which found that the “senior leadership” in No 10 should bear responsibility for the boozy culture.



Photograph: The Guardian

According to [sketch writer John Crace](#), after 30 seconds of remorse in the Commons, Johnson quickly reverted to type with “the classic narcissist’s non-apology. A tawdry torrent of self-pity. A man more sinned against than sinner. A good man cast adrift in a world he barely understood”.

The **Mirror** focuses on how, as the nation was in lockdown and mourning loved ones alone, the prime minister and his staff were “Laughing at us all”.

Thursday's front page: Laughing at us all  
[#tomorrowspaperstoday](#)<https://t.co/4XD4U5CtyU>  
[pic.twitter.com/XrLrmo5TMf](https://pic.twitter.com/XrLrmo5TMf)

— The Mirror (@DailyMirror) [May 25, 2022](#)

The **Metro** picks up the comment from a senior aide to Boris Johnson as its headline. “Red wine on No 10 walls, vomiting, fighting, but... ‘We got away

with it””.

## Tomorrow's Paper Today □

### 'WE GOT AWAY WITH IT'

- Brazen Downing St staff knew they were all breaking the rules
- PM says he's sorry but then denies that he lied to parliament  
[pic.twitter.com/tjE0RQ8282](https://pic.twitter.com/tjE0RQ8282)

— Metro (@MetroUK) [May 25, 2022](#)

The **FT** says “Johnson unbowed as Gray lays bare lurid details of No 10 parties” and reckons a Tory coup is now “unlikely”.

Just published: front page of the Financial Times, UK edition, Thursday 26 May <https://t.co/TlSucwQb46> [pic.twitter.com/jvp1HpAcBu](https://pic.twitter.com/jvp1HpAcBu)

— Financial Times (@FinancialTimes) [May 25, 2022](#)

The **i** picks up the theme of Gray’s conclusion: ““Failure of leadership””.

Thursday's front page: 'Failure of leadership'[#TomorrowsPapersToday](#)

□ Latest from the i politics team: <https://t.co/DiCAr64Qy4>  
[pic.twitter.com/FJHZ9fLbR2](https://pic.twitter.com/FJHZ9fLbR2)

— i newspaper (@theipaper) [May 25, 2022](#)

It’s quite a different picture if you look at some of the Tory-supporting papers, however.

The **Mail** adopts an indignant tone with a headline asking: “Is that it?”. It’s positioned below a lengthy sub-headline building up to its main punchline: “For months the PM’s enemies salivated at the prospect of Sue Gray

skewering him. Yet after her report's innocuous photos of him with juice and M&S sandwiches, even they must be asking ...”

Thursday's [@DailyMailUK](#) [#MailFrontPages](#)  
[pic.twitter.com/EbnGeWURZV](https://pic.twitter.com/EbnGeWURZV)

— Daily Mail U.K. (@DailyMailUK) [May 25, 2022](#)

Nor is there any possibility of mistaking the **Express** for one of Johnson's enemies as it gives the prime minister an easy ride. “Really ... is this what all the fuss is about?” is its front page headline over a picture of him toasting his staff.

Thursday's Front Page: Really... is this what all the fuss is about?  
<https://t.co/RRwFfgAgC1#TomorrowsPapersToday>  
[pic.twitter.com/f8doghThhI](https://pic.twitter.com/f8doghThhI)

— Daily Express (@Daily\_Express) [May 25, 2022](#)

For the **Telegraph**, the [Gray report](#) is not the main story of the day as it prefers to lead with “Sunak to extend energy bill relief”. However, it does report that “Johnson denies cover-up of Abba party at Downing Street flat”, and also carries an unlikely tease to an inside story by the TV presenter Patrick Kielty reading “Wild late nights in Sue Gray’s pub”.

□The front page of tomorrow's Daily Telegraph:

'Sunak to extend energy bill relief[#TomorrowsPapersToday](#)

Sign up for the Front Page newsletter<https://t.co/x8AV4Oomry>  
[pic.twitter.com/oU20pkWaLt](https://pic.twitter.com/oU20pkWaLt)

— The Telegraph (@Telegraph) [May 25, 2022](#)

The **Times** also places the cost of living story first and Gray second. Its headline is “Gray report vindicates me over No 10 parties, claims Johnson”.



Photograph: The Times

The **Sun**, meanwhile, combines the two in what it calls a “message to PM Boris”. “The Party(gate) is over... now help our readers through the cost of living crisis”.

Tomorrow's front page: Boris Johnson must put Partygate behind him & help Sun readers through cost of living crisis <https://t.co/dpE4uKMoMA> [pic.twitter.com/Pn6W5Of4H6](https://pic.twitter.com/Pn6W5Of4H6)

— The Sun (@TheSun) [May 25, 2022](#)

But if the pro-Johnson papers hope their champion is finally out of the woods, the treatment of the story by the non-London press might give pause for thought.

The **Northern Echo**, which serves many constituencies that turned Tory in 2019, has a hard-hitting front page in which it has a picture of Johnson overlaid with the words of Labour MP for Middlesbrough Andy McDonald as the headline: ““Blood on your filthy privileged hands””. The paper says 66% of its readers want Johnson out of No 10 amid anger at how “countless North East lives were lost while PM partied”.

Tomorrow's [@TheNorthernEcho](#)

The North East turns on Boris Johnson

All the fall out, reaction and analysis from [#Partygate](#) & [#SueGray#TomorrowsPapersToday](#) [pic.twitter.com/7nmXCqwaB8](https://pic.twitter.com/7nmXCqwaB8)

— Nick Gullon (@EchoNickG) [May 25, 2022](#)

The **Yorkshire Post** is not quite so bloodcurdling but it is nevertheless damning of a government with many seats in the region. “Failures of leadership and judgment” it says under a picture of a rueful-looking Johnson.

It would have been tempting to follow the chronology of the day, allowing the Prime Minister the last word. Some will. Some won't. Some will craft headlines of their own. But from the get-go today, we knew we wanted to afford Sue Gray the courtesy of summing things up, so we did. [pic.twitter.com/1xDknnPqQH](https://pic.twitter.com/1xDknnPqQH)

— James Mitchinson (@JayMitchinson) [May 25, 2022](#)

In Scotland the **Record** says “Tory party enough to make you sick”.

Thursday's front page: Shameless Boris Johnson has rejected calls to quit despite the shocking revelations of Sue Gray's Partygate report heaping more disgrace on No10. [#TomorrowsPapersToday](#) [#scotpapers](#) [pic.twitter.com/jUyu7DZX1Y](https://pic.twitter.com/jUyu7DZX1Y)

— The Daily Record (@Daily\_Record) [May 25, 2022](#)

---

## 2022.05.26 - Spotlight

- 'You have to let the anger go' Mina Smallman on her daughters' murder – and the police who photographed the bodies
- Claes Bang 'I did two whole plays entirely naked. I thought I'd done enough'
- Edvard Munch review Zombie workers and sexual hang-ups: how artist foresaw our lonely lives
- 'It looks beautiful' UK gardeners on leaving lawns uncut for No Mow May

Advertisement

US edition

- [US edition](#)
- [UK edition](#)
- [Australian edition](#)
- [International edition](#)

[The Guardian - Back to home](#)[The Guardian: news website of the year](#)

[Race](#)

Interview

## **‘You have to let the anger go’: Mina Smallman on her daughters’ murder – and the police who shared photos of the bodies**

[Simon Hattenstone](#)



Mina Smallman says she has forgiven the killer of her daughters, but can't forgive the police officers. Photograph: Graeme Robertson/The Guardian

It is nearly two years since Bibaa Henry and Nicole Smallman were killed in a London park and pictures of their bodies were shared by the officers who were supposed to be guarding them. Their mother talks about taking on the Met, and how she carries on in the face of overwhelming grief



Thu 26 May 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 26 May 2022 08.53 EDT

Mina Smallman's home is idyllic. Overlooking Ramsgate harbour, in Kent, it is bathed in natural light. A sign in the kitchen says: "Welcome to Party Palace". Tiny speakers are embedded in the ceiling from the party days. A gorgeous family photograph is framed on the wall, with her husband, Chris, towering over Mina and her three daughters. "We've got lovely memories here with the girls," Mina, 65, tells me.

On 6 June it will be two years since her life was ripped apart. Two of the daughters were murdered by a stranger at Fryent country park in Wembley, north [London](#). Bibaa Henry was a 46-year-old senior social worker, Nicole Smallman a 27-year-old photographer. A group of 10 friends had been celebrating Bibaa's birthday with a socially distanced picnic in the park –

Britain was in lockdown and indoor gatherings were banned. By 12.30am the friends had left, but Bibaa and Nicole stayed on, dancing to music, draped in fairy lights, taking joyous selfies. At 1.05am Nicole sent a text to her boyfriend, Adam Stone, saying she and Bibaa were dancing in a field by themselves.

Soon afterwards they were killed. Danyal Hussein was a 19-year-old satanist who had pledged to “perform a minimum of six sacrifices every six months for as long as I am free and physically capable” in exchange for winning the Mega Millions Super Jackpot. He stabbed Bibaa eight times, Nicole 28 times.

Although the women were reported missing at around 5am, the police did not search the park. Instead, the family were left to look themselves. That afternoon, Adam discovered the bodies. Horror soon piled upon horror. Mina was informed that the two police officers designated to guard the crime scene, Deniz Jaffer and Jamie Lewis, had taken photographs of the dead women's corpses and posted them on WhatsApp groups, referring to the women as “dead birds”. One of the WhatsApp groups, called “the A team”, contained 41 police officers. The other, containing friends of Jaffer, was called “Covid cunts”.

With all her remaining strength, Mina took on the Metropolitan police. She was convinced that, had her daughters been white, the police would have searched the park, and Jaffer and Lewis would not have taken the photographs of her daughters. Hearing how the officers violated Bibaa and Nicole, she felt she had lost them for a second time. “I hadn’t even imagined what they looked like until we were told the officers had taken photographs. I began to have flashes of what I thought they looked like. Your kids are murdered and then you hear this. In the natural order of things, you would say the kids being murdered is the worst thing. However, when you are hanging on to a life raft, trying to keep yourself together to function, get up, dress, do what you’ve got to do … when that happened, any reserves that we had were stripped away.”

Throughout it all, she showed an astonishing dignity and capacity for forgiveness. She forgave the killer because he was obviously sick. And when

the two officers were eventually sentenced, last December, to 33 months in jail after pleading guilty to misconduct in public office, she said she was prepared to meet them as part of a restorative justice process.

Yet the horror has not abated. Two weeks ago, she and Chris were in court again to hear the officers unsuccessfully appeal against their sentence. Mina thought the stress would kill her. “I had palpitations and my head was pounding. I thought to myself: ‘Am I going to have a heart attack or a stroke here and now?’” She was disgusted by the arguments used by their defence: that the photographs were shared only with close friends and would have gone no further; that taking selfies is just what people do nowadays to show what they have been up to. Jaffer’s barrister asked how his two teenage daughters would cope when he was in prison, oblivious to the casual cruelty of his question.



Bibaa Henry (left) and Nicole Smallman. Photograph: Metropolitan Police/Reuters

She had been prepared to give the officers the benefit of the doubt. Now, she tells me, she has withdrawn her offer to meet them. “If they’d served their time without complaining, I would understand that they had repented. But when they challenged the sentence I thought that was bullshit.” Why had she agreed to meet them originally? “I’ve said all along I don’t need to meet

with them to bring *me* peace. I wanted to be a mirror so they can look at the mother of the two girls they took photos of. I froze the request because I don't want them to use it as part of their defence – ‘The mother has reached out and we've said yeah we're going to meet her.’”

---

Mina Smallman is as tough as she is warm. She says she had to be to progress as a working-class woman of dual heritage (her mother was Scottish, her father Nigerian). She left school with two CSEs, then returned to do O-levels as a mature student, graduated with a bachelor of education in her early 30s, then taught drama for 15 years. After gaining a degree in contextual theology she was ordained into the Church of England at St Paul’s Cathedral in 2006. In 2013, she became Britain’s first black female archdeacon. Throughout her career she says she experienced misogyny and racism, mainly from privileged white men who questioned her right to a place at the table.

She became part of the establishment, but never stopped challenging it. When she was asked to mentor students from ethnic minorities, she agreed only if she could also mentor the white working-class boys she felt were equally disadvantaged. Later, she introduced unconscious bias training for vicars. She says she has always been able to sniff out institutional bigotry, and never more so than now.

Bibaa (Mina’s daughter from her first marriage, along with her surviving daughter, Monique) was black while Nicole (Mina’s daughter with Chris) was of dual heritage. Smallman believes that they were victims of racial profiling and classism; that the police were not interested in searching for them because Bibaa lived on a notorious estate in Wembley. The former Met chief superintendent Dal Babu supported her, saying: “If this was a 40-year-old professional white woman, I question whether we would have had the delay and difficulties we have had.”

Mina was furious when the Independent Office for [Police](#) Conduct (IOPC) concluded that although the level of service provided to family and friends of the women after their disappearance was “unacceptable” (the duty inspector closed the police logs after receiving information about the sisters’ possible whereabouts, while a call handler referred to one of the sisters as a

“suspect”), it was not a result of bias. “I call the IOPC the three blind monkeys – hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil. Independent? They can’t even investigate the Met without the Met agreeing they can investigate.”

Chris, a former English teacher, arrives home. He has an Everton shirt on. “As soon as he knows you love footy, you’ve got your old bromance thing going,” Mina says. He takes off his trainers. “Chris, your shoes stink.”

“The other guys say that, too.”

They laugh. She asks him to leave the trainers outside.

Chris and Mina have very different coping methods. He keeps himself active with sport and tutoring. She has her faith and activism. So many couples separate after suffering such extreme trauma. How has it affected their relationship? “It’s made us closer. Chris and I were good friends before we were a couple.” She smiles. We’re brother/sister, husband/wife, we squabble, we’re real. He doesn’t judge me for the way I grieve and I don’t judge him for the way he grieves. He needs to be out there playing tennis, walking football – he talks to everyone in the street. I retreat. My challenge now is to be out there more.”

She has just made Two Daughters, a BBC documentary about her life since the girls were murdered. I ask why she has stayed in the public eye. She quotes Emmeline Pankhurst on fighting for women’s suffrage: “You have to make more noise than anybody else, you have to make yourself more obtrusive than anybody else, you have to fill all the papers more than anybody else.” She says there are two Mina Smallmans: one is the activist, the other is the mother. In the documentary, we see a lot of the activist, campaigning about women’s safety and Black Lives Matter. But in the most devastating scene she howls with grief, inconsolable. This is Mina the mother.

Today, I get to see plenty of the latter. She talks lovingly about her daughters. Bibaa, the oldest, was a pocket-sized dynamo – barely 5ft, stylish, streetwise and a devoted social worker. She had an adult daughter and was about to become a grandmother. Nicole had gone to a performing arts

school, was a talented musician and a natural-born hippy. Despite their age difference, Bibaa and Nicole were exceptionally close.

Monique is a personal trainer who lives in Holland. I ask how she is coping. “It’s been hard,” Mina says. “The first few times she came here, we never talked about it. We couldn’t. The girls used to share a room if they came at the same time. Just by habit, I said: ‘Your room’s ready.’ The next day I asked how she slept and she said: ‘I just kept thinking of the times I’d stayed in this room with Nikki.’” When Monique visits now, she sleeps in a different room.

The longer I spend with Mina, the more I realise the number of lives devastated by the murders. Mina’s sister, Anne, died soon after her nieces were killed. “I think Bibaa’s murder finished her. She was fighting with cancer for five years and she was particularly close to Bibaa. She wanted to talk about her, and I couldn’t do it. I was broken. I couldn’t even go to her funeral because it was only few months after the girls’. I couldn’t go back there.”

I ask what life used to be like before the murders. “It wasn’t great. I have battled with my physical and mental health.” She was diagnosed with chronic fatigue syndrome and fibromyalgia, and in 2016 took early retirement. But in the months before the girls were killed, she was feeling more positive. “I was beginning to come out of the darkness …” She trails off, disconsolate.

Once she knew the girls had not been sexually assaulted or tortured, she told the police she did not want to know the details. But they came out at the trials of Hussein and the police officers. “When your child has been murdered and you have to listen to their last moments …” Again, words fail her. “Horrific. *Horrific.*”



Mina and Chris outside the Royal Courts of Justice in London. Photograph: Aaron Chown/PA

Hussein's legal team argued that because the officers entered the crime scene to take the photographs, they could have contaminated it. "That sick monster had said he was going to kill six women every six months, so another four women were going to be murdered, and he could have got off because of what those officers did. From my perspective, I'm thinking we have spared potentially another four families." She pauses. "No thanks to those police officers."

The photographer arrives and suddenly the house is busy. As Mina has her photo taken, Chris and I chat. Chris says his daily routine hasn't changed much since losing Bibaa and Nicole. He tries to keep himself active. "I've got a good friendship group through walking football. That's been a saviour. I'm pretty matter of fact as to the way I handle it. I'm not going into a spiral of emotional despair, which can easily happen. The way I look at it is the girls wouldn't want me to go into a hole and give up. They'd they want me to keep going." Has it been tempting to go in to a hole? "Not for me, no. I'm not a very emotional person. If Everton lose, I get upset!"

For about five years, he was both father and schoolteacher to Nicole. Was that difficult for her? "No, she loved it!" Did she ever call him Dad in class?

“She did a couple of times.” He smiles at the memory.

Although he is trying his best to get on with life, he says that there are thoughts he can’t get out of his head. “It’s all the ifs and buts. Why the *fuck* did they stay there when everybody else went? Why wasn’t the weather the same as it was the night before, because it had been raining then? It was the one night that was lovely. It’s all whys and ifs. The thing is it wouldn’t have happened, but Boris said get out, don’t have parties in your house. All those little things you think ...”

Mina returns and he leaves the room to make us a drink. I tell her what Chris said to me about being unemotional and ask if it’s true, or whether he was saying it because he didn’t want to go there. “The second,” she says quietly. “If you speak to him about Nikki and Bibaa and what he loved about them, he can’t get through that without crying.”

I mention that one of the what-ifs he spoke about was lockdown. Mina had earlier told me she can go from nought to 90 in a nanosecond, and now she proves it. Last month the government minister Jacob Rees-Mogg dismissed the Partygate scandal as “fluff” and “fundamentally trivial”, and she’s still apoplectic. Not least because she keeps thinking how the police would have reacted if his children had gone missing. “The truth is if Bibaa hadn’t had the picnic outside, if she had decided to break the rules, she and Nikki would still be alive. It’s like how *dare* you, Rees-Mogg?”

Without a breath she turns her attention back to the [Metropolitan police](#), which announced last October that it would apologise to the family because its response after Bibaa and Nicole went missing “fell short” and “compounded the distress felt by their loved ones”. “Say sorry?” she fumes. “You know sorry is what you say when you bump into someone in the street.”

[Mina finds it difficult to forgive the government hypocrisy](#) or the police officers, but none of her anger is directed at the killer. She pities him. She mentions Gee Walker, the mother of Anthony Walker, who was brutally murdered in an unprovoked racist attack 17 years ago. “After his murder, she said: ‘I forgive the killers because my faith tells me I should.’ I *preached* on that, saying this woman is amazing because I’m not sure I could do it.”

And has she done? She pauses. “Yeah, I’ve forgiven Hussein.” Would she meet him? “No, because he clearly isn’t well. Maybe with some therapy support, years later that might be possible.”

What advice would she give to other people looking to forgive? “I would say to someone who has lost their child in extreme circumstances, try to let the anger go. You’re not letting your loved one down by letting go. If you imagine them looking down, they would be so upset that you have punctuated your life, so the aggressor, the murderer, wins. Let the anger go.”

Yet still the grief remains overwhelming, and there are times she simply doesn’t want to be here. Has she come close to giving up? “Absolutely,” she says. “Only now I can’t take the escape route because I have personally felt how heartbreakingly it is. I couldn’t do it to Chris and Monique. I’ve experienced the loss of my girls, and I would *never* want to inflict that on Chris and Mon.”

We’ve been talking for hours. Mina is exhausted. Chris offers me a lift to the station.

I ask if she has reached a stage where she can wake up and think it’s a lovely day. She has recently been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder. “No. No. No, I can’t. I don’t go outside. I recently went shopping, and I tried to get back in the house before anybody saw me. I don’t know why – our neighbours are amazing.”

She is finding it easier to get on with her public life as an activist than her private life as a mother. “I talk to my counsellor about the mum and the activist, and she said: ‘They’re both you, Mina, you don’t need to separate them.’” Is she trying to reconcile the two? “Yeah,” she says. But it seems more a question than a statement. “As the activist, I feel totally empowered. But as the mum ...” She comes to a painful stop. “I think I’m moving forward, but there’s a lot of work still to be done.”

[Two Daughters](#) will air on BBC Two at 9pm on Sunday and be available on iPlayer shortly after broadcast.

In the UK and Ireland, [Samaritans](#) can be contacted on 116 123, or email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org) or [jo@samaritans.ie](mailto:jo@samaritans.ie). In the US, the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) is at 800-273-8255 or chat for support. You can also text HOME to 741741 to connect with a crisis text line counselor. In Australia, the crisis support service [Lifeline](#) is 13 11 14. Other international helplines can be found at [befrienders.org](#)

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/26/you-have-to-let-the-anger-go-mina-smallman-on-her-daughters-and-the-police-who-photographed-the-bodies>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Advertisement

US edition

- [US edition](#)
- [UK edition](#)
- [Australian edition](#)
- [International edition](#)

[The Guardian - Back to home](#)[The Guardian: news website of the year](#)

[Movies](#)

Interview

## **Claes Bang: ‘I did two whole plays entirely naked. I thought I’d done enough’**

[Alex Needham](#)



‘New Order, the Smiths, Pet Shop Boys – that’s my DNA’ ... Claes Bang.  
Photograph: Alamy

From spanking to swordfighting, why does the Dane have to keep stripping off? As he appears alongside Christopher Walken in *Outlaws*, the actor talks about dodgy directors, the joy of physical contact – and his booming synth pop sideline



[@alexneedham74](#)

Thu 26 May 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 26 May 2022 08.34 EDT

This spring, film fans and theatregoers got a lot of Claes Bang for their buck, with the brilliantly named Danish actor starring in two of the most talked-about offerings of the season. In [The Northman](#), he was the evil Fjölnir the Brotherless, stealing the crown of his nephew Amleth (Alexander Skarsgård). In [“Daddy”](#), at the Almeida theatre in London, Bang played Andre, the gay billionaire art collector who struck up a relationship with a much younger, much poorer, emerging Black artist, and installed him in his Hollywood pad – complete with a real pool that drenched the front row.

Bang infused both roles with sinister charm – he was also, let us not forget, a superb [Dracula](#) on the BBC – while exhibiting a very Scandinavian attitude

to nudity. In *The Northman*, he was swordfighting in the buff, while at the Almeida, a small venue in which there is no hiding place, he and co-star Terique Jarrett ambled around completely nude for quite a while. “I’ve done two plays where I was naked for the entirety,” he says. “I thought, ‘That’s it. I’ve done my naked duty. No more.’ But then I was approached for ‘Daddy’, loved everything about it, and it makes total sense that we are naked for that stretch of time.”

I had a five-week break while shooting *The Northman* – but they wouldn’t let me leave

Bang is talking via Zoom from a cabin in the Danish countryside, which he and his wife, Lis Kasper, bought at the outset of the pandemic. “From Christmas 2020 to spring last year we were here 95% of the time,” he says, surveying an overgrown, deer-infested garden. “It was a nightmare to be in Copenhagen – there’s nothing worse than a city that is closed.”

Bang says working on “Daddy” was a much-needed antidote to [The Northman](#), which was shot around Belfast before vaccines had been developed. If one actor had got the virus, the whole film would have been shut down.



‘Alienating process’ ... Bang as Fjölnir the Brotherless in *The Northman*.  
Photograph: Landmark Media/Alamy

“Filming during Covid has been a very alienating process,” he says. “For one thing, I have not been able to really see the director because everyone’s in masks and visors. I think, in the street, I’d probably walk past 95% of the people I worked with on that movie, because I wouldn’t be able to recognise them. Normally there’ll be a bit of socialising – you go out for dinner or to a football game – and we couldn’t do that, either. In the middle, I had a five-week shooting break, so I asked if I could go back to the cabin. But they wouldn’t let me leave.”

Bang was overjoyed to get back to the hands-on world of theatre – so much so that when the Almeida sent him an email saying he would have to be masked during rehearsals, he threatened to quit. “I said, ‘I’m super happy to do your play, but if we’re not allowed to work without masks in the rehearsal room, I will have to ask you to find someone else because that is exactly what I need.’ It’s become very clear to me during Covid that the contact thing is why I’m here.”

There is certainly plenty of contact in “Daddy”: snogging, spanking, sodomy. “I thought it was important that we really got in there,” Bang says. “And I have to say, the director and the intimacy coordinator and Terique and I, we did a really good, very respectful job of getting that relationship to be as alive as I thought it was.” Bang is a big fan of intimacy coordinators, who guide actors through sex scenes movement by movement, with the agreement of everyone involved. He recently pulled out of a film that had three major explicit scenes because the director wouldn’t employ a coordinator, saying: “I think they’re just in the way.”

