

The Guardian

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We smile at an unexpected windfall, and daydream all the harder when times are tough

[Rachel Cooke](#)



It might be hard to imagine a £184m lottery win but, as people increasingly struggle to pay bills, we can all indulge in more modest, daily treats



‘Some ancient part of me persists in holding fast to the idea that – somehow! – money should be earned rather than won.’ Illustration: Steven Gregor/The Observer

Sun 22 May 2022 03.00 EDT

I didn’t plan to begin my Friday morning with a little light Googling of new cars. I can’t afford to buy one myself. But having dived down this unexpected rabbit hole, I was at least able to confirm my hunch that Joe Thwaite, who with his wife, Jess, [has just won £184m on the National Lottery](#), could – and doubtless will – do a lot better than the Skoda Superb Estate when he comes to upgrade his battered Hyundai.

According to *What Car?*, if space is a luxury, [the Superb](#) is indeed one of the world’s most luxurious vehicles. However, size isn’t everything. Road roar could be a problem. The Thwaites, newly released from the need to budget, as well as from the scorn of any Alan Partridge-types they may know, should seriously consider “a premium German or Swedish badge”.

More than half a century has passed since [Viv “spend, spend, spend” Nicholson](#) and her husband, Keith, won (and immediately began to lose) the equivalent of more than £3m in today’s cash on the football pools – and yet,

our fascination with those who become rich overnight thanks only to a ridiculous ridiculous stroke of luck remains more or less undimmed.

Even stranger, perhaps, we continue to cling to the conviction that no good can come of such financial lightning bolts. You can't buy happiness, we tell ourselves, even as we think of the most miserable couple we know, bound together only by the punitive cost of a separation. In my newspaper, a picture of Jess and Joe Thwaites spraying an obligatory bottle of champagne all over the invited photographers came with a helpful list of some of the wretched disasters that have, since the National Lottery's inception in 1994, befallen its biggest winners. Suffice to say that the bloke whose new swimming pool was invaded by a squatters seemed to me to have got off quite lightly.

But alas, the truth is that money can buy happiness – or at least it can make the possibility of it vastly more likely (a broken heart is still a broken heart). Economists in this area tend to talk of the meeting of “basic needs”, something that makes the correlation between income and happiness strong up to about £60,000 a year, and weaker thereafter. But more recently, the study of groups of lottery winners has revealed that, relieved of financial worries, they are also more content.



Joe and Jess Thwaite celebrate winning the record-breaking EuroMillions jackpot of £184m. Photograph: Andrew Matthews/PA

In 2019, two economists, Andrew J Oswald, of the University of Warwick, and Rainer Winkelmann, now at the University of Zurich, even asserted that, according to [their research](#), the more money someone won, the more pronounced the positive effect this was likely to have on their state of mind. Additionally, neurologists have found that those who give a proportion of their ill-gotten gains away have increased activity in the reward areas of their brains, a fact that may help to explain why some people describe philanthropy as akin to an addiction. We fixate on hoary stories of reclusive, drug-addicted Gettys, but the richest and most generous man I've ever met – I was seated next to him at a dinner at a museum to which his foundation regularly made major donations – exuded a serenity so palpable it seemed almost to be wrapped around him, like a (cashmere) shawl.

Do people spend more, or less, on the lottery when times are hard? We don't know what's happening right now, but my guess is that we're spending more. During the last recession, in 2009-10, sales of both tickets and scratchcards rose, with the result that the Heritage Lottery Fund found itself with [an extra £25m](#) a year to distribute. We daydream all the harder when life is tough.

This cost of living crisis feels radically different to others, in the sense that the link between being in work and keeping your head above water seems to be all but utterly broken – a paradox that encourages not only fatalism, but fantasy, too. If you can hold down three jobs, and still be on the bones of your behind, doesn't logic – or the lack of it – dictate that a quick corner shop flutter might release you from this crushing half-life forever?

The struggle to pay one's bills and to feed one's family is painfully real for large numbers of people in this country. But the situation, in other ways, has an air that is crazily unreal; we are living in a satire so clunky and ill-written, we can hardly be bothered with it. The day after the Thwaites announced their win to the world, Rishi Sunak, the man whose job it is supposed to be to help those in most need, if not to fix the economy, [was revealed as one of the 250 richest people](#) in Britain (he and his wife, Akshata Murty, have a joint fortune of £730m). Tell me: in which do you feel most inclined to place

your trust? In the EuroMillions draw, or in a man who, as if he'd bagged the jackpot himself, will be [spending £13,000 a year](#) to heat the new pool at his home in north Yorkshire?

Still, some ancient part of me persists in holding fast to the idea that – somehow! – money should be earned rather than won, and this is why I'm inclined to make Skoda jokes; I'm willing the Thwaites not to be sensible, the better to bolster my puritan narrative. One thing about writing for a living is that sometimes, small, unexpected sums turn up: a piece, written long ago, is sold elsewhere; a tiny royalty arrives. Whenever this happens in our house, my husband, sounding even more Scouse than usual, says, gleefully: "Money for jam!" and looks about for the champagne.