Bang explains: “I’ve had directors back in the day who would say, ‘OK, it’s a sex scene. There’s the bed, get undressed, do your thing and I’ll be filming it.’ But I’ll say, ‘Um, but hey, excuse me, this will be far too private if you don’t say what you want it to be. Should it be a tender or a rough thing? Dominant or messy?’ If you’ve put the scene in the movie, you want to say something. It can’t be just about seeing two people shagging.””



‘Christopher Walken really makes a fool of me’ ... Bang will appear in next month’s Outlaws. Photograph: BBC

At 55, Bang is far too long in the tooth (and not just when wearing his Dracula fangs) to be pushed into doing something against his better judgment. After years as a jobbing actor in Denmark, five years ago he made an international breakthrough with [The Square](#), which won the Palme d’Or at Cannes. It stars Bang as an urbane art museum director who makes a succession of increasingly terrible decisions, from sleeping with a journalist played by Elisabeth Moss to commissioning a promotional video in which a toddler is blown up.

It’s a brilliant portrayal of the carelessness and weakness lurking within a middle-aged high flyer – and it made Bang into a singular kind of star. Not many actors speak four languages fluently – namely Danish, Swedish, German and English, which he speaks with an estuary-tinged accent that makes him sound a bit like David Bowie. Even fewer are touted by some journalists as possible Bonds, despite him being a grandad twice over.

Bang points out that in his wife’s family, everyone has children when they’re 20. “Children have come into my life in a little bit of a weird way,” he says. “When I met my wife, aged 39, she had Bella who was eight and Sarah who was 19, and now Sarah’s had two kids – the youngest turned two a month

ago and the older one just turned 13. I don't know how that happened but it's been a blessing. It's probably been the best way of getting children into my life because for some reason I couldn't pull myself together and have some of my own."



'I loved everything about it' ... with Terique Jarrett in 'Daddy'. Photograph: Marc Brenner

The pandemic descended just as Bang's career was hitting full throttle – he had three indie films out in 2020, each barely making it into the cinema. Now, however, he is back in business, as a villain in [Stephen Merchant's The Outlaws](#), broadcast next month, in which he stars with Christopher Walken. "He really makes a fool out of me, but he was lovely." After that comes [Bad Sisters](#), a series for Apple TV+ in which he plays Anne-Marie Duff's husband. As well as having a female showrunner, [Sharon Horgan](#), and five female leads, all the directors on the show were women. "The whole entertainment business is getting serious about diversity," Bang says. "I'm proud to be part of it."

Which brings us back to *The Northman*, whose whiteness, machismo and Norse mythological roots have seen it [embraced by some extreme right-wingers](#). "I remember when the trailer came out around Christmas, there was this voiceover that says, 'You have to choose between kindness for your kin

or hatred for your enemy.’ And I was like, ‘Woah, wait a minute – it’s Donald Trump!’ If it is being used by white supremacist groups, I think that’s bloody horrible. It was not something I thought about when we were filming – the script is based on the Danish story of Prince Amlet, the one that Shakespeare turned into perhaps the greatest play in the world.”

Bang spent much of the time lurking in his trailer, either trying to avoid Covid or preparing for yet another of director [Robert Eggers](#)’ many takes. There he indulged his other creative passion: music, which he releases under the name This Is Not America (and, sadly, not Claes’ Bangers). It’s not half bad, particularly if you have a weakness for 80s electro pop. I tell Bang that Tale of a Broken Heart, on his new EP, reminds me of the Johnny Marr/Bernard Sumner supergroup Electronic. “Oh my God!” he says. “That’s making me so proud. New Order, the Smiths, Pet Shop Boys – that’s my DNA.”

He finds music the perfect antidote to being ordered around by fussy directors. “I’m my own boss – I do the programming, the playing, the lyrics, the music. When you come home from a day of someone saying, ‘Go stand over there and say these lines, do it in that light and blah blah blah,’ you’re like, ‘Shut the fuck up and let me go and do my own thing. Stop following me around!’”

I suggest that Bang should play a few gigs, but he points out that his Spotify statistics aren’t exactly giving Harry Styles sleepless nights. “I’m not even sure, if I planned a gig, anyone would come. I probably have as many listeners per week as Billie Eilish has every 10 minutes.”

- Notes from a Saturday Afternoon at the End of the World by This Is Not America is out now. The Outlaws is on BBC1 in June and is streaming on Amazon Prime in Australia.

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Advertisement

US edition

- [US edition](#)
- [UK edition](#)
- [Australian edition](#)
- [International edition](#)

[The Guardian - Back to home](#)[The Guardian: news website of the year](#)

[Edvard Munch](#)

## **Zombie workers and sexual hang-ups: how Edvard Munch foresaw our lonely lives – review**



The walking dead ... Edvard Munch's Evening on Karl Johan. Photograph:  
Dag Fosse/Kode

## Courtauld Gallery, London

From the grief of loss to the despair of impotence and the misery of work, the Scandinavian master wallows gloriously in pain, filling the soul with the ecstatic sorrow of his colours



### [Jonathan Jones](#)

Thu 26 May 2022 05.04 EDT Last modified on Fri 27 May 2022 00.25 EDT

We love anniversaries. This year is being pushed as the centenary of modernism, since *The Waste Land* and *Ulysses* were both published in 1922. But [Edvard Munch](#) had TS Eliot and James Joyce beat. In 1892, Munch painted the first modernist masterpiece of the city, anticipating their radical visions of urban life by a full three decades. Now that masterpiece, *Evening on Karl Johan*, has come to Britain as part of a precious loan of incendiary Munchs from a collection in Bergen, Norway.

These people really need to work from home. They come towards us at the close of day, their faces harrowed by the misery of the office or factory. They are ghoulish grey cartoons of loneliness and sadness lit by yellow glowing windows. A woman stares out with white circles for eyes, her pupils shrunk to dots, while a man in a funereal top hat has a shrunken skull-like face, as if modern life has reduced him to one of the walking dead. In

fact, they are all workaday zombies, their bodies stunted, their pace robotic, approaching in a single mummified mass.

This is the very alienation Eliot would put into words 30 years later: “A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many, / I had not thought death had undone so many. / Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled, / And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.” Evening on Karl Johan prophesies the 20th-century city of lonely crowds trudging hopelessly between nowhere and nothing.

If being first means being the best, Munch deserves the title of the first true modernist, making this the movement’s 130th anniversary rather than its 100th. But that is just one way to judge art. What marks out Munch is the authenticity of the pain. Raw as Evening on Karl Johan is, it’s eclipsed by the painting next to it.



Life has been stolen from them ... By the Deathbed. Photograph: Dag Fosse/Kode

By the Deathbed portrays people standing over a child’s motionless body. Their agony is so complete there is hardly anything left of them. The woman closest to us has a mask of whiteness, like a bandage, over her face, leaving just little patches of pink around her eyes. Her features have been destroyed

by her loss. Another woman has already gone further, her face just a pale cartoon with dot-eyes. All we can see of the departed is a small thin form under the sheets with lank brown hair. But we see death in the mourners' black-clad forms. It has entered every fibre of their being. Life has been stolen from them.

Munch's creamy brown and violet sky, above a dead purple sea, expresses the young man's mood perfectly

It was stolen from Munch as a child, too. This painting remembers the devastating loss of his favourite sister Sophie from tuberculosis, which had already killed his mother. Grief infected how he saw life. TS Eliot's protagonist in *The Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock* admits he was "not Prince Hamlet" – but the young man in Munch's painting *Melancholy* clearly resembles the tragic Scandinavian hero as he broods by the shore, his head resting on his hand in a medieval symbol of melancholia that is as old as the [Lewis Chessmen](#). Munch's creamy brown and violet sky above a dead purple sea lets you feel his mood for yourself.

That is why it is so special to see Munch's paintings up close, as opposed to his prints. This show may be modestly scaled, with just 18 paintings, but that is a lot of Munch on canvas – and in this perfectly lit, perfectly spaced exhibition you can get not just an eyeful but a soulful of the ecstatic sorrow of his colours. Munch wallows gloriously in his pain. All that melancholy spills out in his luxurious feel for paint. Among the dark green woods in his huge 1894 canvas *Woman in Three Stages* is what looks like a big bloodstain: he has hurled red paint at the canvas to create this gash of horror. Or at least that's what I'm assuming happened. Perhaps they should test to see if it's blood.



A luxurious feel for paint ... Munch's Woman in Three Stages. Photograph: Dag Fosse/Kode

As if the overpowering sense of grief wasn't enough, Munch's art unashamedly confesses to massive sexual hangups. There's a young man to the right of this work, brooding beside three images of women: one is a dreamer by the shore, another walks wraith-like in the woods, and in the very middle stands a tall naked woman with her head cocked in sexual challenge. You'd think Munch's male alter ego would be pleased but he looks wretched. And in *Man and Woman*, a naked man has his head lowered in despair as he helplessly sits facing his nude girlfriend. This bedroom scene is nothing if not unmanning. Munch clearly identifies with this male ego crushed into impotence by the woman's nudity. How many artists have been this frank?

This exhibition shows how Munch leapt from lovely 1880s post-impressionist scenes – including a portrait of his sister Inger by a misty sea – to his intense, abstract *fin de siècle* images of unveiled emotion, so extreme it seems he is missing a skin. *Self-Portrait in the Clinic*, painted in 1909, shows why he could not go on like that. Munch's most expressive period was bought at the expense of traumatic love affairs and alcoholism. In 1908, he had a breakdown and entered a “nerve clinic”. This painting shows him in

recovery: at first sight it may seem a more formal work, with Munch adopting a respectable, serious pose, but then you realise he is actually painting himself trying on this pose, in the uneasy hope he can maintain it from now on. Yet his jacket is a frenzied pattern of purple daubs. Munch can't forget what he saw when he looked into the bloodstained forest.

- [Edvard Munch: Masterpieces from Bergen](#) is at the Courtauld Gallery, London, 27 May to 4 September.
- 

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2022/may/26/edvard-munch-courtauld-review-zombie-workers-sexual-hang-ups>

Advertisement

US edition

- [US edition](#)
- [UK edition](#)
- [Australian edition](#)
- [International edition](#)

[The Guardian - Back to home](#)[The Guardian: news website of the year](#)

[Gardens](#)

## **‘It looks beautiful’: UK gardeners on leaving lawns uncut for No Mow May**



After May, people with gardens and lawns are asked to mow less throughout the summer. Photograph: Matt Pitts/Plantlife/PA

People taking part in Plantlife’s conservation project say they have seen plants and wildlife thrive

[Alfie Packham and Guardian readers](#)

Thu 26 May 2022 05.53 EDT Last modified on Fri 27 May 2022 04.31 EDT

The conservation charity Plantlife again urged people [not to mow their gardens in May](#) to help wild plants and pollinators thrive.

As the month draws to a close, we asked some of this year's No Mow May participants what new plants and wildlife they have seen in their gardens.

**'It's nice to know we cater for the butterflies' whole life cycle'**



An orange-tip butterfly in Adam Linnet's garden. Photograph: Adam Linnet/Guardian Community

I thought I had better practise what I preach as a conservation charity worker. My three-year-old daughter loves the flowers in the garden, even more so when they are visited by butterflies, such as this orange-tip (pictured above). Our lawn is currently a sea of cowslips, but hidden under them, waiting to come into flower are meadow vetchling, yellow rattle, common knapweed, and even common spotted orchids.

We have a second no-mow lawn next to our little allotment. The wetter ground here supports cuckooflower, which is the food plant of orange-tip butterfly caterpillars. We spend many a happy hour searching for the eggs in May and the caterpillars in late June. It's nice to know we cater for their whole life cycle, rather than just feeding the adult butterflies.

**Adam Linnet, 35, conservation charity worker, Ipstones, Staffordshire**

## **'People stop to speak to me about my front garden'**



Sean South's front lawn. Photograph: Sean South/Guardian Community

Two years ago, inspired by the No Mow movement, I decided to resow the lawn of my back garden with both grass and clover to increase biodiversity. We also have a front garden that was once a very sad and bare patch of dirt and stones. I threw some wild flower mixes on to the ground, added a few self-seeded plants from the back garden and plants that had outgrown their pots. Even the bin store has a living roof.

Now, the front garden is left to its own devices and is a bountiful haven for birds, small mammals and insects. And I don't need to mow it! A number of people have stopped to talk to me about the front garden. Most are positive –

although one lady seemed to think I had too many weeds.  
**Sean South, 52, primary school teacher, London**

## **'I use a sickle at dusk, when the bees have gone to bed'**



Martin Dohrn's lawn. Photograph: Martin Dohrn/Guardian Community

Early in the year, this scene is covered with lesser celandines, primroses, grape hyacinth and dog violets. In early May, this gives way to daisies, bugle and forget-me-nots. All these flowers are useful to early spring bees, of which quite a few species nest in the garden: furrow bees, flower bees, mason bees and mining bees.

Some parts I keep short, using a sickle at dusk when the bees have gone to bed. Some species of mining bee and furrow bee like to nest in shorter grass areas. Despite this being a small garden (10 x 30 metres), the diversity of plant species and vegetation allows insects to thrive: along with the bees, many species of hover fly and wasp, as well as beautiful green rose chafer beetles and scarlet tiger moths.

**Martin Dohrn, 65, wildlife film-maker, Bristol**

## **‘I am not interested in absurd putting-green perfection’**



Peter Finlay’s lawn. Photograph: Peter Finlay/Guardian Community

I don’t often mow my lawn as I cannot bear to turn the sea of hawkweed, daisies, dandelions and other wild flowers to pulp and convert it into a desert for all the bees and butterflies that thrive there. Then there are creatures like slow worms. It is heartbreaking to come across their remains after being mangled by a strimmer. I recently saw one only a few yards from my lawn, which no doubt froze in terror as the awful noise bore down upon it.

People can call it a ‘lawn’ in inverted commas if they like; I am not interested in having some absurd putting-green perfection in its place! I have a lovely Austrian scythe which is so peaceful and it is quite enough to keep some paths open.

**Peter Finlay, retired church minister, High Corrie, Isle of Arran, Scotland**

## **‘The insects and birds bring life to the once dull lawn’**



Ros Page's lawn. Photograph: Ros Page/Guardian Community

We stopped mowing most of our front lawn about six years ago. That year, we scattered fresh yellow rattle seed sent by my brother from the Yorkshire Dales, which weakened the grass to such an extent that many species of plants and insects have become established. Flowering starts in January with snowdrops, followed by crocus, anemone blanda, primrose, snake's head fritillary, cowslip, dead-nettles, cow parsley, red campion, buttercups and daisies, oxeye daisies, yellow rattle, ragwort and many different grasses.

Our most exciting arrivals have been pyramidal orchids and white helleborine, which appeared with no help from us. Bees, flies, butterflies and moths busy themselves among the flowers; the striped caterpillars of cinnabar moths strip the ragwort leaves; and every summer, two colonies of ants extend their anthills. The insects attract many birds too, bringing even more life to what was once a dull piece of lawn.

**Ros Page, retired civil servant, Oxfordshire**

**‘The cats liked playing jungle’**



Jo Burgess's cat Deedee. Photograph: Jo Burgess/Guardian Community

After I stopped mowing, there was a parade of flowers, buttercups, creeping charlie, dandelions and clover. It got to over half a metre high in some places, so I cut the middle of the lawn but left the edges wild all summer. In the end it was nearly a metre high, with amazing wild grasses and flocks of butterflies everywhere.

The cats liked wandering along the little paths I made and playing jungle. Luckily they don't hunt. Towards the end of the summer, I attacked everything with the lawnmower, but I only have a small mower and it choked up in a couple of minutes. So I had to get some garden clippers to cut it all by hand. The clippers were blunt so in the end I resorted to scissors. I am not sure cutting a long lawn with a pair of scissors is the right look for an experienced gardener, but was a lot of fun.

**Jo Burgess, 64, entertainment agent, Exminster, Devon**

**'We were blessed with this beautiful carpet of daisies'**



Jemima Harrison's garden. Photograph: Jemima Harrison/Guardian Community

We have left our front lawn to its own devices over the past few weeks and were blessed with this beautiful carpet of daisies. We hope it will help support our local bumblebees. It's been good to see the number of little insects that fly up from the daisies when I walk across the lawn. Hopefully they're helping the small wild birds that are breeding at the moment.

There has been a marked [drop in the number of flying insects in Britain](#) over the last decade, even here in beautiful Wiltshire. I hope this will help a little bit. We also now make sure we leave the boundaries pretty wild, knowing that nettles support butterflies. We also leave some rough-and-ready parts of the garden to encourage hedgehogs. I love the idea of No Mow May, and will definitely leave this section of the garden more wild from now on. I think it looks beautiful.

**Jemima Harrison, TV producer, Wootton Rivers, Wiltshire**

**'We've spotted at least four types of wasp'**



Tony's garden.

We don't often mow our lawn, and feel guilty about it. But not this year. We've seen lots of different bumblebees and solitary bees, as well as bees from our neighbour's hives – we always get a jar of honey or two from them. We've spotted at least four types of wasp and a couple of other types of bees, butterflies – including red admirals, peacocks, cabbage whites, yellow ones with a black spot, *Polyommatus icarus*, and others I couldn't identify. I've also seen brown and orange moths, which were possibly *Agrotis puta*, *Ochropleura plecta* and others not known.

### **Tony, north Norfolk**

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2022/may/26/it-looks-beautiful-uk-gardeners-leaving-lawns-uncut-no-mow-may->

## 2022.05.26 - Opinion

- Microplastics in sewage: a toxic combination that is poisoning our land
- My home town doesn't need a fawning monument to Margaret Thatcher
- Big Tobacco is killing the planet with plastics. No smokescreen should be allowed to hide that
- Who are the right blaming for the Texas shooting? Trans people, immigrants and victims' parents

[Opinion](#)[Environment](#)

# **Microplastics in sewage: a toxic combination that is poisoning our land**

[George Monbiot](#)



Policy failure and lack of enforcement have left Britain's waterways and farmland vulnerable to 'forever chemicals'



A digital composite image of plastics found in rivers across the UK.  
Photograph: Alex Hyde/Greenpeace/PA

Thu 26 May 2022 01.00 EDTLast modified on Thu 26 May 2022 10.28 EDT

We have recently woken up to a disgusting issue. Rather than investing properly in new sewage treatment works, water companies in the UK – since they were privatised in 1989 – have handed [f72 bn in dividends](#) to their shareholders. Our sewerage system is antiquated and undersized, and routinely [bypassed altogether](#), as companies allow raw human excrement to pour directly into our rivers. They have reduced some of them to stinking, almost lifeless drains.

This is what you get from years of policy failure and the [near-collapse of monitoring](#) and enforcement by successive governments. Untreated sewage not only loads our rivers with excessive nutrients, but it's also the major [source of the microplastics](#) that now pollute them. It contains a wide range of other toxins, including PFASs: the “forever chemicals” that were the subject of the movie [Dark Waters](#). This may explain the recent apparent [decline in otter populations](#): after recovering from the organochlorine pesticides used in the 20th century, they are now being hit by new pollutants.

But here's a question scarcely anyone is asking: what happens when our sewerage system works as intended? What happens when the filth is filtered out and the water flowing out of sewage treatment plants is no longer hazardous to life? I stumbled across the answer while researching my book, Regenesis, and I'm still reeling from it. When the system works as it is meant to, it is likely to be just as harmful as it is when bypassed by unscrupulous water companies. It's an astonishing and shocking story, but it has hardly been touched by the media.

We are often told that the microplastics entering the sewage system, which come from tyre crumb washing off the roads, the synthetic clothes we wear and many other sources, are a wicked problem, almost impossible to solve. But a modern, well-run sewage treatment works removes 99% of these fibres from wastewater. So far, so good. But – and at this point you may wish to decide whether to laugh or cry – having screened them out of the water supply, the treatment companies then release them back into the wild. In the UK, of the sewage sludge screened out by treatment works, 87% is sent to farms. The microplastics so carefully removed from wastewater by the treatment process are then spread across the land in the sewage sludge the water companies sell to farmers as fertiliser.

Then what happens to them? Some – perhaps most – wash off the soil and into the rivers: in other words, whether sewage is screened or not, the microplastics it contains end up in the same place. Others accumulate in the soil.

It's hard to decide which is worse. Experiments show how microplastics cascade through soil food webs, poisoning some of the animals that inhabit it. When they decompose into nanoparticles, they can be absorbed by soil fungi and accumulated by plants. We currently have no idea what the consequences of eating these contaminated crops might be.

The testing of sewage sludge has not been updated since 1989, so there is no checking for plastic particles or most other synthetic chemicals. A study commissioned but then kept secret by the government found that the sewage sludge being spread on our farmland contains a remarkable cocktail of dangerous substances, including PFASs, benzo(a)pyrene (a group 1

carcinogen), dioxins, furans, PCBs and PAHs, all of which are persistent and potentially cumulative.

Where did they come from? Because our waste streams are not separated and poorly regulated, anywhere and everywhere. The major source of PFASs in sewage is probably the building trade. “[Forever chemicals](#)” are found in paints, sealants and coatings, caulk, adhesives and roofing materials. Evidence sent to me by an industry insider suggests that regulators the world over turn a blind eye to liquid waste disposal on construction sites. Tools are washed and surfaces sprayed with water that’s then poured down the drain. Without regulation, contractors have [no incentive](#) to use technologies that ensure liquid waste is contained. Why go to this expense if your competitors don’t have to?

Could this story get any worse? Oh yes. Microplastics are sometimes [spread deliberately](#) on the soil by farmers, to make it more friable. Across Europe, thousands of tonnes of plastic are also [added to fertilisers](#), to prevent them from caking; or to delay the release of the nutrients they contain. Fertiliser pellets are coated with plastic films – polyurethane, polystyrene, PVC, polyacrylamide and other [synthetic polymers](#)– some of which are [known to be toxic](#) and all of which disintegrate into microplastics. It is almost unbelievable that the deliberate contamination of agricultural soils with persistent and cumulative pollutants is both widespread and legal.

This practice, as well as the spreading of contaminated sewage sludge, urgently needs to be stopped, before large tracts of farmland become unusable, and the damage to ecosystems, from soil to sea, irreversible. It’s tragic that the nutrients in sewage sludge can’t safely be used, but it seems to me that there’s no immediate solution, in our dysfunctional system, but to incinerate it. Only when toxic, accumulating chemicals are banned, waste streams separated and proper tests conducted will sewage be safe to spread.

Right now we are poisoning the land and, in all likelihood, poisoning ourselves. It could turn out to be one of the most deadly issues of all. And hardly anyone knows.

- George Monbiot will discuss his book Regenesis at a Guardian Live event on Monday 30 May. Book tickets in-person or [online here](#)
  - George Monbiot is a Guardian columnist
- 

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/may/26/microplastics-sewage-poison-land-britain-waterways-chemicals>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

OpinionMargaret Thatcher

## My home town doesn't need a fawning monument to Margaret Thatcher

[Frances Ryan](#)



Grantham can do much better than this – an Iron Lady statue facing off with a bronze poll tax protester would be more fitting



‘A statue that has to be hoisted up and shielded from the public’s touch is the ultimate example of how far removed monuments are from the communities they claim to be for.’ Photograph: John Robertson/The Guardian

Thu 26 May 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 26 May 2022 07.14 EDT

You could say I grew up under the shadow of [Margaret Thatcher](#). Raised in Grantham, Lincolnshire, I went to Thatcher’s former primary school, a mix of brick and portable buildings that by the 1990s were a fitting symbol of a decade of her underfunding. I went on to attend her old secondary school, both of us moving from near the street where her father once ran a grocery shop to the opportunity of the leafy state grammar. For seven years, I ate my lunch in the dining hall named after her – and only choked on my sandwich once.

Until this month, though, Grantham noticeably had no monument to Thatcher. You could walk through the town centre and see more charity shops than references to an ex-PM. In contrast, Sir Isaac Newton, who went to school in Grantham, has long been immortalised in brass, and even had the local shopping centre named after him – and no, it doesn’t just sell apples. The storm that has emerged since Thatcher’s long-delayed statue was erected last week is a clear lesson as to why. Within two hours of its installation, [a man was seen egging it](#). The £300,000 statue, made by the

sculptor Douglas Jennings, had already been [rejected by Westminster council](#) in 2018 to stand next to parliament.

When Grantham agreed to give the (bronze) iron lady a home, it did so on the quiet; the planned £100,000 unveiling ceremony was [ditched after a local outcry](#). The council was so concerned by the prospect of political activists making a pilgrimage for the town, it placed the statue on a 3-metre (10ft) high plinth to make it more difficult for protesters to damage. One desperate local Tory councillor suggested protecting Thatcher from vandals by placing the statue [in a pond](#) (this is a sign of respect in Lincolnshire).

You don't have to be a raging Thatcherite to think there should be a monument to her in her home town. Some argue that Grantham producing Britain's first female prime minister is something that should be marked with a statue, regardless of the ideology. There's a certain sense in this. The Thatcher exhibition in Grantham's museum attracts tourists – and their cash – from all over the world and many reportedly long asked why there wasn't a statue. As Nick Jones, a trustee of the museum told [the Guardian](#): "The primary attraction is Margaret. I'd like to say it's the Isaac Newton exhibition, but he doesn't bring them in." Sure, Newt, you were a key figure in the Enlightenment and helped to give the world infinitesimal calculus but did you ever sell off a nation's council housing stock?

The problem with the "historical importance" argument is that statues are not simply commemorative – they are celebratory. Thatcher, erected 10ft in the air with her lofty gaze presiding over passers-by, has – quite literally – been placed on a pedestal. To be immortalised in bronze is to be given an honour, one that signifies (or at least suggests) local pride in the person and aligns the area with their legacy. That's why the [toppling of statues of slave owners](#) became synonymous with the Black Lives Matter movement. The residents of Bristol didn't want to write these figures out of history – they just didn't want to carry on lauding them.

Statues are, by definition, static – they take a point of history and freeze it, staying revered and unmoved as society's values change. In many ways, they are a particularly conservative snapshot of history, taking the viewpoint of the establishment and promoting it as the final narrative. There is a reason

we got a statue of Thatcher and not a striking miner. Thatcher being a woman does not make any of this more progressive – she is immortalised for the high street just as bigots and warmongers are up and down this country.

Grantham's dilemma over Thatcher in many ways speaks to the bigger question of how towns and residents deal with their complex past. The issue is never confined to the statue itself – it's about what the statue represents. What is the legacy of the figure and what does the statue symbolise? What is it actually saying? Fairly or not, the style of the Thatcher monument hardly suggests a town ready to come to terms with the reality of her life's work. Her hands clasped piously below her lap and draped in a robe, there hasn't been a softer portrayal of the iron lady since Meryl Streep [won the Oscar](#). That the local museum “contextualises” Thatcher's premiership, including discussing her critics, will mean little to passers-by who see her statue looming over them, like a Midlands' Maggie the Redeemer.

I can't help but think Grantham would be better off pulling down the statue and getting creative. If locals want a traditional monument, a statue of Thatcher facing off with a bronze poll tax protester would be more fitting to her spirit – and faults. Better yet, sell the valuable statue to one of her [wealthy admirers](#) and use the cash to open an [LGBTQ+ youth centre](#) in her name. A statue that has to be hoisted up and shielded from the public's touch is the ultimate example of how far removed monuments are from the communities they claim to be for. Our home town can do better than a fawning statue of Thatcher. Or we will all have egg on our faces.

Frances Ryan is a Guardian columnist

- *Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a letter of up to 300 words to be considered for publication, email it to us at [guardian.letters@theguardian.com](mailto:guardian.letters@theguardian.com)*

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

## A common conditionGlobal development

# **Big Tobacco is killing the planet with plastics. No smokescreen should be allowed to hide that**

Vinayak Prasad and Andy Rowell

Greenwashing ploys cannot mask the pollution wreaked both by cigarettes and new nicotine products



Smokers stub out nearly 800,000 metric tonnes of cigarettes every year.  
Photograph: Emmanuel Dunand/AFP/Getty Images

Supported by

THE LEONA M. AND HARRY B.  
**HELMSLEY**  
CHARITABLE TRUST



[About this content](#)

Thu 26 May 2022 02.45 EDTLast modified on Thu 26 May 2022 23.30 EDT

The most common source of [plastic pollution](#) in our environment is not bottles, plastic bags or food wrappers, but cigarette butts. Smokers stub out nearly [800,000 metric tonnes of cigarettes](#) every year, enough butts to [cover New York's Central Park](#). They are in every country on the planet, from city streets to rubbish tips, rivers and beaches.

[Cigarettes contain single-use plastics](#) because they are engineered and manufactured that way. Butts take a decade to degrade, releasing more than 7,000 toxic chemicals into the environment. Wildlife is also at risk: researchers found [partly-digested cigarette butts in 70% of seabirds and 30% of sea turtles](#) sampled for one study.

If cigarettes were treated appropriately as single-use plastics, they could theoretically be banned.

It's not just cigarettes leaving a plastic trail. In South Asia, smokeless and chewing forms of tobacco such as gutka and khaini are sold in plastic pouches, millions of which litter the environment.

The industry uses a range of corporate social responsibility initiatives to paint itself green

Vaping, electronic tobacco and nicotine products are creating a new wave of pollution, from the mining of materials for batteries to metal and plastic waste leaching into soil and water. In [a report last year](#), the US Environmental Protection Agency highlighted how lithium ion batteries are entering municipal waste systems as consumers incorrectly dispose of electronic tobacco and nicotine products in the household bin, because they're branded "disposable".

The problem is global. Despite pledges from tobacco companies that they will eventually stop selling cigarettes, [6tn are produced every year](#). And manufacturing, sales and waste from electronic tobacco and nicotine products are increasing globally as tobacco giants seek to replace lost revenue as smokers quit or die.

## Quick Guide

### A common condition

#### Show

The human toll of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) is huge and rising. These illnesses end the lives of approximately 41 million of the 56 million people who die every year – and three quarters of them are in the developing world.

NCDs are simply that; unlike, say, a virus, you can't catch them. Instead, they are caused by a combination of genetic, physiological, environmental and behavioural factors. The main types are cancers, chronic respiratory illnesses, diabetes and cardiovascular disease – heart attacks and stroke. Approximately 80% are preventable, and all are on the rise, spreading inexorably around the world as ageing populations and lifestyles pushed by economic growth and urbanisation make being unhealthy a global phenomenon.

NCDs, once seen as illnesses of the wealthy, now have a grip on the poor. Disease, disability and death are perfectly designed to create and widen inequality – and being poor makes it less likely you will be diagnosed accurately or treated.

Investment in tackling these common and chronic conditions that kill 71% of us is incredibly low, while the cost to families, economies and communities is staggeringly high.

In low income countries NCDs – typically slow and debilitating illnesses – are seeing a fraction of the money needed being invested or donated. Attention remains focused on the traditional disease threats, yet cancer death rates have long sped past the death toll from malaria, TB and HIV/ Aids combined.

A common condition is a new Guardian series reporting on NCDs in the developing world; their prevalence, the solutions, the causes and consequences, telling the stories of people living with these illnesses.

### **Tracy McVeigh, editor**

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.

The industry uses a range of corporate social responsibility initiatives to paint itself green. Clean-ups, anti-littering campaigns and other gestures distract the public. Partnerships with environmental institutes and ministries on reforestation and [forest preservation](#) projects mask how [growing tobacco crops lead to deforestation](#) and desertification in countries like Brazil and Tanzania.

In Mali and Senegal in west Africa, the industry-led [Project Waterfall](#) sought to improve access to water. A similar initiative in Burkina Faso aims to [provide drinking water](#), even though [the country's laws prohibit tobacco-sponsored](#) initiatives. The last time the government evaluated tobacco use among the population was 2013, when [almost one quarter of all men](#) were smokers.

In the US, around [a fifth of adults smoke](#), while slightly less than a fifth of adolescents use e-cigarettes. The tobacco industry has funded conservation organisations that include Keep America Beautiful, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the Center for Watershed Protection.

In the Philippines, where [more than 40% of men](#) smoke, the tobacco industry has partnered with government agencies on environmental projects, including a river clean-up and an anti-littering campaign.

If countries have ratified the WHO framework on tobacco control (a global health treaty) – and most have – this type of partnership is in violation. The treaty obliges government not to interact with tobacco companies other than when strictly necessary. This, of course, doesn't stop tobacco companies from wooing policymakers.

There are two main goals of public relations activities for tobacco companies. The first is that, from a regulatory perspective, they need to be able to manufacture, sell and profit from products that damage the environment. If electronic cigarettes were regulated out of the hands of children, it would not only protect them from addiction, but also protect the environment.

Governments should require the tobacco industry to clean up the waste that results from its products

The second is to portray themselves as sustainable to investors. British American Tobacco has featured on Dow Jones Sustainability Index for 20 years now and Philip Morris on the Climate Disclosure Project's A List.

An industry that creates nearly 800,000 metric tonnes of toxic waste a year from cigarette butts sits oddly with environmental sustainability. There's no escaping the reality: tobacco waste continues to accumulate because these addictive products are not environmentally friendly but are designed to hook new customers and perpetuate consumption.

This could change. A [UN plastics treaty](#) is on the table, offering a global mechanism to tackle the lifecycle of plastics. Many authorities around the

world – including [India](#), [Rwanda](#) and the US state of [California](#) – have put in place or are considering policies to ban single-use plastics. These policies should include the plastic waste coming from tobacco and nicotine products, including electronic products.

Governments should also require the tobacco industry to clean up the waste that results from its products and pay for the environmental damage. And they can implement the WHO treaty, which has provisions to [help governments protect themselves](#) from being the targets of industry-sponsored PR campaigns.

Governments, investors and the global community should refuse to accept the tobacco industry's greenwashing sleight of hand. Despite sustainability claims, its new portfolio of products could end up further polluting in terms of energy consumption, materials and waste.

Tobacco is killing us and the planet.

*Dr Vinayak Prasad is programme manager, WHO Tobacco Free Initiative and  
Andy Rowell is senior research fellow, University of Bath Tobacco Control Research Group*

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/may/26/big-tobacco-is-killing-the-planet-with-plastics-no-smokescreen-should-hide-that-acc>

## Texas school shooting

# **Who are the right blaming for the Texas shooting? Trans people, immigrants and victims' parents**

[Arwa Mahdawi](#)



From congressmen to TV show hosts, rightwingers are blaming everything but guns for the loss of lives in Tuesday's massacre



Laura Ingraham on Fox News blamed the parents for the shooting.  
Photograph: Ingraham/Fox News

Wed 25 May 2022 16.18 EDTLast modified on Thu 26 May 2022 06.26 EDT

It's just impossible. Impossible to adequately describe the horror of 19 little children and two of their teachers being murdered in their classroom by an 18-year-old with military-grade weapons. Impossible to adequately articulate the fury and frustration that this just keeps on happening; that what happened in Uvalde, [Texas](#), was not a horrific one-off, but just another day in the USA. And it's impossible to imagine a scenario in which America's depraved and dysfunctional relationship with firearms is going to change anytime soon.

If you want to see just how dysfunctional the US obsession with guns is, just take a look at how the right is responding to the horrific shooting. You'd think that 19 dead children might weigh on their conscience a little bit; make them reconsider commonsense gun laws. But, no, they are busy regurgitating all the usual talking points and arguing that guns aren't actually the problem, everything else is.

First, trans people and immigrants were blamed. In the immediate aftermath of the shooting, the Republican congressman Paul Gosar [tweeted](#) that the shooter was a “transsexual leftist illegal alien”. His source for this lie was the rightwing social network 4Chan, which was busy circulating the picture of a transgender artist and wrongly claiming it was the shooter. (He has now deleted the tweet.)

Then the Federalist found a way to blame Ukraine for the shooting in Texas. “Sandy Hook proved the need to enhance K-12 security,” one headline blared. “[Congress armed Ukraine instead.](#)” Gold medal for mental gymnastics right there.

Then, last night, Fox News tried to shift blame on to the parents. Host Laura Ingraham strategically brought Andrew Pollack, the father of a Parkland victim who has previously argued that “guns didn’t kill my daughter, [Democratic principles did,](#)” [on to her show.](#)

“It’s the parents,” Pollack told Ingraham. “It’s your responsibility where you’re sending your children to school … You need to check where your kids go to school. You need to go back to school and see. Is there a single point of entry? Do you have guards at the school?”

He went on to suggest that it’s better for parents to take their kids out “of public school and put them in a private school because a lot of these private schools, they take security way more serious … Parents it’s your responsibility where you take your children.” Ingraham was very pleased with that analysis. “Andrew is exactly right,” she concluded.

Pollack has previously expressed the idea that regulating guns is not the answer to preventing school shootings, and has advocated for schools to put in more “safety” measures like barriers, bulletproof glass and security officers. Ingraham pressed him on that point, stating that “[schools] still don’t have those safety mechanisms in place”.

There you go: it’s all the parents fault! If you don’t have the money to send your kids to private school then it’s your fault if they get shot!

Schools should not resemble prisons. They shouldn't have to be fitted with barriers and staffed with armed guards to keep kids safe. Parents shouldn't have to buy their children increasingly [popular bulletproof backpacks](#). Kids shouldn't have to go through active shooter-drills the moment they get into preschool. Not just because these sorts of measures are completely dystopian but because they aren't actually effective. The vast majority of public schools – 96% in 2015 and 2016 – now conduct some [form of lockdown drill](#). Rather than preparing kids for a shooting, some experts warn that they are just [anxiety-inducing security theater](#).

Staffing schools with police officers is not the answer either. Since 1998, the government has invested over \$1bn to increase police presence in schools; [according to one study](#), only 1% of schools reported having police officers on-site in 1975 but by 2018, about 58% of schools reported having a police presence. There were already armed school district police officers at the school in Uvalde and they did not stop the shooter, who was wearing body armor. A sergeant with the Texas department of public safety [told CNN's Anderson Cooper](#) that “there were several law enforcement that engaged the suspect, but he was able to make entry into the school”.

If guns made people safer, then the United States would be the safest place in the world. How many more children have to die before the right accept that the answer to bad guys with guns is not good guys with guns, it's getting rid of guns.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/may/25/right-wing-blame-uvalde-shooting-transsexuals-immigrants-parents>

## 2022.05.26 - Around the world

- [Exclusive Mercenaries accused over use of mines and booby traps](#)
- [Iran Tehran says one dead in ‘industrial accident’ near military complex](#)
- [Portland How to Murder Your Husband writer found guilty of murdering husband](#)
- [Senegal Fire at hospital killed 11 newborn babies, says president](#)
- [Fishing European fleets accused of illegally netting tuna in Indian Ocean](#)

[Libya](#)

## Russian mercenaries accused over use of mines and booby traps in Libya

Exclusive: UN investigators say Wagner Group fighters did not mark mines' positions and may have rigged bomb to teddy bear



A mortar shell and plastic explosive attached to a teddy bear in Libya.  
Photograph: Twitter

[Jason Burke](#)

Thu 26 May 2022 00.15 EDT Last modified on Fri 27 May 2022 00.24 EDT

Russian mercenaries in Libya systematically broke international law by laying mines in civilian areas without any attempt to mark their location or remove the lethal devices, UN investigators have found.

According to a confidential UN report that will be made public in the coming weeks, fighters from the Wagner Group, a private military company that has been repeatedly linked to the Kremlin by western officials, also

rigged booby traps to powerful explosive anti-tank weapons that were responsible for the death of two mine clearers working for an NGO.

Investigators suspect that a booby trap found in a civilian neighbourhood in Tripoli – made of a mortar shell and plastic explosive attached to a [teddy bear](#) – was also the work of Wagner fighters.

The conclusions of the report, by a specialist team that works for a UN committee charged with monitoring the sanctions regime and arms embargo on Libya, will reinforce growing concern in western capitals about the role played by Wagner across [Africa](#).

Last month the Guardian revealed that internal military memos in Mali [linked Wagner to a series of massacres](#) there. Wagner has also been accused of [human rights abuses in Central African Republic](#), where in recent months its fighters have been battling rebels on behalf of the government.

Alleged Wagner group fighters have also been [accused of murdering civilians](#) during the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Sergei Lavrov, the Russian foreign minister, recently admitted that Wagner was present in Libya on a “commercial basis” but reiterated Moscow’s official position that the company has [nothing to do](#) with the Russian state.

Experts believe there are about 2,000 Russian mercenaries in [Libya](#), 1,000 fewer than at the peak of fighting two years ago.

The UN report seen by the Guardian covers 13 months from March 2021 to April 2022, though the accusation that Wagner indiscriminately used mines in civilian areas dates back to when the group’s fighters supported the advance on Tripoli launched by [Gen Khalifa Haftar](#), a former Libyan army commander who controls much of the east of the country.

The attack stalled on the outskirts of the Libyan capital in early 2020, where Wagner fighters laid large numbers of powerful anti-personnel and anti-tank mines to defend their positions.



Explosives are cleared from civilian settlements in Al-Hira region, Libya, in July 2020. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Under international law, Wagner should have marked the positions of mines, warned the local population and removed the mines when they withdrew after several weeks later. Failing to do so constitutes a war crime, according to the Geneva conventions.

The panel found that Wagner operatives took no such precautions when they laid 35 anti-personnel mines in civilian areas of the Ain Zara municipality. “This failure to avoid, or at least to minimise, incidental effects of the deployed ordnance on the civilian population ... rendered their method of warfare unlawful,” the report says.

Shortly after the withdrawal of Wagner from their positions in Ain Zara, a booby-trapped mine killed two civilian mine clearers. “The device was unmarked and attached to a harmless object inside a civilian house,” the report says.

Investigators also found that Wagner operatives made no attempt to follow international law when they laid booby-trapped anti-tank mines along a road in southern Tripoli likely to be used by civilians after their withdrawal.

Some of the investigators' conclusions were based on a tablet left by Wagner when they withdrew. The device was [obtained by journalists](#) and examined by the UN team.

The tablet stored a 10-page document from January 2020, which included a list of the weapons and equipment required for various sub-units within Wagner in Libya and codenames of senior Wagner staff. These include a "director general" who the investigators identify as "highly probably Yevgeny Prigozhin", a businessman with close links to Vladimir Putin. [Prigozhin has denied](#) to the Guardian that he has any links with Wagner.



A fuller image of the teddy bear bomb. Photograph: Twitter

The report portrays an anarchic, divided country rife with human rights abuses by a multitude of different actors, 11 years after the Nato-backed overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi.

Libya has been divided since 2014 between the internationally recognised government in the west and Haftar's forces, a conflict exacerbated by a proxy war between regional and other powers. Haftar is supported by the United Arab Emirates and Russia, while the government is backed by Turkey.

Though there has been no sustained fighting for almost two years, the activities of dozens of armed groups, criminal networks and mercenaries continues to destabilise neighbouring countries.

“The continuing presence of Chadian, Sudanese and Syrian fighters, and private military companies in the country is still a serious threat to the security of Libya and the region,” the report says.

The relative calm established since summer 2020 was due to an “experimental entente” between Russia and Turkey, and has allowed Russia to use its military presence to consolidate economic interests and strategic use of Libya as a launchpad for efforts in the Sahel region farther south.

“It was quite messy to start with but once you have that, both nations could see if a more peaceful Libya was more useful to them and the answer was yes ... But the picture is not static and the calm is now more fragile,” said Jalel Harchaoui, a Paris-based independent expert specialising in Libya.

The arms embargo imposed by the UN security council on Libya is “totally ineffective” and “has no deterrent effect”, the UN investigators believe.

Sign up to First Edition, our free daily newsletter – every weekday at 7am BST

The forthcoming report lists at least 175 Russian Federation military flights carrying nearly 10,000 tonnes of cargo between 1 May 2021 and 31 March 2022, which Moscow said comprised “humanitarian assistance to Libya, including the supply of vaccines against Covid-19”.

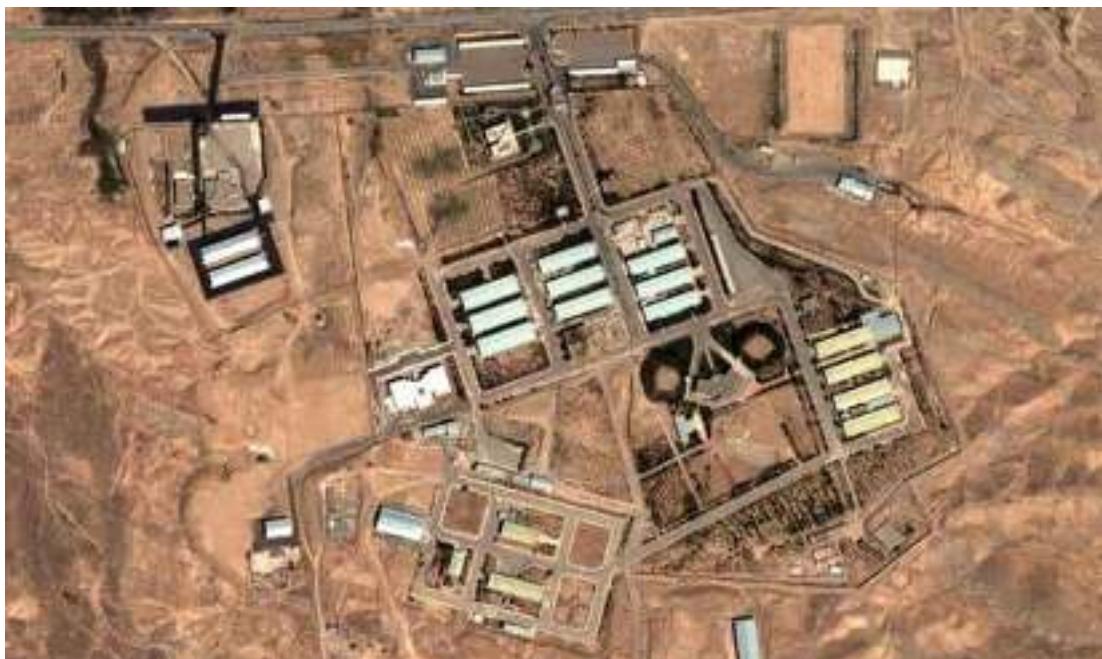
This response was met with scepticism from investigators. “UN agencies have neither observed, nor heard of, any large quantity of humanitarian aid from the Russian Federation being supplied to, or distributed in, eastern Libya. No humanitarian aid has been identified from satellite imagery or ground reports in the aircraft unloading areas,” the report says.

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

## [Iran](#)

# Iran says one dead in ‘industrial accident’ near military complex

Parchin facility has previously come under scrutiny from UN nuclear watchdog



An aerial view of the Parchin facility. Iran has repeatedly denied any ambition to develop a nuclear weapon. Photograph: AFP/Getty Images

*Agence France-Presse in Tehran*

Thu 26 May 2022 04.38 EDT Last modified on Thu 26 May 2022 04.39 EDT

One person has been killed in an “industrial accident” near an Iranian military complex that has previously come under scrutiny from the UN nuclear watchdog, according to state media reports.

“An industrial accident took place [on Wednesday evening] in one of the factories in the Parchin area, leading to the death of one person and injuries

to another,” Iran’s official IRNA news agency said. It gave no details of the cause of the accident.

The Parchin complex, south-east of Tehran, is alleged to have previously hosted testing of conventional explosives that could be used to detonate a nuclear warhead, something Iran has repeatedly denied.

The site came under renewed scrutiny by the International Atomic Energy Agency in 2015 when Tehran reached a landmark deal under which it agreed to curb its nuclear activities under UN supervision in return for the lifting of international sanctions.

Iran had previously denied the IAEA access to Parchin, saying it was a military site unrelated to any nuclear activities, but the agency’s then chief, the late Yukiya Amano, paid a visit.

Sign up to First Edition, our free daily newsletter – every weekday morning at 7am

In June 2020, [a gas tank explosion in a “public area” near the complex](#) shook the capital, 20 miles (30km) away but caused no casualties, the defence ministry said at the time.

Iran’s nuclear programme has been the target of a campaign of sabotage, cyber-attacks and the murder of scientists, which it blames on Israel.

Israeli leaders have repeatedly refused to rule out military action to prevent Iran developing an atomic bomb.

Iran has consistently denied any ambition to develop a nuclear weapon and says its activities are entirely peaceful.

---

## [Portland](#)

# How to Murder Your Husband writer found guilty of murdering husband

Portland jury finds Nancy Crampton Brophy guilty of killing chef Daniel Brophy in June 2018



Nancy Crampton Brophy, left, at her trial in Portland, Oregon. Photograph: Dave Killen/AP

*[Oliver Holmes](#)*

Thu 26 May 2022 09.20 EDTFirst published on Thu 26 May 2022 03.37 EDT

A jury in the US city of [Portland](#), Oregon, has convicted a self-published romance novelist who wrote an essay titled How to Murder Your Husband of fatally shooting her husband.

The 12-person jury found Nancy Crampton Brophy, 71, guilty of second-degree murder on Wednesday after deliberating for two days over Daniel

Brophy's death, according to reports.

Brophy, a 63-year-old chef, was killed on 2 June 2018 as he prepared for work at the Oregon Culinary Institute in south-west Portland.

Crampton Brophy showed no visible reaction to the verdict in the crowded Multnomah county courtroom. Lisa Maxfield, one of her lawyers, said the defence team would appeal against the decision.

The defendant's 2011 how-to treatise [detailed various options for committing an untraceable killing](#), written in the form of a brainstorming exercise for writers.

Its opening reads: "As a romantic suspense writer, I spend a lot of time thinking about murder and, consequently, about police procedure. After all, if the murder is supposed to set me free, I certainly don't want to spend any time in jail. And let me say clearly for the record, I don't like jumpsuits and orange isn't my color."

The blogpost went on to detail motives – financial, "lying, cheating bastard", abuser – and a discussion of possible methods. Knives were "personal and close up. Blood everywhere", while poison, "considered a woman's weapon", was too easy to trace, Crampton Brophy wrote. Guns were "loud, messy, require some skill".