This isn't really the case, of course – it's not for jam: work was done, and usually it was pretty ill-paid work – but I always feel guilty. I can't help it. I think of DH Lawrence's coal miner father who, on being told how much his son had been paid for *The White Peacock*, is supposed to have said: "Fifty pounds! An' tha's niver done a day's hard work in thy life." Then again, I suppose this is what separates the vast majority of us from those who currently run the country. Fifty quid, even now, is a bonus. We feel like swindlers, even when we're as honest as the day is long.

Rachel Cooke is an Observer columnist

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[**The ObserverSri Lanka**](#)

The Observer view on the growing crisis in Sri Lanka

[Observer editorial](#)

As western countries retreat from international aid, China is poised to swoop with its ‘belt and road’ programme



University students carry an injured man after police used water cannons to disperse protests amid economic crisis in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on 19 May.
Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

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There is not a country that has escaped the combined economic shocks of Covid-19 and the global spike in oil and food prices triggered by Russia’s continuing invasion of Ukraine. Painful for wealthy countries, for low- to middle-income countries it risks being existential. Sri Lanka – mired in crisis – last week [defaulted on its debt](#) for the first time in its history.

While its collapsing economy is as much a product of its corrupt politics as of global economic trends, [Sri Lanka](#) is also a worrying bellwether for the instability elsewhere that may be triggered by declining economic security in countries with high levels of poverty.

The situation facing Sri Lanka's citizens is [dire](#). Soaring inflation has taken the price of basic goods out of reach for many, and extreme shortages of food, medicine and fuel mean people have to spend hours queuing in the extreme heat while shops have been forced to close. For months, there have been peaceful anti-government protests, driven by anger with the political elite. But in recent weeks, they have turned [violent](#); one politician has been killed by a mob, and others have had their houses set alight.

This crisis has been long in the making: the product of 20 years of unsustainable levels of borrowing to fund unwise projects, and levels of taxation that have been [too low](#). This made Sri Lanka particularly vulnerable to the impact of Covid, including on its tourism industry. Additionally, the current administration cut taxes further just before the pandemic, and banned the import of chemical fertilisers in April 2021, which has had a ruinous impact on Sri Lanka's domestic food production, making it even more reliant on [expensive imports](#).

There are other countries where political turmoil and economic vulnerabilities mean that further economic shocks will lead to more hardship for their populations, with the risk of triggering instability and violence. Global food prices rose by more than 30% in 2021, and the war in Ukraine pushed up wheat and maize prices by almost 20% in the course of just [one month](#) this year. The economic impact of Covid, already bad, is far from over: lockdowns in Chinese cities such as Shanghai and Shenzhen have [disrupted supply chains](#) worldwide.

Russia's aggression in Ukraine has reawakened western commitment to the Nato alliance as a way of promoting global security. But that is not enough: wealthy countries such as the US and the UK need to be alive to the impact of these global economic trends on lower- and middle-income countries, not just because they have a moral duty to do more to alleviate global poverty, but also out of self-interest with a view to security risks. Instead, the

chancellor, Rishi Sunak, has cut £4.2bn from the British aid budget, breaking the Conservative manifesto pledge to keep aid spending at 0.7% of gross national income. Countries such as Syria, Bangladesh and South Sudan saw their aid from the UK reduced overnight by 69%, 62% and 49% respectively, and the UK has cut £1.5bn of aid from a World Bank programme focused on helping poorer countries recover from Covid. Last week, the foreign secretary, Liz Truss, published a government white paper on international aid spending that proposes halving UK spending on multilateral agencies such as the UN and the World Bank to redirect aid spending towards the UK's own trade interests.

Western retreat from international aid will leave more room for China to fill the gap. Lending to countries such as Sri Lanka through its “belt and road” infrastructure programme is a key part of China’s strategy to increase its soft power. In a world of increasing economic insecurity, Britain’s cuts to international aid are not just immoral, but short-sighted in the extreme.

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

The Observer view on the investigation into Covid lawbreaking in Downing St

[Observer editorial](#)

Although 126 fines have been issued, Boris Johnson remains in post, raising questions for the police and Conservative party



Prime Minister Boris Johnson at 10 Downing Street, London on 20 May.
Photograph: Dominic Lipinski/PA

Sun 22 May 2022 01.00 EDT

Political analysts discount the predictions parties spin out about their election performance as expectation management. The idea is to represent what is in reality a poor result as better than expected. But it is an entirely new development for this to be happening in relation to the number of times a prime minister has been fined for breaking the law.

The Metropolitan police [announced](#) last week that they had concluded their investigation into Covid lawbreaking in Downing Street and other parts of

Whitehall. They issued fines for a total of 126 breaches of Covid regulations by 83 people working in government, making Downing Street the [most fined address](#) for this in the country. Boris Johnson received one fine for breaking the law, for celebrating his birthday at a party with cake in June 2020, as did the chancellor, [Rishi Sunak](#).