The circuit judge Christopher Ramras had excluded the essay from the trial, noting it had been published several years ago. Jurors were not allowed to consider it in their judgment. A prosecutor, however, alluded to the essay's themes without naming it after Crampton Brophy took the stand.

Prosecutors told jurors Crampton Brophy was motivated by money problems and a life insurance policy.

However, Crampton Brophy said she had no reason to kill her husband and their financial problems had largely been solved by cashing in a portion of Brophy's retirement savings plan.

She owned the same make and model of gun used to kill her husband and was seen on surveillance footage driving to and from the culinary institute, court exhibits and testimony showed.

Prosecutors alleged Crampton Brophy had bought a “ghost gun”, an untraceable firearm kit, and swapped parts with a shop-bought handgun.

Police have never found the gun that killed Brophy.

Defence lawyers said the gun parts were the inspiration for an idea Crampton Brophy’s had for a new book and suggested someone else might have killed Brophy during a botched robbery.

Sign up to First Edition, our free daily newsletter – every weekday morning at 7am

Crampton Brophy testified that her presence near the culinary school on the day of her husband’s death was mere coincidence and that she had parked in the area to work on her writing.

Crampton Brophy has been in custody since her arrest in September 2018. She will be sentenced on 13 June.

“I find it is easier to wish people dead than to actually kill them,” Crampton Brophy wrote in her 2011 post. “I don’t want to worry about blood and brains splattered on my walls. And really, I’m not good at remembering lies. But the thing I know about murder is that every one of us have it in him/her when pushed far enough.”

*The Associated Press contributed to this report*

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/may/26/how-murder-husband-writer-guilty-nancy-crampton-brophy>.

## Senegal

# Eleven newborn babies die in Senegal hospital fire

President Macky Sall announces deaths of infants after blaze at hospital in Tivaouane



Visitors gather outside Mame Abdou Aziz Sy Dabakh hospital in Tivaouane, Senegal. Photograph: SEYLLOU/AFP/Getty Images

*Agence France-Presse in Dakar*

Thu 26 May 2022 04.12 EDTFirst published on Thu 26 May 2022 03.42 EDT

Eleven newborn babies have died in a hospital fire in Tivaouane, western Senegal, the country's president has said.

Macky Sall tweeted on Wednesday night: "I have just learned with pain and dismay about the deaths of 11 newborn babies in the fire at the neonatal

department of the public hospital. To their mothers and their families, I express my deepest sympathy.”

The incident occurred at Mame Abdou Aziz Sy Dabakh hospital and was caused by “a short circuit”, according to the Senegalese politician Diop Sy. “The fire spread very quickly.”

The city’s mayor, Demba Diop, said three babies were saved. According to local media, the hospital was officially opened recently.

The health minister, Abdoulaye Diouf Sarr, who was in Geneva attending a meeting with the World Health Organization, said he would return to Senegal immediately.

“This situation is very unfortunate and extremely painful,” he said on radio. “An investigation is under way to see what happened.”

The fire follows several incidents at public health facilities in Senegal, where there is great disparity between urban and rural areas in healthcare services.

In Linguère in April, a fire broke out at a hospital and four newborn babies were killed. The mayor of the northern town blamed an electrical malfunction in an air conditioning unit in the maternity ward.

Sign up to First Edition, our free daily newsletter – every weekday morning at 7am BST

The fire on Wednesday also comes weeks after three midwives were convicted over the death of a pregnant woman who waited in vain for a caesarean section.

The woman, named Astou Sokhna, had arrived at a hospital in the northern city of Louga in pain. The staff had refused to accommodate her request for a C-section, saying it had not been scheduled. She died on 1 April, 20 hours after she arrived.

Sokhna's death caused public outrage over the dire state of Senegal's health service, and the health minister acknowledged two weeks later that the death could have been avoided.

Three midwives who were on duty the night Sokhna died were sentenced on 11 May by the high court of Louga to a six-month suspended jail sentence for their "failure to assist a person in danger".

Amnesty International's Senegal director, Seydi Gassama, said his organisation had called for an inspection and upgrade of neonatology services nationwide after the "atrocious" death of the four babies in Linguère.

Amnesty "urges the government to set up an independent commission of inquiry to determine responsibility and punish the culprits, no matter the level they are at in the state apparatus", he tweeted.

The opposition lawmaker Mamadou Lamine Diallo also responded with outrage over the Tivaouane fire.

"More babies burned in a public hospital ... this is unacceptable @MackySall. We suffer with the families to whom we offer our condolences. Enough is enough," he wrote.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/26/fire-at-senegal-hospital-tivaouane-killed-11-newborn-babies-says-president>

## Fishing

# European fishing fleets accused of illegally netting tuna in Indian Ocean

Reports handed to EU claim vessels likely to have entered coastal states' waters where stocks are dwindling



One of the reports found evidence EU vessels fished without authorisation in the Indian Ocean, where the main catches include skipjack, bigeye and yellowfin (pictured) tuna. Photograph: Giordano Cipriani/Getty Images

*[Fiona Harvey](#) Environment correspondent*

Thu 26 May 2022 04.56 EDT Last modified on Thu 26 May 2022 14.02 EDT

European fishing fleets have been illegally netting tuna from dwindling stocks in the Indian Ocean, according to data presented to EU authorities and analysed by expert groups.

EU purse seine (a type of large net) fishing vessels were present in the waters of Indian Ocean coastal states, where they were likely to have carried out unauthorised catches, and have reported catches in the Chagos archipelago marine protected area and in Mozambique's exclusive economic zone.

Two investigations were made of fishing in the Indian Ocean, [one conducted by the group OceanMind](#) and [another](#) by the charity Blue Marine Foundation along with Kroll, the corporate investigation company. The first report found evidence, from the publicly available data published by the EU from its fishing fleet from 2016 to 2020, that EU vessels fished in the region, where the main catches include the skipjack, bigeye and [yellowfin](#) tuna species. Blue Marine Foundation subsequently established that the vessels were not authorised.

The second report, by Blue Marine Foundation and Kroll, examined data from ships' monitoring software, called the automatic identification system (AIS), and found that some vessels in the region had switched it off, which could be an indication of unauthorised fishing.

Populations of tuna are [under increasing pressure](#) as industrialised fishing fleets cash in on the growing market for the popular fish. The expansion of tuna fisheries [could lead to extinction](#), scientists have warned.

The latest NGO findings, presented to government representatives at a meeting of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission in Seychelles this week, highlight [the problem](#) of illegal, unreported or unregulated (IUU) fishing around the world, and of [EU vessels taking catches](#) from the depleting stocks of developing countries.

The analysts also found instances where vessels had "gone dark" – turned off monitoring through the AIS, which transmits a ship's position and is a safety tool that can also be used to ensure fishers keep within the rules – at key points, suggesting they may have engaged in IUU fishing.

[Graphic: yellowfin tuna catch by country](#)

Some EU vessels in the western Indian Ocean went dark for an average of three-quarters of the period from 1 January 2017 to 30 April 2019, according to the Blue Marine Foundation findings.

The Guardian has spoken to a person familiar with the licensing situation, who confirmed EU vessels have had no licences to fish in Somali waters since 2013. Blue Marine Foundation said the Indian authorities also confirmed they had not issued licences to EU vessels.

Anne-France Mattlet, the tuna group director for the EU fishing trade association Europêche, said: “The EU purse seine vessels did not fish in Somalian waters.”

Sign up to First Edition, our free daily newsletter – every weekday morning at 7am BST

An official for the European Commission said: “The EU has a strict zero tolerance for IUU. In order to fight IUU in the IOTC convention area, the EU has also tabled a proposal to establish a high-sea boarding and inspection scheme, based on the work already done within the IOTC.

“This would be an important tool to control better the fishing activities in the high seas and continue to fight against IUU fishing. We have also tabled a proposal to improve the traditionally weak IOTC compliance process, by putting more emphasis on the categorisation and follow-up to established situations of non-compliance.”

The spokesperson said fishing crews may have valid reasons for switching off their AIS technology, and that the transmission power and signal can vary from place to place.

“[Going dark] does not imply that they fish illegally. The AIS might be switched off under certain circumstances by professional judgment of the master,” the spokesperson said. “The information given by the AIS may not be a complete picture of the situation in the area and of the vessel’s activity.”

Charles Clover, the executive director of Blue Marine Foundation, defended its claims. “The report showing the locations of EU vessels is based on the

findings of a study commissioned by Blue Marine Foundation and undertaken by OceanMind – a highly reputable organisation – which in turn was based on publicly available data reported by the EU and published by the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission on its website,” he said.

“This data shows, for example, evidence of fishing on the part of vessels flagged to Spain in the waters of Somalia, in 2017 and 2018, and India, in 2018 and 2019.”

He added: “There is evidence to suggest that some of these fleets are fishing in coastal states’ waters without any kind of authorisation and we call on the European Commission to investigate these instances as a matter of urgency.”

The Guardian also approached the Spanish government for comment.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/may/26/european-fishing-fleets-accused-illegally-netting-tuna-indian-ocean>

## Headlines friday 27 may 2022

- [Live Rishi Sunak defends letting second home owners get £400 energy bill rebate twice](#)
- [Live Rishi Sunak ‘very confident’ about economic outlook; says cost of living package won’t fuel inflation](#)
- [Economic policy ‘Fiscal conservative’ Sunak refuses to rule out more help on fuel bills](#)
- [Cost of living crisis Sunak unveils £15bn package of support after windfall tax U-turn](#)

[Skip to key events](#)

[Politics live with Andrew Sparrow](#)[Politics](#)

## Boris Johnson confident Tory MPs back him to survive as party leader and prime minister – as it happened

This live blog is now closed. [Boris Johnson changes ministerial code to axe need to resign for rule breaches](#)

Updated 2d ago

[\*Andrew Sparrow\*](#)

[\*@AndrewSparrow\*](#)

Fri 27 May 2022 11.55 EDTFirst published on Fri 27 May 2022 04.34 EDT



Boris Johnson with Paul Holmes, the PPS for Priti Patel who quit his post today. Photograph: Adrian Dennis/PA

[\*Andrew Sparrow\*](#)

[\*@AndrewSparrow\*](#)

Fri 27 May 2022 11.55 EDTFirst published on Fri 27 May 2022 04.34 EDT

## Key events

- [2d ago Afternoon summary](#)
- [2d ago Labour says ministerial code revisions show PM is 'debasement principles of public life before our very eyes'](#)
- [2d ago PM won't be able to block inquiry by No 10 standards adviser without publicly having to say why, revised code says](#)
- [2d ago Ministers should not always have to resign for breaking ministerial code, revised version says](#)
- [2d ago Johnson says he is confident he has enough backing from Tory MPs to survive as party leader and PM](#)
- [2d ago Tory MP Paul Holmes resigns as government PPS over 'unacceptable' Partygate revelations](#)
- [2d ago Johnson admits 'big bazooka' £15bn cost of living measures won't 'fix everything for everybody'](#)

Show key events only

## Live feed

Show key events only

From 2d ago

[08.55](#)

**Johnson says he is confident he has enough backing from Tory MPs to survive as party leader and PM**

And here is a full summary of what **Boris Johnson** said in his pooled TV interview in Stockton-on-Tees.

- Johnson described the measures announced by Rishi Sunak yesterday as a “big bazooka” but conceded it would not “fix everything for everybody”. (See [12.47pm](#).)
- He said he was confident Tory MPs would continue to back him. Asked if he was confident that he had enough backing in his party to survive, given that more MPs are calling for his resignation following the publication of the Sue Gray report, he replied:

Yes, but I think I gave some pretty vintage and exhaustive answers on all that subject the other day in the House of Commons and then in a subsequent press conference.

- He rejected claims that there was now no difference between Labour and the Tories on tax and spend. This has been a charge levelled by Tory commentators. (See [12.36pm](#).) Asked to explain the difference between the two parties, Johnson replied:

Very simple. When it comes to this particular policy, it's much more generous [than Labour's proposal]. This gives a £1,200 for every 8 million households.

But what it also does is, the levy is designed so that companies can offset investments that they're making in new energy supply, or in green technology, to the tune of 91p in the pound.

Johnson was wrong on this point. The investment allowance is [just for investment in oil and gas extraction](#).

- He defended the decision to make the extra support for people time limited. It was designed to get people through the difficult period until inflation went down, he said. After that the economy would be in a strong position because of high employment, he said.

The reason we're going to be a strong position is because we have so many people in work giving us the tax base we need to look after everybody else.

- **He said that he did not think the measures announced yesterday would add to inflation because they would not trigger more discretionary spending.** This was slightly different from the answer Sunak gave when he was asked about this earlier; he said the impact would be “minimal”, adding to inflation by less than 1%.
- **He refused to follow Sunak in saying he would donate his £400 energy bills grant to charity, saying that because he lived in a government flat, his arrangements were different.** Asked if he would do what Sunak was doing, he said: “I think my arrangements are different because I live in a government flat,” he said. It is understood that Johnson does make a contribution to the utility bills for his grace and favour flat at Downing Street, but he is not a conventional tenant. He also owns a home in Oxfordshire, which is understood to be rented out, and he is the joint owner, with his wife, of a house in London. These properties should benefit from the £400 grant too, but it would go to whoever pays the electricity bill.
- 
- 

Updated at 10.49 EDT

[2d ago](#)[11.40](#)

## Afternoon summary

- Boris Johnson has suffered the first resignation of a PPS since the publication of Sue Gray's damning report into Partygate with the departure of Paul Holmes as a ministerial aide to the home secretary. But Johnson has said he is confident that Conservative MPs will continue to back him as party leader and PM. (See [1.55pm](#).)
- Johnson is changing the rules to let ministers avoid resigning if they break the ministerial code, allowing them to apologise or temporarily lose their pay instead.
- Johnson has said the UK is “not necessarily” heading for a recession after his chancellor announced a £15bn package to help people deal with rising energy bills and inflation.
- Shell has said Rishi Sunak’s windfall tax is a threat to investment in North Sea oil and gas as Britain attempts to ramp up domestic energy supplies.
- Johnson has said Ukraine should be supplied with long-range multiple launch rocket systems (MLRS) to help Kyiv’s embattled forces prevent Russian invaders from gaining ground in the Donbas.
- Dominic Cummings, Johnson’s former chief aide, was never contacted by police seeking information about alleged lockdown-breaching parties inside Downing Street during his time working there, he has said.

That's it from us for today. You can read our latest story on Boris Johnson here:

•  
•

Updated at 11.55 EDT

[2d ago](#)[11.25](#)

According to [today's figures](#) from the **Office for National Statistics'** coronavirus infection survey, Covid rates continue to fall in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

For the week ending last Saturday the rates were:

**England** - around one person in 60 infected

**Wales** - around one person in 55 infected

**Northern Ireland** - around one person in 80 infected

And in **Scotland** the trend was uncertain, the ONS says. It says one person in 40 was infected in Scotland last week.

•  
•

[2d ago](#)[11.18](#)

**Labour says ministerial code revisions show PM is 'debasing principles of public life before our very eyes'**

As my colleague **Rowena Mason** writes in [her story on the changes to the ministerial code](#), Boris Johnson has also rewritten the foreword to the code,

removing all references to honesty, integrity, transparency and accountability. Rowena writes:

In his first foreword, published in 2019, he wrote: “There must be no bullying and no harassment; no leaking; no breach of collective responsibility. No misuse of taxpayer money and no actual or perceived conflicts of interest. T

“The precious principles of public life enshrined in this document – integrity, objectivity, accountability, transparency, honesty and leadership in the public interest – must be honoured at all times; as must the political impartiality of our much admired civil service.”

The 2022 foreword simply lists the government’s priorities, with only a brief mention of standards and behaviour of ministers, saying: “Thirty years after it was first published, the ministerial code continues to fulfil its purpose, guiding my ministers on how they should act and arrange their affairs. As the leader of Her Majesty’s government, my accountability is to parliament and, via the ballot box, to the British people.”

Commenting on the changes, **Angela Rayner**, Labour’s deputy leader, said:

Boris Johnson has today rewritten his own foreword to the ministerial code, removing all references to integrity, objectivity, accountability, transparency, honesty and leadership in the public interest. This prime minister is downgrading and debasing the principles of public life before our very eyes.

In a week when Boris Johnson’s lies to parliament about industrial rule-breaking at the heart of government were finally exposed, he should be tendering his resignation but is instead watering down the rules to save his own skin.

Once again, Boris Johnson has demonstrated he is not serious about his pledge to address the scandal and sleaze engulfing his Government or the frequent and flagrant breaches of standards and rule-breaking that have taken place on his watch.

Labour's independent integrity and ethics commission will stamp out Conservative corruption and restore the trust in public office this Prime Minister has eroded.

•  
•

[2d ago](#)[10.38](#)

## **PM won't be able to block inquiry by No 10 standards adviser without publicly having to say why, revised code says**

The updated ministerial code also strengthens the power of the independent adviser on ministerial standards (officially known as the independent adviser on ministerial interests), who is currently Lord Geidt.

The independent adviser investigates alleged breaches of the ministerial code by ministers, but in the past they have only been able to do this when the PM orders an inquiry. For years campaigners have been saying the system would be more robust if the adviser could initiate an inquiry without getting permission first.

Geidt was appointed after the previous adviser, Sir Alex Allan, resigned after Boris Johnson refused to sack Priti Patel after Allan published a report saying she broke the ministerial code. In a very minor concession to Geidt, [his terms of reference](#) said that if he thought an investigation was needed, he could confidentially suggest that to the PM. But the PM still had the final word as to whether one would go ahead.

Under the [new code of conduct](#), the PM still has the final word over whether an inquiry happens. But the code says the adviser can now force the PM to release a public statement saying why he is not allowing an inquiry unless there are public interest reasons for keeping that confidential.

It says:

Where the independent adviser believes that an alleged breach of the code warrants further investigation and that matter has not already been referred to him, he may initiate an investigation. Before doing so, the independent adviser will consult the prime minister who will normally give his consent. However, where there are public interest reasons for doing so, the prime minister may raise concerns about a proposed investigation such that the independent adviser does not proceed. In such an event, the independent adviser may still require that the reasons for an investigation not proceeding be made public unless this would undermine the grounds that have led to the investigation not proceeding.

•  
•

Updated at 11.11 EDT

2d ago **10.17**

## **Ministers should not always have to resign for breaking ministerial code, revised version says**

Ministers who are found to have broken the ministerial code will not automatically be expected to resign, the government said today.

The Cabinet Office has issued [an updated version of the code](#) and, in [a document explaining revisions to it](#), it says the document now explicitly says that a breach of the code is not automatically a resignation offence. It says:

As both Lord Geidt [the independent adviser on ministerial standards] and the Committee on Standards in Public Life have recommended last year, it is disproportionate to expect that any breach, however minor, should lead automatically to resignation or dismissal. The sanction which the prime minister may decide to issue in a given case is for the

prime minister to determine, but could include requiring some form of public apology, remedial action or removal of ministerial salary for a period. The ministerial code has been updated to reflect this.

In the past it has often been assumed that a breach of the code should automatically be a resignation offence but in practice this has not always been the case. Priti Patel was not forced to resign as home secretary despite an investigation finding [she broke the code by bullying staff](#).

However the new version of the code, like the old one, still says that lying to parliament should be a resignation offence. “Ministers who knowingly mislead parliament will be expected to offer their resignation to the prime minister,” it says.

Boris Johnson is currently facing an investigation by the Commons privileges committee into claims he misled MPs about Partygate.

•  
•

[2d ago](#)[09.30](#)

**Dominic Cummings**, Boris Johnson’s former chief adviser, disclosed in a post on his Substack account earlier this week that he had not been fined by the Metropolitan police over Partygate. Today he has said on Twitter that he did not even get a questionnaire from the police, or an email asking for evidence.

no, didnt even send a questionnaire or email asking for evidence

— Dominic Cummings (@Dominic2306) [May 27, 2022](#)

Cummings was one of the people who helped to trigger the police investigation [by revealing in January](#) that No 10 held a party for staff in the garden on 20 May 2020 despite Cummings warning that it would be against the rules.

But most of the events investigated by the police took place after Cummings left No 10 on 13 November 2020.

•  
•

[2d ago](#)[08.55](#)

## **Johnson says he is confident he has enough backing from Tory MPs to survive as party leader and PM**

And here is a full summary of what **Boris Johnson** said in his pooled TV interview in Stockton-on-Tees.

- **Johnson described the measures announced by Rishi Sunak yesterday as a “big bazooka” but conceded it would not “fix everything for everybody”.** (See [12.47pm](#).)
- **He said he was confident Tory MPs would continue to back him.** Asked if he was confident that he had enough backing in his party to survive, given that more MPs are calling for his resignation following the publication of the Sue Gray report, he replied:

Yes, but I think I gave some pretty vintage and exhaustive answers on all that subject the other day in the House of Commons and then in a subsequent press conference .

- **He rejected claims that there was now no difference between Labour and the Tories on tax and spend.** This has been a charge levelled by Tory commentators. (See [12.36pm](#).) Asked to explain the difference between the two parties, Johnson replied:

Very simple. When it comes to this particular policy, it's much more generous [than Labour's proposal]. This gives a £1,200 for every 8 million households.

But what it also does is, the levy is designed so that companies can offset investments that they're making in new energy supply, or in green technology, to the tune of 91p in the pound.

Johnson was wrong on this point. The investment allowance is [just for investment in oil and gas extraction](#).

- **He defended the decision to make the extra support for people time limited.** It was designed to get people through the difficult period until inflation went down, he said. After that the economy would be in a strong position because of high employment, he said.

The reason we're going to be a strong position is because we have so many people in work giving us the tax base we need to look after everybody else.

- **He said that he did not think the measures announced yesterday would add to inflation because they would not trigger more discretionary spending.** This was slightly different from the answer Sunak gave when he was asked about this earlier; he said the impact would be “minimal”, adding to inflation by less than 1%.
- **He refused to follow Sunak in saying he would donate his £400 energy bills grant to charity, saying that because he lived in a government flat, his arrangements were different.** Asked if he would do what Sunak was doing, he said: “I think my arrangements are different because I live in a government flat,” he said. It is understood that Johnson does make a contribution to the utility bills for his grace and favour flat at Downing Street, but he is not a conventional tenant. He also owns a home in Oxfordshire, which is understood to be rented out, and he is the joint owner, with his wife, of a house in London.

These properties should benefit from the £400 grant too, but it would go to whoever pays the electricity bill.

- 
- 

Updated at 10.49 EDT

[2d ago 08.23](#)

A colleague who answered the phone at **Paul Holmes'** constituency office said the MP had nothing further to add when asked if he was calling for Boris Johnson to resign, PA Media reports. Holmes has resigned as a PPS over Partygate. (See [1.01pm.](#))

- 
- 

[2d ago 08.11](#)



Boris Johnson during a visit to CityFibre Training Academy in Stockton-on-Tees today. Photograph: WPA/Getty Images

•  
•

[2d ago](#)[08.07](#)

In his Bloomberg interview, **Boris Johnson** said he did not accept that the UK was inevitably heading for a recession. My colleague **Graeme Wearden** has the details on his business live blog.

•  
•

[Newest](#)[Newest](#)

[Previous](#)

1  
of  
2

[Next](#)

[Oldest](#)[Oldest](#)

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/live/2022/may/27/rishi-sunak-boris-johnson-cost-of-living-crisis-support-package-sue-gray-uk-politics-latest>

[Skip to key events](#)

[Business live](#)[Business](#)

# Johnson admits 'big bazooka' £15bn cost of living measures won't 'fix everything for everybody' – as it happened

PM warns that UK faces difficult period, but can avoid recession, as Resolution says wealthy pensioners are biggest winners from [£15bn cost of living package](#)

- [Johnson: UK can dodge recession, despite difficult times](#)
- [Shell says windfall tax threatens North Sea oil and gas investment](#)
- [UK politics live – latest updates](#)
- [Rich should give £400 rebate to charity, chancellor says](#)

Updated 2d ago

[\*Graeme Wearden\*](#)

Fri 27 May 2022 10.38 EDTFirst published on Fri 27 May 2022 03.43 EDT

Boris Johnson says 'big bazooka' cost of living package won't 'fix everything' – video

[\*Graeme Wearden\*](#)

Fri 27 May 2022 10.38 EDTFirst published on Fri 27 May 2022 03.43 EDT

## Key events

- [2d ago Closing summary](#)
- [2d ago Shell: windfall tax is threat to investment](#)

- [2d ago Full story: Boris Johnson says UK ‘not necessarily’ heading for recession](#)
- [2d ago Johnson doesn’t say if he’ll give £400 to charity](#)
- [2d ago Johnson admits ‘big bazooka’ £15bn cost of living measures won’t ‘fix everything for everybody’](#)
- [2d ago Johnson: Don’t want wage-price spiral](#)
- [2d ago Boris Johnson: UK can avoid recession despite ‘difficult period’ ahead](#)

Show key events only

## Live feed

Show key events only

From 2d ago

[08.12](#)

## Johnson admits ‘big bazooka’ £15bn cost of living measures won’t ‘fix everything for everybody’

Boris Johnson has described the measures announced by [Rishi Sunak](#) yesterday as a “big bazooka”, but he conceded that it would not “fix everything for everybody”.