Before the Met launched its investigation, the general consensus was that if the prime minister were fined for breaking his own laws, he would have to resign. But shifting expectations management means his allies are now trying to claim that because he received only one fine – when he could have been in line for more, for breaking the law on several occasions – his position is secure. One of his ministers, Jacob Rees-Mogg, has even gone so far as to suggest that the police fining the prime minister for breaking the law is a “[non story](#)”.

There are serious questions for the Met over the conduct of this investigation, which it originally said was unnecessary

This is cynical in the extreme. The social restrictions imposed in law by the government during the pandemic were designed to save lives and to protect the NHS. It’s not then just a matter of whether or not the prime minister attended parties; it goes to the heart of the integrity of our government and those who run it. The prime minister and senior officials in government clearly saw themselves above regulations introduced during a national emergency, regulations that were observed at great cost by millions of ordinary citizens, who did not get to spend time with dying loved ones or even to attend their funerals. They did not break the law, but the prime minister did, in order to socialise with colleagues for frivolous reasons. His behaviour renders him wholly unfit to lead our country.

There are serious questions for the Met over the conduct of this investigation, which it originally said was unnecessary, but which has now resulted in more than a hundred fines being issued. The opacity of the investigation further undermines confidence in the political impartiality of the police, whose duty it is to uphold the rule of law without fear or favour. Why was the prime minister reportedly only investigated for attending [two](#)

[of the events](#) the police were looking into, when we know he was present at six of them? Why did Simon Case, who as cabinet secretary is the most senior official in government, receive not a single fine when he attended many events – including the birthday party that Johnson and Sunak were fined for attending? And why were so many junior officials fined for attending events, when senior officials were not? Were the 28 individuals found to have breached Covid regulations multiple times issued with fines of escalating value, as has been the case for [members of the public](#)? It is of paramount importance that the Met answers these questions in order to maintain public confidence in the police investigation.

The Durham police investigation into the takeaway meal Keir Starmer and Labour party staff shared while campaigning last year is yet to conclude. There is a material difference between a meal being shared with colleagues during a break when they are working together away from home, if Starmer's account of what happened is accurate, and the kinds of social gatherings that were repeatedly happening in Downing Street, including during strict lockdowns. But if the police find Starmer did break the rules, he has rightly said he will resign. Were this to happen, it could leave the country in the absurd situation where the leader of the opposition resigns after receiving a police fine, but the prime minister brazens it out.

This is because Johnson's fate lies solely in the hands of the Conservative parliamentary party. And too many Tory MPs appear to be evaluating Johnson's future not in terms of the right thing to do – maintaining the integrity of the government, and public confidence in the rule of law and our democratic institutions – but as a calculation about their party's narrow electoral interests. The unpopularity of Johnson drove the Conservatives' poor performance in this month's local elections, but not enough of them are yet convinced there is a clear successor who will do better than him.

A prime minister who has no shame simply continues in post, despite the finding that he broke the laws imposed to save lives during a national emergency. The publication of Sue Gray's report into the behaviour of Johnson and other senior officials and ministers is likely to be damning, but unless something materially changes in the minds of Conservative backbenchers, Johnson will remain in his job. There is no chance of a man like him voluntarily stepping up to take responsibility for his own actions or

those who work for him. It is an insult to the whole nation, but especially to those citizens who made great personal sacrifices in order to dutifully observe the law.

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Observer comment cartoon

Boris Johnson

Boris Johnson, dancing queen – cartoon

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[The ObserverBitcoin](#)

Crypto is starting to lose its cool – just look at El Salvador

[Rowan Moore](#)



Fantasies of a Bitcoin City have been undermined by the country's huge losses in cryptocurrency



Animated image of Nayib Bukele, with his trademark back-to-front baseball cap, at El Salvador's 2021 "Bitcoin Week". Photograph: José Cabezas/Reuters

Sat 21 May 2022 10.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 21 May 2022 14.45 EDT

To its evangelists, bitcoin is a frictionless, empowering form of money that liberates citizens of the world from the shackles of banks and national governments. To sceptics, the cryptocurrency is a tool of kleptocrats and gangsters, environmentally monstrous in its consumption of energy, a digitally glamorised Ponzi scheme whose eventual crash will most hurt those least able to afford a loss.

Confidence may or may not have been enhanced by the unveiling, by President Nayib Bukele, of images of a proposed bitcoin-shaped [Bitcoin City](#) in El Salvador, funded with a bitcoin bond, the currency's logo embedded in the central plaza, a metropolis powered with geothermal energy from a nearby volcano. Bukele, the self-styled "coolest dictator in the world", a former publicist who wears baseball caps back to front, has already made El Salvador the first country to adopt bitcoin as the official currency. "The plan is simple," he said. "As the world falls into tyranny, we'll create a haven for freedom."