In a pooled clip for broadcasters, shown on Sky News, he says:

I’m not going to pretend that this is going to fix everything for everybody immediately. There are still going to be pressures.

But it’s a very, very substantial commitment by the government to getting us through what will be, I’m afraid, still a bumpy time with the increase in energy prices around the world.

Johnson adds that the £15bn package will “get us through” until energy prices start to abate, when the UK will be in a “much, much” stronger position.

The reason we're going to be in a strong position is because we have so many people in work, giving us the tax base we need to look after everybody else.

*Q: Are you worried that spending £10bn more than you will raise from the windfall tax levy may be inflationary?*

Johnson says the answer is no. He thinks the £400 rebate won't necessarily lead to more discretionary spending because people's outgoings will go up, and have already gone up, due to higher energy and food costs.

It's intended to match the needs of people right now.

[However, the [CEBR predicted this morning](#) that wealthier households **could** spend the rebate, leading to higher inflation]

Johnson points out that unemployment is the lowest since 1974, which he says people wouldn't have been predicted when the Covid-19 lockdowns began.

The UK is using its fiscal firepower to get through the economic aftershocks of Covid, such as higher energy costs, and will come out "much stronger" on the other side, he says.

- 
- 

[2d ago](#)[10.38](#)

## Closing summary

Time for a recap.

**Boris Johnson has admitted that the government's latest cost of living package won't fully protect people from surging prices.**

Speaking a day after [Rishi Sunak](#) unveiled £15bn of support, in response to the energy crisis, the PM said:

I'm not going to pretend that this is going to fix everything for everybody immediately. There are still going to be pressures.

But it's a very, very substantial commitment by the government to getting us through what will be, I'm afraid, still a bumpy time with the increase in energy prices around the world.

Johnson also defended handing every household a £400 energy rebate, regardless of their circumstances, [saying](#) it was “massively, massively redistributive”.

In an interview with Bloomberg, Johnson took the upbeat view that [the UK was not necessarily heading into recession](#).

**[But Johnson declined the chance to pledge to pay £400 to charity, as chancellor Rishi Sunak did, on the grounds that he lives in a government flat.](#)**

Sunak said that people who didn't need the rebate should give the money to charity, as he will – insisting that a universal payment was the best way to ensure that those in need were protected.

He told Sky:

“You, like me, can also give that money to charity if you don't need it.

[Labour criticised the government for allowing](#) second-home owners to get **two** £400 rebates, saying this showed the plan had been rushed out to distract from the Sue Gray report into Partygate.

[Sunak also argued](#) that his plan won't have much impact on inflation, already at 40-year highs of 9%, and insisted he was still a “fiscal conservative” despite announcing plans that will require £10bn of extra borrowing.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies said Sunak was “engaging in some serious redistribution from rich to poor”:

The poorest households will now be approximately compensated for the rising cost of living. Many low earners will now be better off this year than last. High earners will still tend to be worse off.

But the **Resolution Foundation** pointed out that wealthy pensioners were the big winners, while families with several children might feel “rough justice” from the flat-rate rebate as their higher energy usage isn’t recognised.

Resolution Foundation:

\* 9.5% uprating of state pension & benefits is \*biggest for 32 years\* and will cost £15bn

\* Sunak's package will shield average households from 82% of bill rises; 93% for poorest

\* Biggest losers = large families; biggest winners = wealthy pensioners

— Steven Swinford (@Steven\_Swinford) [May 27, 2022](#)

The CEBR warned that yet more help will be needed next year, if energy prices - driven high by the Ukraine war - don't come down.

**Deutsche Bank** said the package would only have a modest boost to growth, but probably enough to avoid recession.

The bad news for borrowers, though, is that it may spur the Bank of England on to raise interest rates faster, warned **Capital Economics**.

Shares in oil producers fell as the City digested the windfall tax, while electricity producers weakened after Sunak hinted they would face a levy too.

**Shell** criticised Rishi Sunak's windfall tax, saying it was a threat to investment in North Sea oil and gas as Britain attempts to ramp up domestic energy supplies.

Our Politics Live blog has the latest action, including the resignation of Conservative MP **Paul Holmes** as a parliamentary private secretary in response to the revelations in the Sue Gray report.

•  
•

Updated at 11.02 EDT

[2d ago](#)[10.04](#)

## **Shell: windfall tax is threat to investment**

Alex Lawson

**Shell has said Rishi Sunak's windfall tax is a threat to investment in North Sea oil and gas as Britain attempts to ramp up domestic energy supplies.**

A Shell spokesperson said:

We understand the worry for millions of people about how high energy costs are challenging their household budgets – and the need for support to help make ends meet.

But at the same time, we must sustain investment in securing supplies of oil and gas the UK needs today, while allocating future spend for the low carbon energies we want to build for the future.

However, in its current form the levy creates uncertainty about the investment climate for North Sea oil and gas for the coming years.

And, longer term, the proposed tax reliefs for investment don't extend to the renewable energy system we want to drive forward in the UK and invest in very substantially. When making plans for the next decade and beyond, we need certainty.

Shell has been studying the new oil and gas windfall tax some more... and it's not happy

New statement says the levy “creates uncertainty” for North Sea investment and fails to encourage its plans to invest in renewables...  
[pic.twitter.com/Bz8aQ0LyKm](https://pic.twitter.com/Bz8aQ0LyKm)

— Emily Gosden (@emilygosden) [May 27, 2022](#)

**Shell plans to make £20bn to £25bn of investments in the UK over the next decade, predominantly in renewable energy projects.**

Industry insiders were surprised that the one-off levy will remain in place until “normal” conditions in the energy market return or until the end of December 2025.

•  
•

Updated at 10.28 EDT

[2d ago](#)[09.45](#)

**Full story: Boris Johnson says UK ‘not necessarily’ heading for recession**

**Boris Johnson has said the UK is “not necessarily” heading for a recession after his chancellor announced a £15bn package to help people deal with rising energy bills and inflation.**

Despite experts warning of trouble ahead for the economy and the government bringing in emergency measures to help out struggling households, the prime minister sounded an upbeat note about Britain's financial prospects in an interview with Bloomberg TV.

"There are ways forward for the UK that are incredibly exciting," he said.

"If we make sure that we have a proactive approach to talent from abroad – we want to control immigration but allow the talent that we need to come in – we fix our energy supply issues, we fix the issues in the UK labour market.

•  
•

[2d ago](#)[09.39](#)

**The government's £15bn cost of living package may encourage the Bank of England to hike interest rates more quickly, says Paul Dales of Capital Economics.**

The Bank could even vote for a larger-than-usual increase, from 1% to 1.5%, rather than a typical quarter-point move. That would put added pressure on borrowers

Dales explains:

The new fiscal stimulus announced by the Chancellor this week puts more pressure on the Bank of England to raise interest rates into restrictive territory.

As result of this and other recent developments, we're becoming more confident in our view that interest rates will rise from 1.00% now to 3.00% next year.

What's more, although we are forecasting a 25 basis point rate hike at the Bank's next policy meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> June, we think a 50 basis point

hike is a bit more likely than the 10-20% chance priced into the markets.

- 
- 

2d ago09.20

Boris Johnson avoids talking about Rishi Sunak's comment that he will give his £400 to charity.

The PM instead says the support package will not cover the costs for households fully, but it will go a long way in helping people.<https://t.co/FXTNEgrI7D>

□ Sky 501 and YouTube <pic.twitter.com/uYI2MiSxEt>

— Sky News (@SkyNews) [May 27, 2022](#)

- 
- 

2d ago08.47

## Johnson doesn't say if he'll give £400 to charity

*Q: The chancellor is donating [his £400 energy tax rebate to charity](#), will you do the same?*

Boris Johnson says his arrangements are different as he lives in a government flat.

It's important that people recognise that these payments will not necessarily cover the increased cost fully, the prime minister adds:

We can't cover every single cost that people are going to face, we've got to be realistic about that.

However, they will go a long way towards helping people.

- 
- 

Updated at 09.20 EDT

[2d ago](#)08.42

*Q: How will temporary one-off payments help families long term?*

Johnson agrees that the package is temporary, saying the “natural strength” of the economy should power it forward, but the government is helping people cope now with the energy price spike.

*Q: Some families don't need this help, and some will get the rebate more than once (because they own multiple homes). Won't this benefit people who are already wealthy, at the expense of the taxpayer?*

Johnson insist the package is “massively, massively redistributive” and “the right thing to do”, citing analysis from the Institute for Fiscal Studies (see 9.28am) and the Resolution Foundation (see 11.20am).

- 
- 

[2d ago](#)08.30

**Boris Johnson is also asked what the difference is between the Labour Party and the Conservative Party on tax and spend, following yesterday's announcement.**

Johnson says the government's package is ‘much more generous’, as it's worth £1,200 for the eight million households.

[the £400 discount on energy bills, a £650 one-off payment to the 8m poorest households, plus the £150 council tax rebate announced earlier this year]

**Johnson** adds that the energy levy is designed to encourage investment - firms can offset 91p in every pound which they spend on investments in new energy supply or green technology.

It's a solution that protects people and protects investment, he says.

**Reminder:** [Under Rishi Sunak's plan](#), the tax rate on North Sea oil and gas producers rises by 25 percentage points from 40% to 65%, raking in an estimated £5bn, while Labour had proposed a 10 percentage point increase that would raise £2bn.

But because firms can offset the government's levy by investing more, it's not yet clear quite how much it will raise.

•  
•

[2d ago](#)[08.12](#)

## **Johnson admits ‘big bazooka’ £15bn cost of living measures won’t ‘fix everything for everybody’**

**Boris Johnson has described the measures announced by [Rishi Sunak](#) yesterday as a “big bazooka”, but he conceded that it would not “fix everything for everybody”.**

In a pooled clip for broadcasters, shown on Sky News, he says:

I'm not going to pretend that this is going to fix everything for everybody immediately. There are still going to be pressures.

But it's a very, very substantial commitment by the government to getting us through what will be, I'm afraid, still a bumpy time with the increase in energy prices around the world.

Johnson adds that the £15bn package will “get us through” until energy prices start to abate, when the UK will be in a “much, much” stronger position.

The reason we’re going to be in a strong position is because we have so many people in work, giving us the tax base we need to look after everybody else.

*Q: Are you worried that spending £10bn more than you will raise from the windfall tax levy may be inflationary?*

Johnson says the answer is no. He thinks the £400 rebate won’t necessarily lead to more discretionary spending because people’s outgoings will go up, and have already gone up, due to higher energy and food costs.

It’s intended to match the needs of people right now.

[However, the [CEBR predicted this morning](#) that wealthier households **could** spend the rebate, leading to higher inflation]

Johnson points out that unemployment is the lowest since 1974, which he says people wouldn’t have been predicted when the Covid-19 lockdowns began.

The UK is using its fiscal firepower to get through the economic aftershocks of Covid, such as higher energy costs, and will come out “much stronger” on the other side, he says.

- 
- 

[2d ago](#)[07.34](#)

## Johnson: Don't want wage-price spiral



Boris Johnson visiting the CityFibre Training Academy in Stockton-on-Tees today  
Photograph: Owen Humphreys/AFP/Getty Images

**Boris Johnson has also suggested that wages shouldn't simply rise in line with inflation, as a showdown with UK trade unions looms.**

[Speaking to Bloomberg](#) on the train as he travelled to Stockton-on-Tees, in County Durham, the prime minister said:

What we want is a high-wage, high-skill economy. The increases in wages have got to be driven by productivity gains, and not simply by inflation.”

“What we don’t want to see is a return to the wage-price spiral that we saw in the 1970s.”

The government angered unions this week when it suggested that public sector pay awards would need to assess the risk of stoking inflation when deciding this year’s pay awards.

[UK consumer price inflation hit 9% last month](#), the fastest increase in the cost of living in 40 years.

## **But how much of a risk is it?**

Gita Gopinath, first deputy managing director at the IMF, [told the World Economic Forum in Davos this week](#) that wages **can** rise without driving inflation higher, as company profits can decline instead.

As Gopinath pointed out, inflation is a measure of rising prices, not rising wages....



Photograph: Owen Humphreys/AFP/Getty Images

- 
- 

[2d ago](#)[06.30](#)

**Boris Johnson: UK can avoid recession despite 'difficult period' ahead**

**Boris Johnson is optimistic that the UK can avoid falling into recession, but admitted that there is a 'difficult period' ahead.**

He's been interviewed by **Bloomberg TV**, and while the PM admits the UK faces a "difficult" period, he argues the UK can avoid a downturn.

Asked whether the UK was headed for a recession, Johnson said:

"Not necessarily at all."

[as flagged earlier, [Deutsche Bank think the UK may avoid one too](#)]

Johnson also warned there are difficult times ahead:

"We're going to have a difficult period, and we've got to be absolutely clear with people it's going to be difficult, and the government cannot solve every problem.

"We can't cover everybody's extra cost. But what we can do is make sure that we deal with the underlying causes of inflation, but also keep our economy strong and open to investment."

[Here's the full interview.](#)

Boris Johnson says the UK economy can dodge a recession  
<https://t.co/hexxap7uHb> via [@kitty\\_donaldson](#) [@\\_DavidGoodman](#)  
<pic.twitter.com/cOeaxUOV5U>

— Zoe Schneeweiss (@ZSchneeweiss) [May 27, 2022](#)

Companies tend to invest more when they are confident about the future, so the prime minister might note that [business investment has been weak since the Brexit vote in 2016](#):

"One of the best growth ways to drive growth is to drive business investment, something the party opposite will never understand," says Rishi Sunak <pic.twitter.com/NTejlVpFcl>

— Andy Bruce (@BruceReuters) [May 26, 2022](#)

•  
•

Updated at 06.53 EDT

[2d ago](#)[06.20](#)

## **Resolution: wealthy pensioners are biggest winners.**

**The Resolution Foundation have calculated that wealthy pensioners are the biggest winners from yesterday's announcement.**

But families with several children will feel 'rough justice' from the £400 lump sum rebate on energy bills -- which won't cover their higher energy use.

Among working-age households receiving means-tested benefits, households with three or more children will see energy bills pushed up by £500-plus a year more than those without children, but will get the same one-off payment, Resolution says.

**Mike Brewer**, chief economist at the **Resolution Foundation**, explains:

"The Chancellor has delivered a bold and well targeted support package which, when combined with his previous support, will almost entirely offset the rise in energy bills for low-income families, as well as the majority of bill rises for everyone else. However, with the cost-of-living crisis extending well beyond fuel bills, households are still going to feel a tight squeeze over the coming year."

"The biggest winners from yesterday's package are wealthy pensioners who may not need extra support, but still stand to gain £850, while large families on low incomes may feel rough justice as their higher energy usage isn't reflected in flat-rate lump sum payments."

"Critically, as well as providing vital support to households this winter, the Chancellor confirmed that he will go ahead with what is set to be

the biggest increase in benefits in over three decades when they are likely to rise by over 9 per cent next spring. This will offer lasting protection for poorer households from today's high inflation."

What is the overall impact of tax/benefit policies (inc. energy bill rebates) coming into effect this year? An average cash gain to households in the bottom quintile of £1,195, £799 for households in the middle, and a £456 loss for households at the top.  
<https://t.co/4FnxEORznE> pic.twitter.com/0Z3QAjgF9z

— Resolution Foundation (@resfoundation) [May 27, 2022](#)

NEW RF Overnight analysis by [@karlhandscomb](#) [@LalithaTry](#) [@MikeBrewerEcon](#) [@JMarshall\\_3](#) & [@TorstenBell](#) - Back on target: Analysing the Government's additional cost of living support  
<https://t.co/4FnxEORznE> pic.twitter.com/s8OM0KmpyU

— Resolution Foundation (@resfoundation) [May 27, 2022](#)

- 
- 

[Newest](#)[Newest](#)

[Previous](#)

1

of

2

[Next](#)

[Oldest](#)[Oldest](#)

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

## Economic policy

# Boris Johnson says UK ‘not necessarily’ heading for recession

PM sounds upbeat note on economy amid some disquiet among Tory MPs over £15bn cost of living package

- [Latest politics news - live updates](#)



Boris Johnson acknowledged there would be a ‘difficult period’ ahead but said he was confident energy prices would start falling. Photograph: Reuters

*[Emily Dugan](#) and [Rowena Mason](#)*

Fri 27 May 2022 07.54 EDTFirst published on Fri 27 May 2022 05.32 EDT

Boris Johnson has said the UK is “not necessarily” heading for a recession after his chancellor announced a £15bn package to help people deal with rising energy bills and inflation.

Despite experts warning of trouble ahead for the economy and the government bringing in emergency measures to help out struggling households, the prime minister sounded an upbeat note about Britain's financial prospects in an interview with Bloomberg TV.

"There are ways forward for the UK that are incredibly exciting," he said. "If we make sure that we have a proactive approach to talent from abroad – we want to control immigration but allow the talent that we need to come in – we fix our energy supply issues, we fix the issues in the UK labour market.

"One of the incredible things about the economy right now is that unemployment is at its lowest level since I was two years old."

He acknowledged there would be a "difficult period" ahead but said he was confident energy prices would start coming down.

Asked if the UK was heading for a recession, he answered: "Not necessarily at all."

Johnson's economic optimism has been wrong in the past when he gave an interview last year saying inflation fears were "unfounded". It has since hit 9% and there are worries it could be in double digits by the end of the year.

Boris Johnson says 'big bazooka' cost of living package won't 'fix everything' – video

Rishi Sunak, the chancellor, [launched a package of measures](#) on Thursday designed to tackle soaring fuel bills amid the cost of living crisis, but the measures have proved controversial with Conservatives MPs who would rather have seen tax cuts.

Speaking in a round of broadcast interviews on Friday, Sunak said he remained a "fiscal conservative". He also did not rule out further emergency relief next year.

The package of relief was more ambitious than predicted but Sunak was quick to insist he had not changed his politics.

“First and foremost, I’m a fiscal conservative; I believe it’s incredibly important that I manage the country’s finances responsibly,” he said on Friday morning. “That means, after suffering the shock we did, to get our borrowing and debt levels back on a sustainable trajectory.”

Asked if he would be prepared to introduce a further emergency package in future, with fresh borrowing and taxes, he said: “People can judge me by how I’ve acted over the last couple of years.

“I’ve always been prepared to respond to the situation on the ground, what’s happening to the economy, what families are experiencing and making sure we’ve got policies in place to support them through that.

“In terms of ‘Is it one-off, what’s happening next year?’, I’d go back to what I said earlier. I do want people to be reassured and confident that we will get through this. We will be able to combat and reduce inflation, we have the tools at our disposal and after time it will come down.”

Commenting on the fact that every household across the UK would receive a £400 grant to help cope with the rapidly rising energy costs, including wealthy individuals such as himself, the chancellor said he would be donating his to charity and encouraged others who did not need it to do the same.

He told Sky News: “I am sure, like me, you can also give that money to charity if you don’t need it.”

He said second homes would account for only 1-2% of payments, adding that he had not wanted to use council tax to give the money to households because of the risk that it penalised families in larger homes who were cash poor.

Sunak denied the shadow chancellor Rachel Reeves’ suggestion that he had implemented a Labour policy, telling BBC Radio 4’s Today programme: “I don’t think that’s fair.”

Labour proposed a windfall tax on energy companies five months ago.

He also denied the package was brought forward to generate positive headlines after [Sue Gray's report](#) exposed a culture of “bacchanalian” parties in Downing Street.

Sign up to First Edition, our free daily newsletter – every weekday morning at 7am BST

Despite a turbulent few weeks, where he has been fined for breaching Covid rules and his family’s finances have come under scrutiny, Sunak said he was not planning to resign.

He told the BBC: “No. I am fully committed to helping get the country through what are some challenging months ahead and build a brighter future for the people that I’m very privileged to represent.

“And, as you saw yesterday, I have the same energy and verve I’ve always had for this job and I’ll keep at it.”

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/may/27/fiscal-conservative-rishi-sunak-refuses-to-rule-out-more-help-on-fuel-bills>

## Cost of living crisis

# Sunak U-turns on ‘energy profits levy’ in £15bn cost of living package

Chancellor’s measures, including tax on oil and gas companies, criticised as too late and a ‘drop in the ocean’

Rishi Sunak announces £5bn windfall tax on energy firms to ease cost of living crisis – video

*[Richard Partington](#) and [Heather Stewart](#)*

Thu 26 May 2022 16.21 EDT Last modified on Fri 27 May 2022 02.44 EDT

Rishi Sunak bowed to months of pressure over the cost of living crisis with a £15bn [package of support](#), part-funded by executing a remarkable U-turn to [impose a windfall tax](#) on energy companies.

Announcing the measures on Thursday, in a bruising week for the government, the chancellor said his “significant set of interventions” would help the poorest in society – with a one-off £650 payment for 8 million families on means-tested benefits, alongside an extra £200 for all energy bill payers that will not have to be repaid.

After months of rejecting Labour calls for a windfall tax on energy giants, Sunak announced what he called a “temporary targeted energy profits levy”, which is expected to raise £5bn.

He was forced to deny the package had been brought forward in order to generate positive headlines after [Sue Gray’s final report](#) exposed the culture of alcohol-fuelled parties in Downing Street. “I can categorically assure you that that had no bearing on the timing,” he said.

Thursday’s announcement was far more ambitious than had been predicted – and was broadly welcomed by charities and the influential Institute for

Fiscal Studies, [which described it](#) as a “genuinely big package of support”.

Critics warned, however, that the measures [still only amounted to a “sticking plaster”](#) that failed to tackle longer-term pressure on households, and would need updating should the cost of living emergency fail to abate next year.

Rachel Reeves, the shadow chancellor, said Sunak’s about-face on the windfall tax showed Labour was “winning the battle of ideas in Britain”, while arguing that the move came months too late and was not accompanied by a long-term plan to deal with soaring living costs.

“Today it feels like the chancellor has finally realised the problems that the country is facing,” she said.

“We first called for a windfall tax on oil and gas producers nearly five months ago to help struggling families and pensioners. Today he has announced that policy but he can’t dare say the words. It’s a policy that dare not speak its name.”

The chair of Asda, Stuart Rose, warned the measures were [still only a “drop in the ocean”](#) in regard to the pressures facing families.

“I can remember the last time inflation was [like this] and it took nearly eight years to get [it] under control,” Lord Rose said.

After weeks in which ministers – including Boris Johnson – had said they were not in favour of a windfall tax, Sunak told MPs the extraordinary profits being made by the oil and gas companies should now be taxed to help ease the cost of living emergency.

He insisted the energy levy – which he refused to call a windfall tax – was designed not to deter investment, with a 90% tax relief for firms that invest in oil and gas extraction.

However, BP warned it would now review its plans in the light of the levy, which is set to stay in place for up to three years, though the Treasury said it would be phased out when oil prices return to historically normal levels.

BP said in a statement: “Today’s announcement is not for a one-off tax – it is a multi-year proposal. Naturally we will now need to look at the impact of both the new levy and the tax relief on our North Sea investment plans.”

Some Tory backbenchers objected to the levy, with Richard Drax accusing Sunak of “throwing red meat to socialists”, while Craig Mackinlay said: “Higher taxes can never mean lower prices. All in all, I’m disappointed, embarrassed and appalled that a Conservative chancellor could come up with this tripe.”

Sunak rejected the idea he was a tax-and-spend chancellor, however, saying: “What people want and what I am is to be a pragmatic chancellor, to do the things that I believe are right for the country both in the short term and in the long term.”

Sunak’s third economic package in less than six months amounted to a doubling of support to more than £30bn, with an additional £300 payment for pensioners and £150 for recipients of disability benefits.

Economists said Sunak was gambling on current high rates of inflation fading next year, despite signs that Russia’s war in Ukraine and China’s zero-Covid policy, causing disruption for global trade, could lead to persistent pressure on living costs.

Inflation in Britain soared to 9% in April, the highest level since 1982, driven by a surge in energy bills, record petrol prices and the rising cost of a weekly shop. The Bank of England forecasts inflation will peak at close to 10% later this year, after a expected £800 increase in energy bills to close to £2,800.

Alison Garnham, the chief executive of the Child Poverty Action Group charity, expressed relief that Sunak was finally waking up to the scale of the crisis for ordinary families but warned the chancellor he was “kidding himself if he thinks that the problem is temporary”.

“If the chancellor is serious about supporting those who are struggling then he will need to make long-term changes to the structure of the social security

system and restore the value of benefits to something that families can really live on,” she said.

After a decade of austerity, the real value of benefits has fallen to the lowest level in four decades. Although Sunak promised benefits would rise next spring by the rate of inflation this September – expected to deliver a multibillion-pound boost for the poorest families – charities warned the overall safety net was threadbare.

Sign up to First Edition, our free daily newsletter – every weekday morning at 7am BST

Despite criticism for taking months longer than necessary, leading economists said the updated government plan was a marked improvement on two previous attempts by Sunak, which were widely criticised for failing to help the poorest in society.

The Resolution Foundation said twice as much of the fresh £15bn support package would go to the poorest households than to wealthier families, with an average gain for those on the lowest incomes of about £823 compared with £296 for the richest.

Paul Johnson, director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS), said the intervention was well targeted to deal with the cost of living shock from soaring energy bills. “This is hugely redistributive – taking from high earners and giving to the poor,” he said.

Taken together with all three support packages announced by Sunak this year, the poorest 8m households in Britain are now expected to be entirely compensated for the rising cost of energy bills, with help worth £1,200 on average.

City economists warned that the chancellor offering £400 of support for even the wealthiest bill-payers – £200 announced in February, which will now not have to be repaid, plus the additional £200 – risked fuelling already high rates of inflation.

“The consequence of easing the pain now may be worse pain later on,” said Kallum Pickering, senior economist at Berenberg.

Tasked with keeping inflation low and stable while supporting jobs and growth, Threadneedle Street has raised the cost of borrowing four times this year to the highest level since after the 2008 financial crisis. Some analysts said the Bank would now be forced to raise rates further.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/may/26/sunak-u-turns-on-energy-profits-levy-in-15bn-cost-of-living-package>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

## 2022.05.27 - Spotlight

- [Rory Kinnear on humour, horror and trauma ‘I went in the truck and there was my skull again, sent to haunt me’](#)
- [Stranger Things 4 review bigger, better and more gruesome than ever](#)
- [Lizards or snakes? The stark game of survival playing out in Ibiza](#)
- [Cost of living crisis Concern in Merseyside as price rises hit](#)

Advertisement

US edition

- [US edition](#)
- [UK edition](#)
- [Australian edition](#)
- [International edition](#)

[The Guardian - Back to home](#)[The Guardian: news website of the year](#)

[Movies](#)

Interview

## Rory Kinnear on humour, horror and trauma: ‘I went in the truck and there was my skull again, sent to haunt me’

[Claire Armitstead](#)



Rory Kinnear: 'I never really expected to be playing Hamlet.' Photograph: Alicia Canter/The Guardian

The actor has found a niche playing multiple characters in one scene, never more so than playing five in his new film Men. He talks about grief making him old before his time – and why niceness is back



[@carmitstead](#)

Fri 27 May 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 27 May 2022 11.40 EDT

You can never be sure who you are going to meet when you interview an actor. Will it be the leery landowner with prosthetic teeth and nice little holiday mansion, the lank-haired, hand-wringing vicar, or perhaps the phantasmagorical green man who lets it all hang out? Rory Kinnear is all of these – and more besides – in his latest film, Men, a creepy symbolist horror mashup written and directed by [Alex Garland](#). But the man who has just walked across London to be photographed and interviewed – no minders in tow – looks about as threatening as a fine spring day, and is so refreshingly personable that by the end of the photoshoot he has winkled a confidence out of the photographer that even her family don't yet know.

Kinnear plays no fewer than eight men in the film, a sleight of hand, body and face that culminates in a pub scene with five of them drinking together

at the bar. How is that even possible? “It was quite lo-fi actually,” he says. “It was basically a question of camera angles and having to stand in certain places, with five stand-ins for the characters that I was playing, all of whom were dressed similarly and aged similarly. We’d do the scene five ways and I’d only be playing one of the characters. But it also places a lot of limitations on you: like you can’t stray over there, because that will cost us another 20 grand in post-production.”

It’s all in a day’s work for one of the UK’s most versatile actors. “Weirdly,” he says, “I’ve now done multiple multiple versions of myself in a scene; it was my fourth time doing it, which is an odd niche to have found oneself in, but it means I sort of know the score now. It’s quite laborious, but also fun.”

As “the Creature”, in one episode of the cult horror series [Penny Dreadful](#), he played three versions of himself in a padded cell – “just me and Eva Green and no yellow contact lenses, which was nice, because it meant I could actually see her”. In Steve Pemberton and Reece Shearsmith’s black comedy [Inside No 9](#), he was a Shakespearean pair of long-lost twin brothers. Immediately after Men, he hopped over to the US for a comedy series, [Our Flag Means Death](#), in which he again played twins. Among other things, it meant being stalked by his own 3D printed skull, through a succession of makeup trucks. For Men, there were several such trucks, draped with wigs and prosthetics. “Then I walked into a makeup truck on the set for Our Flag Means Death and there was my skull, sent to haunt me again.”



Kinnear in Men. Photograph: Landmark Media/Alamy

Kinnear's co-star in the film is [Jessie Buckley](#), who plays Harper, a woman haunted by the fallout from an abusive marriage, who seeks sanctuary in an idyllic Cotswolds hideaway, only to find it besieged by personifications of her worst nightmares. Among them are a priest and a policeman, the very people to whom women in danger are most likely to run. But although both institutions have seldom been far from the headlines in recent years as agencies of an out-of-control patriarchy, Kinnear is loth to pin the film down to any one political message. "It'd be a little bit too simplistic to say: 'Gosh, aren't men bad?' I don't think that's what it's doing," he insists. "It's a portrait of men through the eyes of a woman who's just suffered a traumatic event because of what we see to be an abusive relationship. So it starts in that grief, and post-trauma, and I think it's reflecting on what trauma does to the way that one person sees the world. It's the story of Harper's experience."

So what sort of man is Kinnear? He became part of the pandemic narrative with a couple of initially loving, then angry, articles about the death from Covid of his disabled sister, Karina, [whose funeral was on the day](#) of one of the Downing Street parties. He had felt consoled, he wrote, by the sense of solidarity. "Pain like ours was tearing through families the world over. So, in

some ways, it felt like we were all in it together. Well, not *all* of us, it turns out. Not *them*.”

Inevitably, he says now, he was shaped by a childhood in which he not only had an older sister with severe learning difficulties, but also lost his father – the actor Roy Kinnear – in a freak film-set accident when he was 10 years old. “I had a very strong-willed and loving mother and two loving sisters, and when I grew up, quite often there’d be a nurse or a carer in the house. I went to an all-boys school, but I was from an all-women house, so, even at 13 or 14, I guess I wasn’t necessarily aligning myself with traditional masculine roles. I wasn’t massively into sport. I did drama and I liked books, but that felt just as much male as female behaviour at that time; it didn’t bother me.”



With Nancy Carroll in *Man of Mode* at the National Theatre. Photograph: Tristram Kenton/The Guardian

Acting was a family business: his mother, [Carmel Cryan](#), was in *EastEnders* for a while; his godfather was Michael Williams, the husband of Judi Dench (who took on the role after her husband’s death and still sends him birthday presents), so becoming an actor wasn’t such a distant dream. But the turmoil of bereavement had put an old head on young shoulders and he didn’t go to drama school until after graduating with a degree in English from Oxford.

“I felt like I wouldn’t get anywhere until I was about 40, because I felt about 40 when I was 14, and so I just presumed that I’d have to wait for my body to catch up with my sense of who I was,” he says. “Everything that happened before that was a pleasant surprise. I never really expected myself to be playing Hamlet and stuff like that.” But play him he did, winning one of a string of theatre awards that includes an Olivier for an exquisite restoration dandy, Sir Fopling Flutter, in *The Man of Mode* and [a double whammy in the 2014 Critics’ Circle awards](#) as an actor (Iago in *Othello*) and the author of the year’s [most promising debut play](#), a close-to-home piece about a family with a disabled child.

Kinnear is 44, the father of two young children. His early heroics and foppish falderals have been shoved aside by sinister character parts such as the MI6 operative Bill Tanner in the James Bond films and the British fascist leader Colin Jordan in the recent TV miniseries [Ridley Road](#). But he loves a laugh and goes misty-eyed when he talks about showing his small son the 1971 film *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory* for the first time, with his dad playing the father of Veruca Salt. “There’s dad doing a bit of a pratfall as he goes down the egg chute, my son just laughing and making me replay and replay it,” he says. “What a wonderful legacy that is. Fifty years after he’s done this pratfall, the grandson he never met is laughing away.”

His own sense of humour is “quite dark”, he says. He has a much-repeated party gag about wanting to be a butcher when he was small because the local butcher’s missing finger proved his love of the job. He laughs like a naughty child when I tell him the critic sitting next to me at a screening of *Men* greeted the appearance of a decaying stag by loudly asking: “And is that [Rory Kinnear](#), too?”

It’s a humour he shares with Buckley, as they discovered when they were holed up together for rehearsals in the Cotswolds home of Garland’s dad, and later after each day’s filming in a Cheltenham hotel, with the world locked down around them. “It was definitely one of the most intense experiences in terms of a working relationship,” he says, “But luckily Jessie is one of the world’s best laughers.”

He looks back on the two pandemic years as the best and worst of times. It enabled him to spend a lot of time with his partner, the actor [Pandora Colin](#), and their children, but none with his dying sister. Likewise, as someone whose life has been shaped by an unnecessary accident (his father fell from a horse in a scene the stuntmen had refused to do), he is heartened by moves in the film world to make it a safer place, through innovations such as intimacy coordinators, even as the abuse cases keep rolling in. “I think there’s quite a lot of questioning around,” he says.

And then he launches into a riff, delivered in such a deadpan voice, and with such a poker face, that it’s hard to work out how serious he is being. “Everything really, over the last four or five years, has been about niceness. Obviously, people have different takes on it, and obviously there’s quite a lot of un-niceness around at the moment. A lot of politics has become un-nice, but it feels like we’re hoping to move to a nicer world, and there’s been a momentum shift. The move towards niceness is probably – um – nice.” Enough horror; give the man a political comedy slot.

Men is released in the UK on 1 June

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2022/may/27/rory-kinnear-on-humour-horror-and-trauma-i-went-in-the-truck-and-there-was-my-skull-again-sent-to-haunt-me>

Advertisement

US edition

- [US edition](#)
- [UK edition](#)
- [Australian edition](#)
- [International edition](#)

[The Guardian - Back to home](#)[The Guardian: news website of the year](#)

[TV review](#)[Television](#)

## Stranger Things 4 review – bigger, better and more gruesome than ever



Growing pains ... Charlie Heaton, Noah Schnapp and Finn Wolfhard in season 4 of Stranger Things. Photograph: Netflix

The goofy gang in Hawkins are back in a supersized series that is visually stunning, way more disturbing – and has the show's single greatest episode

## Jack Seale

Fri 27 May 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 27 May 2022 13.57 EDT

The press release accompanying volume four of *Stranger Things* makes a reckless boast: “Over five hours longer than any previous season!” The show is among Netflix’s biggest hits, but it returns at a time when the streaming platform’s business model – hook subscribers by hurling cash at bloated mega-shows, while deferring making any profit for as long as possible – is starting to creak. It feels rather provocative to trumpet that a knockabout sci-fi caper that was already in danger of treading water in its second and third seasons has been “supersized” – in other words, even vaster sums of money have disappeared into it.

Yet the gamble pays off. If large budgets are to be indulged, one wants to see them clearly on the screen, and that’s immediately the case as we cruise back into Hawkins, the small Indiana town perched on a portal to a monster-infested netherworld, in 1986. Simple scenes such as kids arriving at high school or visiting a roller disco have a new scope, with scores of impeccably retro-shod extras and just the right vintage cars or Formica fittings. The beautiful strip-mall shop fronts, a giant labour of love for some lucky set designer, deserve their own Instagram account. There are more characters and more locations (Nevada, California, Alaska, Russia) as the ensemble is split up and scattered, giving ST4 enough strands to sustain episodes that routinely stray beyond an hour each. Everything is unapologetically bigger.

More important, *Stranger Things* now has a supersized dramatic purpose, on the assumption that the 12-year-old viewers who were wowed by season 1 are now 18 and ready for darker meat. What was once a spooky but essentially cute thriller, in hock to Steven Spielberg, has taken on elements of full-blown horror inspired by [The Exorcist](#) and [A Nightmare on Elm Street](#). Limbs snap. Eyes are gouged. Unlike the old monsters who would spend most of the season unseen, rattling windows and making lights flicker, this year’s impressively realised fiend – a hideous humanoid with no nose, claws for hands and a house in the benighted realm that could really benefit from significant modernisation – is in full horrific effect from the get-go.



Sidelined ... Winona Ryder and Brett Gelman in *Stranger Things*.  
Photograph: Netflix

The coming of age of *Stranger Things* does not stop at the gruesome special effects, either. The opening minutes include a reflection on how Hawkins is a community damaged by tragedy – specifically a reference to the end of the third season, when several people died in an explosive three-way battle between rogue Russian agents, a creature called the “Mind Flayer” and a gang of resourceful children. But in a show returning after a pandemic-induced delay, the contemporary resonance is unmistakable.

Surprisingly, the show follows through on this idea, matching the narrative’s distressing visuals with a psychological depth that has previously been absent. The supernatural being preys on the kids’ worst memories, turning the main story into one about childhoods torn up by trauma. It can even be read as an allegory for teen suicide: episode four, the standout from the seven new ones and perhaps the show’s best single instalment ever, makes heartwrenching use of a montage of fun moments from episodes past, illustrating what would be lost if any of these goofy kids were overcome by their demons.

So what of the kids themselves? Where once they worried about who fancied whom, now they are experiencing proper dating issues such as fear

of commitment and the awkwardness of long-distance relationships. If on occasion these more adult themes are too much for the cast to cope with, the show's new structure, hopping gaily between four or five parallel stories, rides over the odd rough patch.



Rock god ... Joseph Quinn as Eddie Munson in *Stranger Things* 4.  
Photograph: Courtesy of Netflix

There are some casualties of the sprawling narrative: police chief Jim Hopper (David Harbour) is marooned in a Russian prison in a dead subplot that sucks scatty mom Joyce (Winona Ryder) and angry nerd Murray (Brett Gelman) into its black hole of cuttable material. The breakout star of season 3, Priah Ferguson as little sister Erica, is hardly in it, and the best new character – Joseph Quinn as long-haired Dungeons & Dragons freak Eddie Munson, a rock god who is less Hawkins, Indiana and more Justin Hawkins from the Darkness – blazes brightly for one episode before being chewed up in the gears of the plot.

But with CB-radio-wielding oddball Dustin (Gaten Matarazzo) still hacking computers, riffling through cassette tapes and forming half of the best odd-couple comedy duo on telly with Joe Keery as fallen high-school idol Steve, plenty of the old magic persists. *Stranger Things* is bigger, older, somewhat sadder – and as lovable as ever.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2022/may/27/stranger-things-4-review-bigger-better-and-more-gruesome-than-ever>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Advertisement

US edition

- [US edition](#)
- [UK edition](#)
- [Australian edition](#)
- [International edition](#)

[The Guardian - Back to home](#)[The Guardian: news website of the year](#)

[The age of extinction](#)[Global development](#)

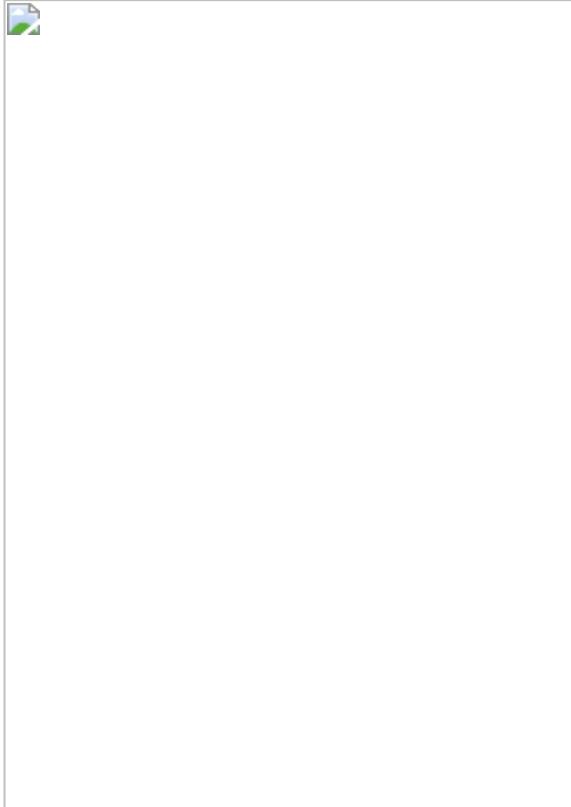
## Lizards or snakes? The stark game of survival playing out in Ibiza



A captured horseshoe whipsnake in Ibiza: they are threatening to wipe out the island's native wall lizard population. Photographs: Patricia Escriche/the Guardian

The growing trend for imported olive trees has brought hoards of invasive snakes to the Spanish island, threatening the future of its wall lizard

The age of extinction is supported by



[About this content](#)

[Sam Jones](#) in Ibiza

[@swajones](#)

Fri 27 May 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 27 May 2022 13.57 EDT

Far below the Ibiza sun, a solitary lizard fidgets across the baking rocks on the southern tip of the island, happily oblivious to what may lurk ahead.

After 6m years of isolated evolution, the Ibiza wall lizard, whose scaly finery runs from cobalt blue to acid green, is facing an existential threat summed up in the Catalan phrase *sargantanes o serps*: lizards or snakes. Over the past two decades, the wall lizards have completely disappeared from some areas of Ibiza and the neighbouring island of Formentera thanks to the rapid proliferation of invasive, non-venomous horseshoe whipsnakes and ladder snakes.

“The density of the lizard population across the islands used to be very, very high,” says Antònia María Cirer, an Ibizan biologist who has studied the reptiles since the late 1970s. “It was extraordinary. There were so many that if you sat down anywhere to eat a sandwich or a piece of fruit, the crumbs would bring the lizards out straight away.”

That began to change about 20 years ago. Until then, the islands had been snake-free apart from the odd interloper that arrived with freight. According to scientists, conservationists and the Balearic government, the fateful moment for the lizards came when wealthy property-owners in Ibiza and Formentera developed a taste for adorning their gardens with ancient olive trees imported from mainland [Spain](#) and beyond.



Horseshoe whipsnakes came to Ibiza in olive trees imported from the Spanish mainland. They now threaten the island's native species. Photograph: Patricia Escriche/The Guardian

Beautiful as the non-native trees are, they have served as Trojan horses for the ophidian onslaught, their cracks and hollows perfect compartments for laying eggs and hibernating. The snakes have adapted quickly to their new environment and its menu – lizards make up 56% of their diet and are now threatened by the newcomers' voracious appetite.

"If they've managed to colonise half the island in 20 years, then the snakes are likely to spread around the rest of the island in less than 20 more years," says Cirer. "It would be a very quick extinction for the lizards. It's not just that they're eating the lizards; it's that they're pushing them out of their habitat."

Cirer says the lizards are an important species, whose biological value is on a par with that of the [finches Charles Darwin found on the Galápagos islands](#). Each of the dozens of islands and islets that make up [the Pityusic islands](#) has a different population and, on many of them, the lizards' colouration is unique and exclusive to that island.

"Every link in the evolutionary chain is still present," she says. "And we still haven't had time to do a genetic study of how their evolution has worked. But we're going to lose some of these links before that can be done."



The Ibiza wall lizard was once found everywhere on the island, but they are the main prey of the invasive snakes and are now under threat. Photograph: Patricia Escriche/The Guardian

Although efforts are underway to get rid of the snakes, the scale of the challenge is immense. The regional government's wildlife teams captured 8,274 ladder snakes and horseshoe whipsnakes on Ibiza and Formentera between 2016 and 2021, but there is more work than they can handle.

Dean Gallagher, a British-Australian teacher and property manager who has lived in Ibiza for 15 years, is one of those taking up the slack. As well as catching the snakes – a skill he picked up as a child in Australia – he is working to educate people about the reptiles.

“I think the authorities are trying as much as they possibly can, but this is a new situation,” he says. “They’re still learning; I’m still learning; everyone’s still learning. But more residents of the island need to accept that this is the new reality, get over their fear of snakes and reptiles and become more aware of issues facing the ecological balance of the island.”



Dean Gallagher, who learned how to handle snakes as a child in Australia, lets a captured horseshoe whipsnake coil around his arm Photograph: Patricia Escriche/The Guardian

Between May and September last year, Gallagher recovered and euthanised 365 snakes. As the weather grows warmer and more snakes emerge, he is finding himself in ever-greater demand.

The first call on a recent Saturday, his busiest day, takes him to a snake trap on a remote property in the mountains. He takes a 70cm horseshoe whipsnake out of the compartment that separates it from the bait mice and lets it coil around his arm to calm it down. The snake is enervated and its neck scrawny, suggesting it is malnourished.

When the time comes to put the snake down, Gallagher stuns it with a blow to the head and then dashes its brains with a rock. Before he does so, he says a few solemn words that he will repeat a dozen times that day: "Sorry mate. Come back as a bird or a lizard." With that, he casts its body into the cloud-covered valley below as food for the birds. Larger snakes, of which there will be more as the day wears on, are buried.

Gallagher says that while "99.5% of people are on board" with eradicating the snakes, a small number think nature should be left to take its course.

“But the reality is that we have to make a stark choice between the snakes and the lizards. The two cannot peacefully coexist and the snakes will decimate the lizard population if nothing is done.”



A snake trap on Ibiza uses a mouse as bait. Spain’s environment ministry is hoping to develop more efficient traps. Photograph: Patricia Escriche/The Guardian

Both Gallagher and Cirer would like a much stricter approach to live imports – including a quarantine period to detect snakes arriving in trees – but the regional government says EU rules on free movement of goods make that difficult.

“We’re talking to specialist environmental lawyers to see whether there might be a legal way to restrict the entry of ornamental plants that are susceptible to bringing snakes into Ibiza and Formentera,” says a spokesperson for the Balearic islands environment department. “We’re confident that all these efforts will help us to reduce the snake populations in the islands, even if the chances of completely eradicating them are slim.”

Spain’s national environment ministry says it has been channelling funds into tackling invasive snakes in the two Balearic islands – and in the Canaries, where the [native lizards are under threat](#) from another invasive

species, the California kingsnake. It is also hoping to develop traps that are more efficient.



Dean Gallagher throws the body of a horseshoe whipsnake into the valley so it can be eaten by the birds. Photograph: Patricia Escriche/The Guardian

Another step towards protecting the sargantanes would be to move them up the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) red list. A spokesperson for the IUCN says that while [the lizards are classified as “near threatened”](#), a reassessment is underway and will take into account the threat posed by the snakes. The review is expected to be published early next year.

Although the eradication effort has already led to noticeable reductions in some areas of Ibiza, the situation remains critical: on the day the Guardian visited, 11 snakes and just three lizards were spotted.

Gallagher is gearing up for another long summer season and is already getting twice as many calls as this time last year. “One day last week, I extracted 11 snakes from five or six different properties,” he says. “The callouts are constant.”

Cirer, whose affection for the lizards is deep, welcomes plans to set up a reserve for them on the south-west of the island. But she warns that far more

needs to be done, because the loss of these vivid little lizards would be felt far beyond the Balearics.

“We’re at risk of losing a species that has an extraordinary biodiversity value,” she says. “Yes, the Spanish government and the people of Ibiza have a responsibility to protect this species, but if it’s lost, it’s lost to the whole world.”

*Find more [age of extinction coverage here](#), and follow biodiversity reporters [Phoebe Weston](#) and [Patrick Greenfield](#) on Twitter for all the latest news and features*

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/may/27/snakes-or-lizards-stark-game-of-survival-ibiza-aoe>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

## Cost of living crisis

# Concern in Merseyside as the cost of living crisis hits

From Bootle to Formby, people are worried about bills and frustrated Sunak's measures were not introduced sooner

- [Cost of living payments – key measures at a glance](#)



Aziz Sherzad, owner of Formby General Store: 'People will end up footing the bill. They always do.' Photograph: Jane MacNeil/The Guardian

*[Sophie Zeldin-O'Neill](#)*

Fri 27 May 2022 04.02 EDTFirst published on Fri 27 May 2022 02.00 EDT

"We've been here for six generations and this is the first time we're facing a threat to our existence," says Kevin Hewlett of Hewlett Butchers in Crosby, Sefton, pointing to a photo of the original shop opposite the site of the Liver Building in 1859.

“Chicken prices have doubled in eight months, and we’re not alone in feeling the pinch. In the last six months the village has lost its post office and pharmacy.”

Hewlett, whose father died in the pandemic and was only able to have 10 people at the funeral, says he has lost all faith in the government to provide sufficient support amid the escalating economic crisis.



Butcher Kevin Hewlett: ‘Chicken prices have doubled.’ Photograph: Jane MacNeil/The Guardian

Walking the 10 miles from Bootle, an area of relative deprivation, through Crosby and up to well-to-do Formby, north of the city, no one is immune to soaring living costs.

Since the chancellor, [Rishi Sunak](#), announced on Thursday that he would be imposing a windfall tax on energy companies – a move initially suggested by Labour to ease soaring electricity and gas costs – it seems the overall mood in Merseyside and Liverpool is not one of relief, but of frustration that the measures were not introduced sooner.



Julie and Terrence Murphy in Bootle: ‘It’s a worrying time.’ Photograph: Jane MacNeil/The Guardian

Many residents of Bootle and surrounding areas are already having to take on second jobs, use food banks, and come out of retirement to make ends meet.