Leaving aside the worrisome Pompeii vibe of the city's location, some shine has come off the president's vision with the news that the country's investments in cryptocurrency [have lost](#) 45% of their value, that it scores CCC with the credit rating agency Fitch, and that [the perceived risk](#) of its bonds is up there with that of war-torn Ukraine. And Bukele's talk of freedom doesn't sit well with Amnesty International's claim that his recent state of emergency has created "a perfect storm of [human rights violations](#)".

But why worry about any of this when you have shiny computer-generated images of a fantasy city to distract you?

Unsecured credit line



The Mayor of London Sadiq Khan looks on as Boris Johnson gives a speech at Paddington station on 17 May 2022. Photograph: Reuters

The use of constructional bluster by populist leaders – Trump's wall, for example – is not in itself anything new. See also the island airport, garden bridge, Irish Sea bridge, 40 new hospitals and 300,000 homes a year promised but not delivered by Boris Johnson, and the nuclear power stations he has implausibly pledged to build at a rate of one a year.

Last week his fondness for Potemkin infrastructure took a new twist. Rather than over-promise illusory schemes and under-deliver them, he decided to [take credit](#) for something actually built, the £19bn Elizabeth line in London, formerly known as Crossrail, whose central section opens to the public on Tuesday. “We get the big things done,” he boasted to the House of Commons, choosing to ignore the fact that the line was initiated under a Labour prime minister and a Labour mayor of London. He almost makes Nayib Bukele look credible.

Behind the red wall



Mounting misery: *The House of Shades*. Photograph: Helen Murray

If you want a light-hearted night out – a date, a birthday treat – then *The House of Shades*, a new play by Beth Steel, might not, unless you are an unusual person, be for you. It is a cross between Greek tragedy and what was once called kitchen sink drama, a story of ever-mounting misery set in a Nottinghamshire town from 1965 to 2019. It covers the collapse of manufacturing, the rise of Thatcherism, the promises of New Labour and the disillusionment that led to “red wall” seats voting Conservative in 2019.

It features illegal abortion, graphically portrayed, and the effects of inflation, both newly significant. All presented at the Almeida theatre in the famously

metropolitan London borough of Islington, not far from the former restaurant where Tony Blair and Gordon Brown did the 1994 deal that shaped some of the events in the play. There's irony here to make this audience squirm. Which, along with several other not-comfortable emotions, is probably the desired effect.

Rowan Moore is the Observer's architecture correspondent

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

Once Carrie was forever in the public eye. Well done her if she's tiring of consort role

[Catherine Bennett](#)



There's a long history of wives making PMs look 'human'. Best to let thrive, or not, alone



Prime Minister Boris Johnson and his wife Carrie Johnson wait to greet G7 leaders at the start of the G7 summit in Carbis Bay, Cornwall on 11 June 2021. Photograph: Leon Neal/AFP/Getty Images

Sat 21 May 2022 06.25 EDTFirst published on Sat 21 May 2022 02.00 EDT

What has become of [Carrie Johnson](#)? No need, yet, to ask for proof of life – she has been spotted, it's a relief to report, in a number of theme parks – but Mrs Johnson's admirers, having learned to recognise her as a national asset, must be feeling accordingly bereft, even with the couple's terrier stepping forward as a substitute.

True, Dilyn is photogenic, appeals across demographics, and seemed to [pull less than Carrie](#), earlier this month, when summoned by his master to the polling station. Alas, it's hard to picture him retweeting Mr Johnson's supposed achievements, including his most unspeakable videos: also key to the modern Conservative consort's job. Something for one of the newer poodle crossbreeds?

It may help that Mrs Johnson's amplifications and endorsements are a fraction of what she produced when, back in 2019, she broke off from environmental PR to campaign around the country for the party currently replacing rivers with conduits of untreated sewage. "Longtime Labour voters

here switching to vote Conservative to get Brexit done,” the then Carrie Symonds would tweet from a doorstep, with a selfie to prove it. “All of you make me feel v. proud to be a Conservative,” she told candidates. And, for wavering civilians: “Time to end the arguing, get Brexit done and move forward.”

After the election the couple tried out various double acts, clapping *à deux* for carers and attempting a cheery sofa duet: “Good evening, it’s Boris and Carrie here!” Carrie: “As a family we have so much to thank the NHS for and we will never stop being grateful.” Boris (incisively): “Correct!”

But recently: nothing. Not even about rescue dogs.

While Johnson might adapt, with professional training, to a replacement partnership with Dilyn, a lasting substitution could still be problematic for the Conservatives and not only because, in showcasing Carrie as it has, the party plainly considers her an asset in her own, environmentally virtuous right. Isn’t it possible that their leader, without a young and wholesome partner to signal a joint claim on human status, could come to resemble some dung-caked, temporarily house-trained beast reverting to its natural state? We can only hope so.