Shopping in the Strand centre, Jeanette Redmond says her disposable income has shrunk to nothing. “All the nice things are being squeezed from life,” she says, adding that as costs have increased, wages have remained stagnant. Redmond is accompanied by a friend, Ann Mills, who says that as a widow in her 70s, she is still having to work just to survive.

Further along the high street, Terrence and Julie Murphy are shopping together, and say that while they feel there are people “far worse off” than them, “it’s a worrying time, that won’t just be felt by the poorest”.

Heading north to Crosby’s south road, barber Darren Finnegan says he has been extremely conscious of the need to keep a close eye on his energy use and cut back where he can. “So far, it’s just been small steps like hanging the washing on the line rather than using the dryer, but we are going to need to take more serious measures to get through the winter,” he says, adding that

the Partygate scandal has left him cynical about the steps being taken by those in power to protect “the average Joe”.



Darren Finnegan, a barber, is cynical about the steps taken by those in power to protect ‘the average Joe’. Photograph: Jane MacNeil/The Guardian

As [Liverpool](#) FC prepares to face Real Madrid on Saturday in the Champions League final, football is providing a welcome distraction from the financial worries most are grappling with. Elizabeth Cash, walking near the docks in her Liverpool FC shirt, shares with enthusiasm the news that Iceland is offering a 10% discount on Tuesdays for the over-60s, something that she said would make a significant difference to her day-to-day costs. “It really does feel like a choice between ‘eat or heat’ at the moment. I can’t remember anything like it in my lifetime.”

Though younger than Cash and working in a well-paid profession, barrister and mother-of-two Helen Richardson says that working from home has left her anxious about what her bills will look like come winter. “I think we will see a number of professional households going into debt in the next year,” she predicts. “Something’s got to give,” she says, adding, “I’m one of the lucky ones.”



Elizabeth Cash: 'I can't remember anything like it in my lifetime.'  
Photograph: Jane MacNeil/The Guardian

Arriving finally at Formby, a pretty village lined with bunting, where branches of M&S Simply Food and Waitrose jostle against a wealth management firm and a yoga studio, it feels logical to expect a community with very different priorities. As it turns out, local people are far from immune to the changes.

Suzanne, who doesn't want to provide her surname, says that having been successfully self-employed before the pandemic, she has found herself on benefits and universal credit, and resorting to using food banks. "After Covid, this latest crisis has left me feeling paralysed," she says. "It's just one thing after another, and now it's impacting on my mental health."



Helen Richardson: ‘Something’s got to give.’ Photograph: Jane MacNeil/The Guardian

Even the jovial manager of Formby General Store, Aziz Sherzad, is sceptical that the measures will be sufficient in the longer term, saying some of his regular customers have already started cutting back on everyday items like bleach and toiletries.

Serving customers as they queue to buy household essentials, he concludes: “The people will end up footing the bill. They always do.”

This article was amended on 27 May 2022. Bootle is just to the north of Liverpool, not “in the south of Liverpool” as an earlier version said. And while Bootle, Crosby and Formby are in the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority area, they are located in Sefton rather than Liverpool, and the headline and text have been changed to reflect this.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/may/27/what-does-a-walk-across-liverpool-reveal-about-the-cost-of-living-crisis>

## 2022.05.27 - Opinion

- Rampant inflation breaks the status quo – no wonder the government is spooked
- Columbine happened 23 years ago. How is America still no further forward?
- Putin's bombs were supposed to break us in Ukraine. They are doing the opposite
- Stop abuse of migrant workers before Britain becomes the next Dubai

## OpinionInflation

# Rampant inflation breaks the status quo – no wonder the government is spooked

[Andy Beckett](#)

Soaring prices are familiar to older Britons. But their return could lead a fragile, divided country into uncharted territory



Illustration: Nate Kitch/The Guardian

Fri 27 May 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 27 May 2022 12.57 EDT

When a government pinches a key opposition policy it has spent months deriding, and which goes directly against its ideology, you know something pretty big is going on. The Tories' screeching U-turn over a [windfall tax](#) on energy companies in order to fund payments to “ease” the cost of living crisis is in part a typically crude attempt to change the subject from Partygate. But it is also a more revealing signal: that the government has, belatedly, become very worried about the politics of inflation.

It is right to be. For a lot of voters, many of them Tories, high inflation is very frightening. Savings shrivel. Pay rises are rarely enough. Investing safely seems impossible. State benefits are even less sufficient than usual. Luxuries, small treats and even essentials become unaffordable. The whole process of personal enrichment promised by capitalism goes into reverse. The solidity of money – the basis for so much of our lives – is revealed as an illusion. It becomes clear that money can decay, like everything else.

High inflation makes people angry. The last time Britain had a sustained period of it, from the early 1970s to the early 1980s, rightwing politicians, commentators and voters often described it as a disease, and claimed it was caused by trade unionists' greed and the profligacy of Labour governments. It was seen as a sign of decadence, which might lead to a national collapse. "[Inflation is a great moral evil](#)," said Geoffrey Howe, Margaret Thatcher's severe first chancellor, in 1982. "Nations which lose confidence in their currency lose confidence in themselves."

Rishi Sunak announces £5bn windfall tax on energy firms to ease cost of living crisis – video

The UK currently has the [worst inflation](#) of any G7 nation. Further huge increases in food and fuel prices are seen as inevitable, such as the [£800 rise](#) in the energy price cap this October, which the energy regulator Ofgem predicted this week. "It's hard to overstate the scale of the cost of living crisis coming," warned the [Resolution Foundation](#) in March. The usually sober thinktank foresaw "the highest inflation in 40 years and the worst income squeeze on record".

This shock is beginning to be felt by a country that is much more unequal than in the 1970s, and which has many more vulnerable people. In 1975, about [13%](#) of UK residents were living in relative poverty. The figure is now [about 22%](#) – and our population is a fifth larger.

Unlike in the 1970s, average wages have already been stagnant or falling for over a decade. The climate crisis and commodity speculators are making surges in food prices more frequent. And the capacity of the state to respond to social emergencies has been weakened by 12 years of austerity. High

inflation may be familiar to older Britons, but its return could lead a fragile and divided country into uncharted territory.

What might be the politics of our new age of inflation? The fact that the government's new cost of living plan is its third in four months suggests that panic and improvisation will be the Conservative response. The latest measures are generous – up to £1,200 will go to the poorest households – but they may not be generous enough. This year's rise in the energy price cap is likely to be £1,500. And the price of energy is hardly the only thing that is going up. Nor do many forecasters expect inflation to fall quickly. We should probably expect further special announcements from Rishi Sunak.

That this time he had to rely so heavily on an idea from Labour suggests that the Tories are running out of inflation remedies. That their windfall tax – shamefacedly disguised as a “temporary targeted energy profits levy” – is more ambitious than Labour's also suggests that there may now be a bidding war between the parties over cost of living policies.

But they may struggle to keep up with the crisis regardless. In an inflationary era, social conditions can change fast. At the peak of the German hyperinflation in the 1920s, the price of a cup of coffee sometimes doubled in the time it took to drink it. There was panic-buying, hoarding and an increase in theft and prostitution. Politics became more polarised, and scapegoats were identified: immigrants, inadequate politicians, profiteering companies. Much of the energy of politics moved out of parliament and on to the streets, into protests, strikes and riots.

The UK is not anywhere near as feverish, yet, but it is showing some of the same symptoms. This week the RMT union voted for the first national rail strike in decades, partly because employers have “refused to keep staff pay in line with... soaring living costs”. Last week, the chief inspector of constabulary said police officers should use “discretion” when deciding whether to prosecute people who steal food.

But it is the impact of inflation on those used to being comfortably off that often makes it most politically disruptive. More than austerity and the slump in wages since 2010, it threatens people with assets – the voters on whom the Conservatives depend. In the inflationary 1970s, they formed aggressive,

often very rightwing lobby groups such as the Middle Class Association, campaigned against “spiteful” tax increases and the “disproportionate suffering” that price rises imposed on business owners and professionals, and ultimately helped radicalise the Conservative party. Nowadays, many middle class people are protected against inflation, to an extent, by the high value of their properties. But if the collapse in real incomes also causes house prices to fall, then the wrath of the middle classes will return.

And the old scapegoats for inflation are less available. The unions are smaller and weaker now. Labour is not in government. There is greed and decadence in this country, but centred on Johnson’s Downing Street and his favoured corporate interests. [Inflation](#) eats away the status quo, and today’s status quo is thoroughly Tory.

The process isn’t always fast. There were years of surging prices in the 1970s before there was a change of government. If the current crisis lasts, it’s possible to envisage a populist, anti-inflation party forming and calling for price caps on much more than energy. But our electoral system would limit its chances. Meanwhile, the disappearance of physical cash from our lives, accelerated by the pandemic, makes it easier to avoid thinking about how much our money is shrinking. As the sometimes docile years following the financial crisis demonstrated, our country often reacts to economic punishment less dramatically than doomy forecasters imagine.

Yet it does react in the end. After the financial crisis came the fall of Gordon Brown’s government, the 2011 riots, Corbynism and Brexit. By the time the cost of living crisis is over, this could be a different country.

- Andy Beckett is a Guardian columnist

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/may/27/rampant-inflation-breaks-the-status-quo-no-wonder-the-government-is-spooked>

## [OpinionUS news](#)

# Columbine happened 23 years ago. How is America still no further forward?

[Hamilton Nolan](#)

There is no generous interpretation for the past 23 years of inaction. We all bear some of the blame



Students at Columbine high school in Littleton, Colorado, on 20 April 1999.  
Photograph: Hal Stoelzle/AP

Fri 27 May 2022 02.40 EDT Last modified on Fri 27 May 2022 02.41 EDT

If you want to ponder how deeply broken and dysfunctional our system of governance is, all you have to do is to reflect upon the fact that our nation experiences regular mass murders of schoolchildren by gunmen, and these mass murders are followed by no meaningful political action. To sit with that basic fact for even a few moments is to feel like you are beginning to lose your grip on reality. It sounds like the gut-roiling reveal from a horror movie, or a dystopian novel about the wealthiest country in the history of the

world, which has at its heart a horrible secret. We are that country, and our wealth is soaked in blood. Our learned helplessness on the issue of guns is so deeply rooted that many people – including, unfortunately, our elected leaders – cannot even see how much of our system must be ripped apart, if we ever want to stop seeing massacres.

It should make all of us queasy that we are still here, wringing our hands. The school shooting at Columbine happened 23 years ago. There is no generous interpretation for the past 23 years of inaction. We all bear some of the blame, in the sense that we have acquiesced to a cycle in which many of the people in charge today have failed over and over again to make serious gun control a reality, as thousands and thousands of Americans have lost their lives. But that's a little too pat to get at the heart of what is really happening.

The cold truth is that our political system does not care about dead children; it cares about money. We don't have gun control for the same reason we don't have many other things that are plainly necessary and good and that would save many lives, like public healthcare: because not having those things enables a certain group of people to get rich. And that class of rich people funds an even smaller class of politicians, who are tasked with protecting their interests, in exchange for living the nice life of a congressman or governor.

This straightforward and cozy arrangement, multiplied by many dozens of industries, is at the heart of how our political system operates. It just happens to be the case that the weapons industry forces its handpicked politicians to step over dead bodies before they walk into the office. It's clear by now that no matter how many murdered children are laid at their doorstep, they are untroubled by taking that step.

Americans own more than [twice](#) as many guns per capita as any other country on earth, a good demonstration of what happens when you give unfettered capitalism an entire constitutional amendment to use as an advertising slogan. We have allowed ourselves to become a paranoid and insane nation, where millions of people arm themselves because they live in fear of the millions of other people who armed themselves in fear. At the

heart of this circular firing squad, smiling, sits the gun industry, which sold nearly 20m guns in America last year alone, earning itself tens of billions of dollars. What separates the gun industry from more mundane businesses is that in order to sustain and grow itself, it must foster both a constant atmosphere of fear, tied together with a carefully nurtured sense of grievance. Customers must be afraid – afraid of imaginary home invaders, and afraid that any gun control measure will deprive them of the ability to defend their families from imminent death. Such fear is good for business. The fact that this deliberately provoked thirst for self-defense is itself fueling the countless bloody deaths of innocent people is just a cost of doing business for gun manufacturers, who would prefer that you not recognize or remark upon the grim irony of it at all.

The paranoid heart of all of this is the NRA, which turns money into political influence and has done more than any other organization to keep us all trapped in this nightmare. Despite their best efforts, though, a majority of Americans say they support stricter gun laws. The average citizen's experience of a gun is far more likely to be being shot by one, or killing themselves with one, or having a family member or friend do so, than it is to be some “good guy with a gun” fantasy of saving innocents from crime. So why, after all of the logic and outrage and dead bodies, are we still in the same miserable place?

Marches are not going to change it. We have marched. Anguished people full of pain and loss marched for gun control after the mass shootings at Columbine, and at Virginia Tech, and at Sandy Hook, and at Parkland, and in Las Vegas. The worst pictures imaginable and the greatest grief on earth have not changed it. The system is immune to this sort of influence. So we need to change the system. That means that when we speak of gun control, we need to speak of campaign finance reform, to prevent a heartless and deadly industry from buying a protective shield of venal congressmen who exist to block any bills that might save lives at the cost of reducing profits. When we speak of gun control, we need to speak of ending gerrymandering, so that political minorities cannot consolidate power in ways that prevent desperately needed reforms from being passed.

When we speak of gun control, we need to speak of how the existence of the US Senate gives white, rural states disproportionate power, and we need to

speak of how the cynical pleas for “civility” towards the powerful serve to insulate them from the consequences of their own policies, and we need to speak of how unregulated capitalism has allowed behemoth tech companies to suck so much money out of the journalism industry that the public doesn’t hear these things spoken about much at all.

We need to talk about the whole system. When we find ourselves in a situation so interminably resistant to change in the face of the most extreme catastrophes, the problem is that we have built a system that serves money instead of humans. March for gun control, by all means. But then turn your attention to the companies and the politicians who live well while so many people die, and think about what it is going to take to dislodge them from the place they have been perched so comfortably for so long. Reality is proof that we are not yet radical enough. We have an entire political system that doesn’t work. We need to break it in order to change it. If we can’t do that, the price is more broken bodies.

- Hamilton Nolan is a writer in New York City. He is currently writing a [book](#) about the labor movement
- 

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/may/27/columbine-gun-violence-america-gun-control>

## OpinionUkraine

# **Putin's bombs were supposed to break us in Ukraine. They are doing the opposite**

[Nataliya Gumenyuk](#)

Amid the horror, we Ukrainians have become kinder towards each other. We are planning ahead – and still determined to win



A badly damaged residential block in Saltivka, Kharkiv, Ukraine, 25 May 2022. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Fri 27 May 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 27 May 2022 13.19 EDT

For the last three months, 600 people have slept in the Heroiv Pratsi metro station in Kharkiv, north-east [Ukraine](#). The city lies just 40km (25 miles) from the Russian border and has been heavily shelled since the first day of the invasion. Last week, the mayor of Kharkiv urged the temporary residents of Heroiv Pratsi to return to their homes. I first visited Heroiv Pratsi in mid-

March, and recently returned to the metro station a few days before the mayor's announcement. I was amazed by how well-maintained people's temporary sleeping areas had become since my previous visit. Bouquets of lilac and daffodils had been placed next to almost every mattress.

Nina Maksymivna, an 80-year-old woman who had been staying in Heroiv Pratsi [on my last visit](#), was still sleeping by the stairs in the same place where I had met her in March. Aside from very brief forays outside, she had barely left the underground in two months. It's still possible to hear sounds of distant explosions in the area. For her, they were too close to feel safe. The Ukrainian army pushed the Russians back from Kharkiv's outskirts in early May, but local fighting continues.

At 3am during my night in Kharkiv city centre, I was awoken by a loud bang. Still, I'm told this was nothing compared to how the city felt weeks ago. In Saltivka, the most damaged neighbourhood of Kharkiv, which had been inaccessible for some time, all that remains are empty buildings and burnt-out blocks. Russian troops are still stationed less than a mile away. On my recent visit, I met residents returning to check whether any of their belongings had survived. Men and women were cleaning the streets, some obviously shocked to see what remained. A local shipping company was helping people to move fridges and TV sets. "Long live Saltivka," one of their guys, who was loading a lorry, shouted to me as I passed.

Almost two million people were living in Kharkiv at the start of the war. There are still more than a million left, and many more are now returning. The Kyiv to Kharkiv express trains are now packed. For Ukrainians, the decision to return is rational, but only if two conditions are met: first, if your house survived the shelling, and your water and electricity supply are fixed. Second, if there's still a chance of getting a job. After three months of war, people's savings are depleted. Many working-age adults are returning home to Kharkiv, leaving family members and friends to look after kids and elderly relatives in safer towns. But it's especially hard for families where relatives have joined the army.

Compared to Kharkiv, my native Kyiv feels strangely normal, despite the curfew, the not yet fully operational public transport, and the occasional air-raid siren. Yet the war still goes on. The major battles are being fought in Donbas, in the south of Ukraine. In the newly occupied area around the southern city of Kherson, people are being kidnapped and tortured. I covered the Russian invasion of Donbas and Crimea in 2014. My biggest fear now is that Ukrainians in Kyiv and the west of the country will get used to the distant battles unfolding hundreds of kilometres away, and ignore the war. Last time, the unresolved conflicts in Donbas and Crimea became a pretext for the Kremlin's full-scale attack.

Yet, finding myself recently at a small party in Kyiv, I know this time it's different: there is nobody in the country untouched by the war. At the party, I spoke to one of Ukraine's most famous travel bloggers, who is now making stories not from exotic far-flung locations, but from [liberated Ukrainian towns](#). He is originally from occupied Luhansk, in the east. Every one of us at the party had a friend who had been killed, lost a house, became a refugee or is fighting on the frontline.

As a conflict reporter I know that wars cause societies to disintegrate. But from what I've seen, Ukrainians, and in particular Kyiv residents (who were previously known for their briskness and focus on work), have become kinder and warmer. The discussions that prevail are about rebuilding the country for the better. Professionals who helped with the logistics during the first months of the military invasion are now figuring out how their skills might be useful in a new environment. My cousin, an architect, recently called to tell me how his university mates have been united in developing a plan for rebuilding the country's demolished infrastructure.

I find it hardest to interact with foreign experts and analysts. One veteran reporter from the Balkans recently told me that the longer the war lasted, the less she could understand its goal. Perplexed, I responded that Ukrainians saw the goal even more clearly now than before: to defend cities from invasion while ensuring the fewest possible casualties and to liberate the occupied territories, where the atrocities have been greatest.

Despite the many positive surprises we have seen during the war – including the strength of the Ukrainian army, which has shown itself to be more

efficient compared to Russia's poorly organised troops – for Ukrainians, it is going on exactly as we imagined. We knew that if we were attacked, it would last a long time. I've heard many times that Ukrainians should manage their expectations, and that “compassion fatigue” is inevitable from the west. But Ukrainians aren't asking for compassion: we're asking for solidarity. We're fighters, not powerless victims.

Yes – Ukrainians are adjusting to the war, and trying to make daily life more bearable, as the people who put flowers near their beds in the Kharkiv metro attest. But this doesn't mean we have to normalise the conflict. Discussions about rebuilding the country and victory come not from naivety: they are rooted in the knowledge that we can't afford to waste energy and time explaining why things are impossible. We need to preserve our strength to prove the opposite is true.

In Kyiv, I recently passed by a bookstore that was still open. It sold funny socks with infamous phrases such as “Russian ship, go fuck yourself”. On the label of one pair was written: “Made of 92% cotton, 8% Lycra, and 100% trust in Ukraine”.

- Nataliya Gumenyuk is a Ukrainian journalist specialising in foreign affairs and conflict reporting, and the author of *Lost Island: Tales from the Occupied Crimea* (2020)
- 

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/may/27/kharkiv-ukrainians-shelling-fighters-victims>

---

## Rights and freedomWorkers' rights

# Stop abuse of migrant workers before Britain becomes the next Dubai

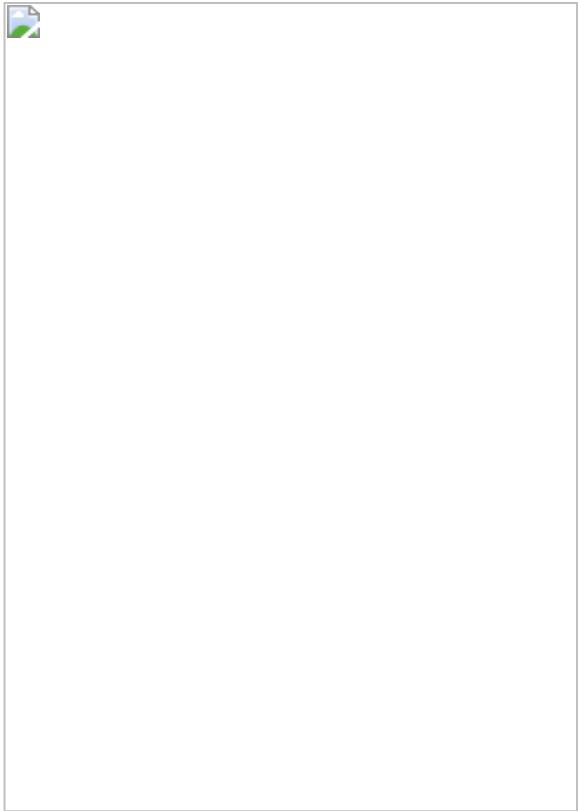
[Pete Pattisson](#)

Exploitation common in the Gulf is emerging in the UK – and will only get worse without government intervention



Severe labour shortages after Brexit and Covid-19 have forced the government to look beyond Europe for seasonal workers. Photograph: Ben Stansall/AFP/Getty Images

Supported by



## About this content

Fri 27 May 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 27 May 2022 04.14 EDT

Impoverished migrant workers forced to pay thousands of pounds in illegal recruitment fees, housed in squalid accommodation and unable to leave their jobs voluntarily. Is this [Qatar?](#) [UAE?](#) [Saudi Arabia?](#) No, it's post-Brexit Britain.

Revelations that Nepali workers have allegedly been [forced to pay extortionate fees](#) to agents in Nepal for their jobs on a British farm supplying some of our leading supermarkets are just the latest in a series of shocking

reports. Such cases expose how the UK is adopting practices commonly seen in the Gulf, a region with an appalling record of labour abuse.

Severe labour shortages in the wake of Brexit and the pandemic have forced the government to look beyond Europe. Its seasonal worker scheme, which offers short-term visas for farm work, is now recruiting from more than 50 countries – as far afield as Barbados, Tajikistan and Nigeria, as well as Nepal. The scheme began with about 2,500 workers in 2019 and may recruit as many as 40,000 this year.

But testimonies from migrant workers hired through the scheme sound uncomfortably like those I have heard countless times in the Gulf.

A Ukrainian employed on a British farm said she was forced to cover the costs of her own recruitment and duped into signing a contract she didn't fully understand. When workers staged a protest, they were punished by being suspended for a week.

A government review of the pilot year of the scheme published late last year found workers subjected to “unacceptable” conditions, including racist abuse, accommodation without running water and contracts not in their own language.

The scheme requires workers to pay for their own flights and visas, in breach of International Labour Organization guidelines, which state that the employer should pay all fees and related recruitment costs. Add to these payments the illegal recruitment fees some workers allege they have been charged, and it is clear that many are arriving in this country deep in debt.

The cost of the visa, flights and fees incurred by one Nepali worker amounted to almost a third of what she earned during her six months on a farm. And, just as in the Gulf, there is no sign that any of the Nepali migrant workers who were forced to pay to secure jobs on UK farms will be compensated.

The parallels with working conditions in the Gulf extend beyond the agricultural sector. A recent report by the University of Nottingham Rights

Lab found non-European migrant fishers working on UK-flagged fishing vessels being paid on average £3.50 an hour (after their recruitment debt had been accounted for). A majority reported working a minimum of 16 hours a shift, and over a third said they “experienced regular physical violence”.

The most criticised labour practice in the Gulf has been [the kafala system](#), under which workers are unable to leave their jobs without their employer’s permission, leaving them open to gross exploitation.

Similar practices can be found in the UK. In March the Guardian revealed that some foreign nurses working for NHS trusts and private care homes were being forced to [pay thousands of pounds if they wanted to leave](#), or change jobs, before the end of their contracts, a condition one anti-slavery expert likened to debt bondage.

To be clear, the scale and severity of labour abuses in the UK is still significantly less than in the Gulf. Wages in particular are far better in the UK, where most migrant workers enjoy at least the minimum wage of £9.50 an hour; in Qatar, for example, the minimum wage is the equivalent of just £1 an hour plus food and a dorm bed.

Migrant workers like the Nepalis on our farms are willing to pay the costs – legal and illegal – for the chance to earn UK wages, but in doing so they are effectively subsidising the price of the food in our supermarkets and the healthcare in our hospitals.

The recruitment of foreign workers can benefit both the workers and the UK, but only if the government puts proper safeguards and funding in place. So far, it has done neither. Meanwhile, if you want a foretaste of labour conditions for migrant workers in the UK in the coming years, take a look at Doha and Dubai.