Around this time last year, Mrs Johnson was in her considerable pomp. Newly married, with Dominic Cummings – apparently – crushed, and Partygate still to come, she was shortly to co-host the G7 summit in Cornwall, setting an “assertive” agenda, according to the *Daily Mail*, with a wardrobe of national importance. For the BBC, it was professional skills that made the third Mrs Johnson the ultimate political BOGOF. Though the youngest wife there, she offered, the BBC said (possibly borrowing from party literature): “Political nous honed over the years at Conservative campaign headquarters and more recently, in the world of conservation and political PR.” With the further diplomatic/tabloid bonus of a blond infant. “Baby BoJo is star of the show.”

Before this triumph, Mrs Johnson had long appeared supremely at ease, perhaps more so than any consort since Cherie Blair, with the before-, as well as behind-the-scenes opportunities available to a leading politician’s partner. Inside No 10, she agitated for badgers, outside she has spoken,

accompanied by Johnson's father (before he was exposed for wife-beating) at an [anti-whaling protest](#), and addressed fellow environmentalists on making a difference: "Tonight I'm wearing a sustainable dress."

Accusations from the ousted Cummings about interference in staffing, wallpaper and time-wasting tantrums appeared not to affect much, either her public appearances or her reputation. In fact, if the departing Cummings and his supporters could be depicted as misogynists, this helped cultivate a myth that, notwithstanding its nicknames, all-male gangs and "[strong-like-bull](#)" inanities, Downing Street boasted, thanks to Carrie Johnson, a significant progressive component. Unadorned by Carrie, the place looks more clearly what it is: the kind of dismal hub you'd expect in the party of [porn viewing and reprieves for sexual misconduct](#).

If, for whatever reason, Mrs Johnson has genuinely tired of escorting her husband, this suits some of us fine. Although her protection is unlikely to rival that afforded by his previous wife, a QC, Carrie's appearances with Johnson affirm what might otherwise seem impossible: that regardless of his repellent character, presentation and history, a capable person with free will nonetheless finds him tolerable. With babies that do not merely prove it, but offer the cheese-fancier a chance to imitate, having mislaid his previous output, a fondly harassed dad. Without a visible Carrie, Johnson is, however, pretty much what Wayne Rooney would be without Coleen and the boys in matching Christmas pyjamas. Minus, obviously, Rooney's undoubted skill and team spirit.

Accusations from Cummings about interference in staffing, wallpaper and tantrums appeared not to affect her reputation

Though varying in attempts at illegitimate political influence, all political consorts will perform, so long as the public insists on family credentials, a version of Mrs Johnson's sanitising service. Miriam Clegg stopped many people noticing that Nick Clegg's boyish integrity was, for the right price, on sale.

Without Samantha Cameron's more engaging personality, her husband might not adequately have disguised Bullingdon levels of entitlement and self-

interest. Sarah Brown [offered](#), as much as she could, tokens of warmth and approachability that were sadly beyond Gordon. Even Cherie Blair, independent but convinced of her personal centrality to national life, helped obscure the reality that Tony Blair's progressive government was yet another boys' club.

Mrs Johnson's absences and near-muteness on Twitter could be tactical, of course, given the glut of party investigations and fines. And it's only recently that Lord Ashcroft accused her of distracting Johnson from his job, an unconvincing as well as unimpressive comment on the prime minister's character, you might think. It's like saying that matron is what used to distract Johnson from finding his missing PE kit.

Even a shortish period without a producible partner has further exposed Johnson as a chaotic fantasist in a stained suit: the longer it lasts, the deeper will be the nation's debt to the third Mrs Johnson.

Catherine Bennett is an Observer columnist

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The Observer[Amber Heard](#)

#MeToo is over if we don't listen to 'imperfect victims' like Amber Heard

[Martha Gill](#)

When even young women join the actor's male tormentors, ideas of justice soon begin to unravel



Amber Heard in court in Fairfax, Virginia, on 18 May 2022. Photograph: Kevin Lamarque/AFP/Getty Images

Sun 22 May 2022 02.30 EDT

The backlash to the [#MeToo movement](#) was always coming. We know this because a backlash has followed every single step forward feminists have ever made. This backlash was always going to be big, too. Not only did #MeToo threaten a status quo that props up powerful men, it threatened these men personally, and – as it seemed to some – with reckless caprice.

“[If somebody](#) can be brought down by accusations like this,” a White House lawyer said shortly after [Christine Blasey Ford](#)’s allegations against Brett

Kavanaugh were made public, “then you, me, every man certainly should be worried.”

It wasn’t just men who were worried. The idea that systems that previously treated only women, minorities and lower-class men unfairly might be capable of doing the same to high-status men was deeply unsettling to everyone.