## **Share your experiences**

*Have you worked on a UK farm as part of the seasonal worker visa scheme?  
You*

*can get in touch by [filling in this encrypted form](#), anonymously if you prefer. Read terms of service [here](#) and privacy policy [here](#).*

*Your responses are secure as the form is encrypted and only the Guardian has access to your contributions.*

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/may/27/stop-abuse-of-migrant-workers-before-britain-becomes-the-next-dubai>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

## 2022.05.27 - Around the world

- [US Antony Blinken says Joe Biden is not seeking ‘cold war’ with China](#)
- [Turkey Plan to forcibly relocate Syrian refugees gains momentum](#)
- [Jacinda Ardern New Zealand PM addresses Harvard on gun control and democracy](#)
- [Taiwan People stuck with the name ‘Salmon’ after sushi promotion](#)
- [China Technology shares jump as Alibaba sales exceed forecasts](#)

[Antony Blinken](#)

## Antony Blinken says US is not seeking ‘cold war’ with China

US secretary of state vigorously defends existing global order but admits Washington sees Beijing a ‘long-term challenge’



Antony Blinken: ‘China is the only country with both the intent to reshape the international order – and, increasingly, the ... power to do it.’  
Photograph: Alex Wong/Getty Images

[Vincent Ni](#) China affairs correspondent

Thu 26 May 2022 12.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 26 May 2022 12.56 EDT

The US secretary of state, Antony Blinken, has called for a vigorous defence of the existing global order, but stressed that Joe Biden’s administration did not seek a “cold war” with [China](#).

“President Biden believes this decade will be decisive,” Blinken said in a [China](#) policy speech on Thursday. “The actions we take at home and with countries worldwide will determine whether our shared vision of the future will be realised.”

The Biden administration’s policy towards the world’s most populous country contained three words: invest, align and compete, Blinken said, adding that while the administration has devoted much of its resources to containing Moscow, Washington sees Beijing as a “long-term challenge”.

“China is the only country with both the intent to reshape the international order – and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military and technological power to do it,” he warned in the speech hosted by Asia Society’s Policy Institute – delayed from earlier this month due to his positive Covid test result.

Blinken said that the administration will work with American partners and allies to preserve that international order, and double down on investments into research and development. The US will also attract the best talents from around the world – including those from the People’s Republic of China, he said.

Blinken highlighted China’s violation of human rights, infringement of citizens’ privacy as well as [Xi Jinping’s “limitless” friendship with Vladimir Putin](#), noting that when the US president was in the region last week, Beijing and Moscow conducted military exercises in east Asia.

“Beijing’s vision would move us away from the universal values that have sustained so much of the world’s progress over the past 75 years,” he warned, reassuring smaller powers that Washington was not forcing other nations to pick a side, but rather “give them a choice”.

But Blinken acknowledged that Washington’s ability to directly influence China’s ambitions is limited. “So we will shape the strategic environment around Beijing to advance our vision for an open and inclusive international system,” he said.

Tensions between the world's two largest economies and military powers have continued to simmer in areas ranging from supply chains to geo-strategy in the Asia-Pacific region. This month, Biden visited allies Japan and South Korea and invited leaders from Asean nations for a summit in Washington, both of which drew ire from Beijing.

During his trip to Tokyo this week, [Joe Biden warned his administration would defend Taiwan if the island were attacked by China](#), in an off-the-cuff remark that raised eyebrows at home and abroad. On Thursday, Blinken accused China of conducting “deeply destabilising” actions around Taiwan.

Zhao Tong, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace based in Beijing, said that Blinken’s China speech on Thursday would not change Beijing’s perception about and its dealings with Washington significantly. “In Beijing’s view, the Biden administration has a darker heart than it is willing to admit,” Zhao said.

“The bottom line is: the existence of the serious perception gap is not yet recognised and is increasingly contributing to worst-case thinking about the US’s strategic intent [in China].”

[Joe Biden says US would defend Taiwan if attacked by China – video](#)

Before Blinken’s speech, China’s envoy to the US, Qin Gang, warned that his government considers the “one China principle” – which in Washington is called “one China policy” – as the “bedrock” of peace across the [Taiwan Strait](#).

“On an issue concerning China’s core interests, we will never compromise or back down. Any discussion in America about “strategic clarity” or “strategic ambiguity” is a waste of time,” he wrote in the Hong Kong-based [South China Morning Post](#) on Thursday.

Qin, who [early this year said](#) the two countries could face a “military conflict” over the future of Taiwan, wrote: “No one should underestimate our determination, resolve and capability to defend national sovereignty and territorial integrity.”

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/may/26/antony-blinken-china-us-cold-war>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

## [Turkey](#)

# Turkey's plan to forcibly relocate Syrian refugees gains momentum

President Erdoğan presses on with move by leveraging his Nato veto over Nordic states' accession



The move will gain President Recep Tayyip Erdogan approval ahead of Turkish elections. Photograph: Burhan Özbilici/AP

*[Martin Chulov](#) Middle East correspondent*

Fri 27 May 2022 00.30 EDT Last modified on Fri 27 May 2022 00.46 EDT

Turkey's plan to expand a buffer zone inside northern Syria and use it to relocate large numbers of refugees has gained momentum after officials endorsed a military push that analysts from both countries say will force demographic shifts inside Syria.

Though a timeline has not been decided, military and political leaders have confirmed that an extensive operation is being prepared to move Kurdish

populations away from Turkey's southern border and assert Turkish control as deep as 18 miles into northern [Syria](#).

While not explicitly stated, the move involves moving Syrian Arabs into the new zones, in which Turkey will secure economic influence and political approval on the home front ahead of elections next year. Kurdish populations that dominated the 500-mile border are set to lose more sway after being forced from key towns during three Turkish incursions in the past five years.

Plans for a new operation have taken rapid shape in recent weeks against a shifting geopolitical backdrop in Europe, where [Sweden and Finland's request to join Nato has given Turkey the chance to press its own domestic agendas.](#)

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan flagged the new push into northern Syria on Monday, claiming it would have the twin effect of defanging the Kurdistan Workers' party (PKK), which dominates northeastern Syria, and further weakening the Islamic State terror group. Earlier he had announced that up to 1 million Syrian refugees would be returned from Turkey.

Despite its implications for regional security, the announcement has met a muted response: the US has expressed "concern" but needs Turkish support for the Nordic states' ambitions to join the alliance.

Local considerations remain paramount for Erdoğan, who has led Turkey for two decades and faces a troubled economy and potentially his toughest re-election challenge yet in 2023. The issue of Syrian refugees on Turkish soil is one domestic issue he could capitalise on, as anti-refugee sentiment runs high and moves to repatriate some long-term Syrian residents winning political favour.

Turkish officials have claimed that up to 500,000 refugees have voluntarily returned to Syria in the past few years. However, that number is hotly contested, with refugee advocates saying the real figure is close to 80,000, and claiming that many have not returned of their own free will.

“Erdoğan’s statement that he plans to return 1 million refugees back to Syria falls squarely into the pre-election momentum and is just an example of how the file of Syrian refugees is instrumentalized at will,” said Lynn Maalouf, Amnesty International’s deputy regional director for the [Middle East and north Africa](#). “While refugees have been returning, some forcibly, in past years, were he to put such a plan in action it would be a gross breach of Turkey’s obligations [not to forcibly return refugees]”.

Asli Aydintaşbaş, senior fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations, said: “The US sensitivity about this is, I think about the Hasakah region (in northeastern Syria) where US soldiers remain. They wouldn’t want stability shaken there to hurt the fight with Isis.

“The geopolitical climate has become more conducive for Erdoğan to increase his demands. And outlining security concerns like this might result in concessions from the western counterparts, because of the Ukrainian war.

“The Syrians I talk to in Istanbul or other cities, they have been living here with their families, their livelihood is here and they don’t want to go back to Syria. I don’t see how clearing more buffer zones will create a momentum for return.”

Another Turkish analyst, international relations expert Soli Özel of Istanbul’s Kadir Has University, said the chances of a large incursion were low. “I don’t personally think it will be as large an operation as the government says. I don’t see a possibility of direct conflict between Turkish forces and the YPG (the main Kurdish group in northeastern Syria).

“For the last 12 years, Turkey has had foreign policy problems and it might be that these kinds of operations would be used as a political capital. In the Turkish press the details we see seems like a government wishlist, but I don’t personally think it will be in that scale.”

Samah Hadid, head of Middle East advocacy at the Norwegian Refugee Council, said: “The fact remains that Syrian refugees still need protection and asylum. No government should be forcibly returning and pushing them

into direct risk and insecurity. Vulnerable displaced Syrians should not be used as pawns in geopolitics.”

*Additional reporting by Gokce Saracoglu*

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/27/turkeys-plan-to-forcibly-relocate-syrian-refugees-gains-momentum>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

## [Jacinda Ardern](#)

# New Zealand PM Jacinda Ardern addresses Harvard on gun control and democracy

Ardern warns against ‘scourge of online disinformation’, and wins standing ovation for crackdown on weapons

Jacinda Ardern receives standing ovation for Harvard speech on gun control and democracy – video

*Australian Associated Press*

Thu 26 May 2022 21.05 EDT Last modified on Fri 27 May 2022 02.30 EDT

Jacinda Ardern has spoken out against the online “scourge of disinformation” in an address at [Harvard University](#), in which she also won standing ovations for her government’s gun control laws, diversity and decriminalisation of abortion.

The New Zealand prime minister was honoured by the American university , making [the annual commencement address](#) to more than a thousand students on Thursday from the same stage as figures such as Winston Churchill, Angela Merkel, Steven Spielberg and Oprah Winfrey.

Ardern’s [address](#) was built around the need for democratic systems and informed debate, invoking the same plea from the late Pakistan prime minister Benazir Bhutto, who underscored the “fragility” of democracy in her own address to the university in 1989.

But, with the United States reeling from the Texas school massacre and paralysed over how to stop the violence, she won loud cheers and a standing ovation when she spoke about how her government cracked down on gun ownership in the wake of the [2019 Christchurch mosque attacks](#).

“We knew we needed significant gun reform, and so that is what we did,” she said. “But we also knew that if we wanted genuine solutions to the issue of violent extremism online, it would take government, civil society and the tech companies themselves to change the landscape.”

Developing her theme of trying to combat online extremists such as the perpetrator of the Christchurch attacks, Ardern tied the problem to the defence of democracy.

“This imperfect but precious way that we organise ourselves, that has been created to give equal voice to the weak and to the strong, that is designed to help drive consensus – it is fragile,” Ardern said.

“For years it feels as though we have assumed that the fragility of democracy was determined by duration.

“That somehow the strength of your democracy was like a marriage; the longer you’d been in it, the more likely it was to stick. “But that takes so much for granted.”

Ardern took aim at online disinformation and called on tech companies to do more to stop the online spread of conspiracy theories.

“The time has come for social media companies and other online providers to recognise their power and to act on it,” she said.

She finished her speech with a call for kindness, and to bridge differences with others. “What we do as individuals in these spaces matters too ... we are the richer for our difference, and poorer for our division,” she said.

Ardern received cheers when she told the assembled throng that New Zealand’s parliament was 50% women, almost 20% Maori, and her deputy was “a proud gay man sitting among several other rainbow parliamentarians”. She was applauded after law changes including decriminalising abortion, outlawing most assault weapons, and banning ‘conversion therapy’.

As is tradition for commencement speakers, Ardern was also given an honorary degree, in her case a doctorate of law.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/27/jacinda-ardern-wows-harvard-with-new-zealands-lesson-on-gun-control-and-democracy>.

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

## [Taiwan](#)

# Taiwanese people stuck with the name ‘Salmon’ after sushi promotion

Parliament debates law that bans people from changing their names more than three times after stunt leads to unforeseen consequences



The government was critical of the sushi promotion at the time, and one year later it is still causing problems  
Photograph: Alina Buzunova/Alamy

*Helen Davidson and Chi Hui Lin in Taipei  
@heldavidson*

Fri 27 May 2022 01.47 EDT Last modified on Fri 27 May 2022 13.57 EDT

Taiwanese parliamentarians have debated changing legal limits on name changes, after some of the hundreds of people who legally altered their name to “Salmon” in return for free sushi reportedly became stuck with it.

In March 2021 restaurant chain Sushiro ran a promotion offering free all-you-can-eat sushi for a whole table to anyone with the Chinese characters

for salmon, “gui yu”, in their name. In what was later dubbed “Salmon chaos”, 331 people took part, paying a nominal administration fee to legally call themselves names including “Salmon Dream” and “Dancing Salmon”.

At the time the government was critical of the promotion, asking people to be “rational” and complaining that the stunt created pointless extra work for Taiwan’s paperwork-heavy bureaucracy.

Some participants built social media followings off the international media attention, while others ran small businesses taking friends to the restaurant [for a fee](#). Once the two-day promotion ended, most returned to their normal names, but more than one year on some have hit a roadblock – the government only allows people to change their names three times.

On Thursday legislators in Taiwan’s national parliament debated proposed [amendments](#) to the names ordinance, with members from both the government and opposition parties calling for changes to help those stuck as Salmons, or to prevent another “salmon chaos”.

“After the salmon chaos incident some people had already changed their name three times and now have no way to change them back,” said New Power Party legislator, Chiu Hsien-chih, suggesting other measures including fee changes and cooling-off periods.

Other legislators, from both the governing Democratic Progress Party (DPP) and main opposition Kuomintang, called for it to be made more difficult.

“Our trust in civic rationality is too low,” said legislator Kuan Bi-ling, opposing an increase to restrictions as an intrusion into people’s daily lives.

On Taiwanese social media residents were scathing of the debate, saying adults should be more responsible, and that this was a waste of the legislature’s time.

“How can we amend the law for those who sell their personality for the sake of benefits?” said one commenter. “Be responsible for your own life, Salmons!” said another.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/27/taiwanese-people-stuck-with-the-name-salmon-after-sushi-promotion>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

## [Technology sector](#)

# Chinese technology shares jump as Alibaba sales exceed forecasts

E-commerce company's revenues rise 9% to 204bn yuan despite weakening economy



Alibaba has warned of the impact of restrictions on its business under Beijing's zero-Covid policy, and declined to give a forecast for the current year. Photograph: AFP/Getty Images

*[Julia Kollewe](#)*

Fri 27 May 2022 04.57 EDT Last modified on Fri 27 May 2022 05.47 EDT

Chinese technology shares jumped after strong results from internet companies, including better-than-expected sales at the e-commerce firm [Alibaba](#) despite an economic slowdown driven by Beijing's Covid-19 lockdowns.

The Hangzhou-based company beat analysts' forecasts with its sales and profit figures for the first quarter despite a weakening economy, and it did better than local rivals such as Tencent. Revenues rose 9% to 204bn yuan (£24bn) in the first three months of the year.

Hong Kong-listed shares of Alibaba leaped almost 12%, a day after its New York-listed shares soared more than 14% to close at \$92.48.

Its resilient performance boosted confidence in the sector, which has been battered by a regulatory crackdown over the past year. Hong Kong's Hang Seng Tech index of the 30 largest technology firms rose 3.6%, while the wider Hang Seng index climbed 2.8%.

Shares in the Chinese search engine group Baidu rose almost 15% in Hong Kong after it reported a 1% rise in sales, led by its cloud and artificial intelligence business. Shares in JD.com, China's biggest online retailer, increased more than 5% after it posted an 18% increase in quarterly revenues.

However, Alibaba also warned of the impact of restrictions on its business under [Beijing's zero-Covid policy](#), and declined to give a forecast for the current year because coronavirus risks clouded the outlook. It said the restrictions affected merchants' ability to ship goods, and prompted consumers to focus on buying necessities.

Analysts at Daiwa Capital said: "As Alibaba's large scale reflects the overall macro economy, we believe it is the key beneficiary of a potential favourable policy rollout in terms of lockdown measures and consumption stimulus."

After two months of Covid lockdowns led to a squeeze on consumer spending, Beijing announced measures to shore up the economy this week.

Sign up to the daily Business Today email or follow Guardian Business on Twitter at [@BusinessDesk](#)

After strong gains on Wall Street, most Asian stock markets were higher at the end of the week. China's CSI 300 index of Shanghai- and Shenzhen-

listed stocks edged up 0.2%, while the Australian market climbed more than 1%.

Richard Hunter, the head of markets at interactive investor, said: “The wave of cautious optimism filtered through to the Asian markets and were consolidated after revenue growth from Alibaba beat expectations, boosting tech shares. In addition, the reported cooling of tensions between China and the US, and the likelihood of more stimulus from the former to support the local economy underpinned the positive moves.”

The strong results from the technology sector come after a series of warnings from Chinese policymakers about the health of the economy. The premier, Li Keqiang, said this week that conditions were “to some degree worse” than they were at the start of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020.

---

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/may/27/chinese-technology-shares-jump-as-alibaba-sales-exceed-forecasts>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

# Table of Contents

[The Guardian.2022.05.29 \[Sun, 29 May 2022\]](#)

[2022.05.29 - Opinion](#)

[Ukraine must negotiate from a position of strength. But the world's attention is fading](#)

[The Observer view on Rishi Sunak's cost of living package](#)

[The Observer view on the summits that forecast global environmental dangers](#)

[Boris Johnson, the party animal, has vomited over standards in public life](#)

[God bless the Elizabeth line - heaven for nerds of the built environment](#)

[Boris Johnson, greased piglet, escapes yet again – cartoon](#)

[Why shouldn't the Greeks have their marbles back? We proved we lost ours years ago](#)

[If a lesbian only desires same-sex dates that's not bigotry, it's her right](#)

[Letters: only a coalition can oust the Tories](#)

[For the record](#)

[Deryla Murphy: a girl's own adventurer who showed us how to live at full tilt](#)

[Tory devotion to 'dear friend' Modi says so much about needy post-Brexit Britain](#)

[Headlines saturday 28 may 2022](#)

[Politics Boris Johnson accused of changing ministerial code to 'save his skin'](#)

[Partygate Civil servants furious as Simon Case dodges sanction](#)

[Politics The Tory MPs calling on Johnson to resign – and what they said](#)

[Partygate Met never asked me for lockdown party evidence, says Dominic Cummings](#)

[2022.05.28 - Spotlight](#)

['High drama, with the lowest stakes' What really happened at the Wagatha Christie trial](#)

'I woke up and he was on top of me' Six women on being abused by fashion agent Jean-Luc Brunel

Blind date I was so engrossed, I leaned over the candle and my sleeve caught on fire

Books by women that every man should read Chosen by Ian McEwan, Salman Rushdie, Richard Curtis and more

### 2022.05.28 - Opinion

Rewilding, or just a greenwashed land grab? It all depends on who benefits

Ambivalence about the Queen seems modern – but it's actually a Victorian feeling

No drive, no spine, very little vision: even science can't explain the creatures clinging on to Johnson

Andrew Fletcher: the pop-loving everyman who held Depeche Mode together

### 2022.05.28 - Around the world

Pacific islands Samoa signs China bilateral agreement during regional push by Beijing

Indonesia 26 people missing after ferry sinks

US Republican primaries offer look into future of Trumpism without Trump

Columbia Has the left's time come at last as ex-rebel closes in on presidency?

France Ailing orca stuck in River Seine to be lured to sea using drone with loudspeakers

### Headlines tuesday 24 may 2022

Live Shapps refuses to deny Johnson suggested Sue Gray abandon publication of her report

Partygate Boris Johnson under pressure to explain meeting with Sue Gray

Partygate Met faces questions about credibility of inquiry after photos emerge

Tell us Partygate: what were you doing on 13 November 2020?

### 2022.05.24 - Spotlight

The long read Nazi or KGB agent? My search for my grandfather's hidden past

['I'm in awe' Trans actor Yasmin Finney on joining Doctor Who](#)

['I haven't got a pretty face' Brendan Gleeson on fame, middle age and tapping into his mean side](#)

['How did he get away with this?' What the papers say about new Johnson Partygate photos](#)

## [2022.05.24 - Opinion](#)

[In the Passport Office queue I see distress, despair and the dilapidated state of Britain](#)

[The UK's view of Rwanda is deeply ignorant – I once fell prey to it myself](#)

[State schools are not the wild west and 'Britain's strictest headmistress' is not Clint Eastwood](#)

[Sunak says he can't help the cost of living crisis. What about these five simple steps?](#)

## [2022.05.24 - Around the world](#)

[Donald Trump New York subpoenas longtime assistant Rhona Graff in business dealings inquiry](#)

[Joe Biden Ukraine invasion shows need for 'free and open' Indo-Pacific, president tells Quad summit](#)

[Explainer What is the Quad, and how did it come about?](#)

[Airbnb Lockdowns force shutdown in China](#)

## [Headlines](#)

[Live Sue Gray report: minister says 'extraordinary pressure' on No 10 staff during pandemic helps explain Partygate](#)

[Partygate UK government briefings accusing Sue Gray of 'playing politics' condemned by minister](#)

[Taiwan US would defend island if attacked by China, says Joe Biden](#)

[Australia New PM flags 'difficult' China ties as he heads to Tokyo for Quad meeting](#)

[Australia Teal independents: who are they and how did they upend Australia's election?](#)

## [2022.05.23 - Spotlight](#)

[UK inflation What it means for house prices, savings and pay rises](#)

'People are under pressure' The shop staff paying for strangers' groceries or turning a blind eye to theft

'I feel totally seen' John Crace on how guided breathing soothed a lifetime of anxiety

Transport Building the Elizabeth line

#### 2022.05.23 - Opinion

My teacher said I'd more likely be dead by 25 than a footballer. What if I had listened?

Goodbye to the age of rage: why Piers Morgan's outrage journalism is flopping

Too many have suffered under Ghana's abortion laws. Ending Roe v Wade risks our hope for change

Is it really true? Surely there is a false dawn! Are they really gone? Prime minister Albo!

#### 2022.05.23 - Around the world

Canada Storms leave at least eight dead amid trail of destruction

Hepatitis Cases rising among children globally but cause remains a mystery

Iran Country will 'avenge' killing of Revolutionary Guards colonel, says president

Pakistan Town blames deadly cholera outbreak on government neglect

US Man shot and killed on New York subway in latest 'unprovoked' attack

#### Headlines thursday 26 may 2022

Live Partygate: more Tory MPs call on Boris Johnson to resign after Sue Gray report

Gray report More Tory MPs call for Boris Johnson to quit over Partygate revelations

Downing Street Support staff at No 10 'subjected to bullying for years', union claims

'Failure of leadership' What the papers say about the Sue Gray report

#### 2022.05.26 - Spotlight

'You have to let the anger go' Mina Smallman on her daughters' murder – and the police who photographed the

bodies

Claes Bang ‘I did two whole plays entirely naked. I thought I’d done enough’

Edvard Munch review Zombie workers and sexual hang-ups: how artist foresaw our lonely lives

‘It looks beautiful’ UK gardeners on leaving lawns uncut for No Mow May

2022.05.26 - Opinion

Micoplastics in sewage: a toxic combination that is poisoning our land

My home town doesn’t need a fawning monument to Margaret Thatcher

Big Tobacco is killing the planet with plastics. No smokescreen should be allowed to hide that

Who are the right blaming for the Texas shooting? Trans people, immigrants and victims’ parents

2022.05.26 - Around the world

Exclusive Mercenaries accused over use of mines and booby traps

Iran Tehran says one dead in ‘industrial accident’ near military complex

Portland How to Murder Your Husband writer found guilty of murdering husband

Senegal Fire at hospital killed 11 newborn babies, says president

Fishing European fleets accused of illegally netting tuna in Indian Ocean

Headlines friday 27 may 2022

Live Rishi Sunak defends letting second home owners get £400 energy bill rebate twice

Live Rishi Sunak ‘very confident’ about economic outlook; says cost of living package won’t fuel inflation

Economic policy ‘Fiscal conservative’ Sunak refuses to rule out more help on fuel bills

Cost of living crisis Sunak unveils £15bn package of support after windfall tax U-turn

2022.05.27 - Spotlight

[Rory Kinnear on humour, horror and trauma ‘I went in the truck and there was my skull again, sent to haunt me’](#)

[Stranger Things 4 review bigger, better and more gruesome than ever](#)

[Lizards or snakes? The stark game of survival playing out in Ibiza](#)

[Cost of living crisis Concern in Merseyside as price rises hit](#)

#### 2022.05.27 - Opinion

[Rampant inflation breaks the status quo – no wonder the government is spooked](#)

[Columbine happened 23 years ago. How is America still no further forward?](#)

[Putin’s bombs were supposed to break us in Ukraine. They are doing the opposite](#)

[Stop abuse of migrant workers before Britain becomes the next Dubai](#)

#### 2022.05.27 - Around the world

[US Antony Blinken says Joe Biden is not seeking ‘cold war’ with China](#)

[Turkey Plan to forcibly relocate Syrian refugees gains momentum](#)

[Jacinda Ardern New Zealand PM addresses Harvard on gun control and democracy](#)

[Taiwan People stuck with the name ‘Salmon’ after sushi promotion](#)

[China Technology shares jump as Alibaba sales exceed forecasts](#)