After all, when a man is treated badly it lands with a double sense of burning injustice. Women’s stories of woe are so common that they can leave us comparatively unfazed. We feel bad, but we already know women are treated unfairly. It is priced in. “[Women’s stories were] all the same story, which is not to say it wasn’t important. But it was boring,” writes Taffy Brodesser-Akner in her novel *Fleishman Is in Trouble*. “The first time I interviewed a man, I understood we were talking about something more like the soul.” When something bad happens to a powerful man, it has not happened to a statistic. It has happened to a human soul.

Female accusers are still routinely treated as if they are lying, both by the public and the courts

For these reasons, #MeToo struck many men – and women – as deeply unfair. Yet it was merely an attempt to correct a bias that still exists. Female accusers are still routinely treated as if they are lying, both by the public and the courts – more so than other alleged victims of crime. It took the testimony of more than a hundred women to bring down Harvey Weinstein. Brett Kavanaugh was not brought down.

The public reaction to the [Johnny Depp](#) and [Amber Heard](#) trial is what a #MeToo backlash looks like. Here are the facts of the case. Depp is suing Heard for defamation after she described herself in a 2018 article that didn’t mention him as a “public figure representing domestic abuse”. Depp says he is innocent of abuse and her statement amounts to lying. On his side are two facts that seem clear. Heard promised to donate her entire divorce settlement to charity, and didn’t. There is a recording in which she admits to hitting Depp.

On Heard's side is the following evidence. Depp admits to head-butting his ex-wife (by accident), and there are texts from his assistant alleging he kicked Heard. There are texts from Depp to Paul Bettany saying he wanted to kill Heard and rape "her burnt corpse". There is a recording of Depp shouting at Heard for speaking in an "authoritative" way to him. She was awarded a domestic violence restraining order in 2016. In 2018 Depp sued the *Sun* newspaper for libel after it called him "a wife beater". He [lost the case](#) after the judge found 12 of 14 alleged incidents of Depp's abuse of Heard to be true.

The idea that Heard is a manipulator, a fantasist and an abuser herself has caught fire across all social media

The court will decide whether or not Heard is a liar. But the idea that Heard is a manipulator, a fantasist and an abuser herself has caught fire across all social media, and some more traditional outlets. Every sexist trope ever used to humiliate and discredit female accusers has been deployed against her at vast scale. Re-enacting her testimony of rape and abuse has become a game on TikTok. She has been mocked by *Saturday Night Live*, and by Chris Rock ("Believe all women, except Amber Heard") and 'N Sync's [Lance Bass](#).

Heard's tormentors, many of them young women, do not seem to see themselves as anti-feminist. They believe women, of course – just not this one.

It is not they who are damaging #MeToo, it is Heard – by virtue of being an imperfect victim.

They perhaps forget that the project of #MeToo – the whole point – was to help imperfect victims. Those who were wearing the wrong thing, or were drunk, or were promiscuous, or loved their perpetrator, or had previously broken the law, or had lied before, or had a bad character, or seemed "a little bit nutty and a little bit slutty", as David Brock once memorably described [Anita Hill](#), who testified during Clarence Thomas's US supreme court confirmation hearings in 1991. In fact, perfect victims have never needed feminism, partly because they barely exist.

Whether or not Heard's accusers fully realise it then, setting up "bad" victims in opposition to "genuine" ones is a very effective method of unpicking #MeToo. It is only the rare misogynist who outright admits they don't believe women. Their objection has always been just to this one bitch, who is lying.

#MeToo (the clue's in the name) attempted to combat this by linking experiences – all those bitches who weren't believed – so we could see the pattern. In fact, you could say the whole project of feminism is about taking bad things that happened to women, which they thought only happened to them, or were their fault, and calling them by one name. Divide us back into unlinked individuals who might be lying, and the movement is lost.

#MeToo is often framed as having uncovered truths about the world – its success was because women "explained really clearly" what was going on. No. People already knew what was going on. #MeToo worked for the reason any feminist movement works: strength in numbers. It is a political movement pushing against incredibly strong forces in the other direction. There's no reason to think its work cannot be rolled back.

Martha Gill is a political journalist and former lobby correspondent

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

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[The Observer](#)[Death and dying](#)

Letters: courage in the face of cancer

Deborah James's eloquence and bravery reduced one reader to tears. But, asks another, can there really be a 'good death'?



Deborah James with her medal. Photograph: @bowelbabe/twitter

Sun 22 May 2022 01.00 EDT

As someone who was diagnosed with an incurable cancer around the same time as Deborah James, I have watched her public response to living with cancer with both awe and detachment ("[In her gracious acceptance of death, Deborah James has given us lessons in how to live](#)", Comment). Awe, in the way she can TikTok dance with a cannula in her arm and in the way she navigates the bathos of cancer as a public discourse, deftly side-stepping self-pity and blame.

Detachment, in that I have responded neutrally to cancer. I avoid talking about it beyond medical professionals. I know when someone has heard I have cancer. It is in their eyes: a look that says I am no longer an equitable member of the human race. I resent the existential pressure to live a "better"

life now that I am in a sprint finish between liver and heart failure. There is to be no bucket list existence. No sponsored runs up mountains for palliative care that I will undoubtedly need if my liver starts to fail. I am determined to continue with my ordinary life that is fitfully productive and apathetic.

So, when James eloquently described her decision to end all treatment and how there was no right time to die, how I so believed her, and how I cried. I even cried when the government expedited her damehood so she could proudly sit in the same chair with the freshly minted medal. There was something just so triumphant about it.

Mark Newell

London NW5

There are many truths in Nicci Gerrard's article, and so much to admire about James' courage and love of life in the face of imminent death. Unfortunately, her story isn't unique and, having watched my wife die in similar circumstances, I question the concept of "good death" with a disease like this.

Despite the best hospice care and a lot of caring medical expertise, my wife's death was tough and brutal. Death, like birth, is painful, bloody and complicated, and I think it's important that we acknowledge that.

Andrew Clyde

London W12

We are of like mind, you and I

Sam Wolfson's essay on the word "like" was full of charm and richly informed ("[Why do people, like, say, 'like' so much?](#)", Magazine). It was especially good as a reminder that it's more interesting to try to understand how language is really used, in all its nuance, rather than to shudder in despair at its perceived misuses.

All that liking made me think about what poetic language does; I encourage my students to think about poems as things that not only use similes, but also behave like similes themselves: they ask us to compare and contrast our experiences with ones very different to our own, and to ask what those

experiences might be like, however strange seeming. Maybe the most famous simile in a poem is the opening of TS Eliot's The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock:

Let us go then, you and I,

When the evening is spread out against the sky

Like a patient etherized upon a table... ”

It's an arresting image, but it's not immediately clear what it means for the "evening" to be "like" a patient on a table at all (Simply spread out? Apparently without life ? Ready to be cut open?). We have to work at how the one thing relates to the other, and in the process we're working through how alike or unlike other different things might be – things like that "you and I" in the first line. Cheers to Sam for taking the time to understand "like" and all its likenesses.

Chris Townsend

Christ's College, University of Cambridge

Wake up, Bill Gates

Your interview with Bill Gates showed him to be a very well-informed, energetic and caring man ("[Your Questions for Bill Gates](#)", the New Review). However, he continues to propagate a myth about the cause of climate change. He says: "Most of the emissions are from middle-income countries." That's largely true, but only because these countries manufacture goods for the "developed" nations – we import goods and export our emissions.

Gates also picks on population growth. Climate change is not being caused by population growth in Africa, "the last continent left with meaningful population growth", but by the levels of consumption in the developed world. US historian and social thinker Howard Zinn said that in his lifetime he would use up the resources and give off the emissions of a whole Indian village.

Surely Gates understands that we are heading for climate catastrophe because the economic system that is spreading worldwide tells us that the good life depends on excessive material consumption. Perhaps he needs to wake up so that he can see that the “American dream” has become a nightmare.

Eileen Peck

Benfleet, Essex

My kingdom for an office

Julia Hobsbawm’s article makes a good case for the benefits of working from home, but assumes that workers have somewhere to work effectively (“[Let them eat cheese: WFH is here to stay](#)”, Focus). I have been happily productive for 20 years working from a room in my terrace house but, since lockdown ended, a desire for home improvements has been unleashed. When my ex-neighbours told me that they were moving out for six months so that they could “get the whole house done”, I didn’t realise how disruptive it would be.

It’s impossible to plan a Zoom call when someone can hammer-drill into the wall at any moment. It really did take six months to remove every original feature and polish the new concrete and, during that time, I longed to have an office to go to.

Mat Walker

London N8

Hair loss is no joke

I’m bald, and I used to be a teacher (“[Let’s not mock bald men. But do they really feel threatened?](#)”, Comment). That means that in front of a group of teenagers you start with an inescapable minus quantity. And it’s not just the kids: colleagues will make jokes about “follically challenged” people – as if you haven’t heard all the baldy jokes a thousand times. It wasn’t the only reason I gave up teaching (see “[How teaching became unrewarded and unrewarding](#)”, Letters) but it sure helped.

David Cole

Aulnay de Saintonge, France

The measure of Murdoch

Professor John Tully draws our attention to Kevin Rudd's petition for a royal commission into NewsCorp, which Rudd calls a "cancer on democracy" ([Letters](#)). The playwright Dennis Potter revealed in his final interview, with Melvyn Bragg in 1994, that he called his pancreatic cancer "Rupert" ("I would shoot the bugger [Murdoch] if I could"). Dennis Potter had the measure of Murdoch 28 years ago.

Chris Waller

Bristol

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[For the record](#)UK news

For the record

This week's corrections

Sun 22 May 2022 01.00 EDT

The headline and introduction to an article (“[Refugees fleeing conflict sent to hosts not cleared by criminal record checks](#)”, 15 May, p14) should have been clear that the reported concern was about Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks conducted by local authorities. Before Ukrainian refugees can travel to the UK, their prospective sponsor households are first subject to criminal records checks by the Home Office, which includes searches against the police national computer. DBS vetting of hosts follows as part of the wider safeguarding process.

An opinion piece muddied the law when it said an employment tribunal had ruled that a man was “a victim of sexual harassment”. In such cases, the unwanted conduct must be “of a sexual nature”. The finding was that the harassment “related to the claimant’s sex”, a protected characteristic, thus sex-based harassment (“[Let’s not mock bald men. But do they really feel threatened?](#)”, 15 May, p46).

The Northern Ireland protocol introduced border controls between Northern Ireland and Great Britain, not just England (“[Cambridge spies and Brexiters have a lot in common](#)”, 15 May, p55).

An article about Millicent Fawcett (“[Courage may well call to courage... but don't quote suffragist Fawcett on that](#)”, 15 May, p7) said that her statue in London’s Parliament Square displays a “stone banner” bearing her famous words. The entire sculpture is in bronze.

Playwright David Eldridge went to Brentwood School, not Brentford, in Essex ([Q&A](#), 1 May, the New Review, p7).

Other recently amended articles include:

[Queer Spaces by Adam Nathaniel Furman and Joshua Mardell review – a fascinating LGBTQIA+ architecture history](#)

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

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[The Observer](#)[Taylor Swift](#)

Taylor Swift: inspiring students about the importance of being earnest

[Rebecca Nicholson](#)



The singer's commencement speech steered clear of snark, and focused on genuine life advice for the NYU graduates



Taylor Swift: 'I'm a big advocate for not hiding your enthusiasm for things.'
Photograph: John Angelillo/UPI/REX/Shutterstock

Sat 21 May 2022 12.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 21 May 2022 12.15 EDT

Now that students at English universities are getting into an [average debt](#) of more than £45,000 each – I still recall, with horror, the news that one student had borrowed [£189,700](#), or the equivalent of turning the heating on for a couple of weeks this winter – I wonder if they might start to expect more celebrity speakers at graduation ceremonies. You can see thousands of bands at Glastonbury for £280. It can't cost that much to book the presenters of *Loose Women*, say, to do 30 minutes of life advice.

In the US, there is a long tradition of famous people delivering commencement speeches, from authors to politicians to tech bosses. My favourite is the director [John Waters](#), who can always be relied on for the good stuff. “Parents, now it’s time to talk to you. God, these kids can be brats, can’t they? Entitled little bastards,” [he told one crowd of students](#), in 2015; in 2020, he told virtual graduates to “travel beyond the valley of the humour-impaired and over the top of sexual anarchy to a coup d’etat of crackpot capitalism”.

Funnily enough, Taylor Swift used that exact same line when she gave the [commencement speech](#) at New York University last week. Only kidding. Of course she didn't. But the approaches taken by famous people to this odd task, of delivering a speech that mixes support, congratulations, personal anecdotes and advice on how to live well (spoiler alert: being rich really helps) are varied and fascinating.

Swift, who picked up an honorary doctorate, opted for “life hacks” over advice, all with a smattering of self-deprecating humour. “I’m 90% sure the main reason I’m here is because I have a song called 22,” she told the class of ’22. She told the students not to be ashamed to try, a sentiment I found oddly touching, and very Swift-esque in its unabashed sincerity. “I’m a big advocate for not hiding your enthusiasm for things,” she said. She argued that there was “a false stigma around eagerness in our culture of ‘unbothered ambivalence’”, which sounds as if she’s putting in the work to make that honorary doctorate a real one. “Unbothered Ambivalence and the 19th-century gothic” etc.

To continue the spirit of Swift’s earnestness, it is a lovely sentiment, and a rare one now, in a culture that is becoming increasingly arch and distant, filtering its emotions only through humour and gags. But nonchalance is boring, and it gets nothing done. If this is the start of the big enthusiasm comeback, then fittingly, I’m all for it.

Lessons with Lisa McGee’s Derry Girls were a delight



Lisa McGee in front of a *Derry Girls* mural in Londonderry on 7 April 2022.
Photograph: Liam McBurney/PA

I watched the final two episodes of *Derry Girls* twice, once before they aired, because [I reviewed them](#), and then again when they were on TV, because sometimes big telly moments like that are better in a crowd. I cried both times. It was a near-perfect ending to what has been a wonderful series, and has rightly been credited with educating viewers about the Good Friday agreement, and doing so with jokes to spare. It was brilliant and it was very moving.

Its creator, Lisa McGee, told a press screening that one of its most powerful storylines, in which Erin and Michelle fall out owing to Michelle's family history, wasn't originally part of the episode at all. When filming was delayed by Covid – which is why there were so many scenes involving Clare being in a different place to everyone else, as Nicola Coughlan was also filming *Bridgerton* – McGee had time to think, and pitched the idea of the friends' conflict playing out against the backdrop of the referendum. "Let's just bring the political and the personal crashing together, because it's the only time we're going to get a chance to do it," she said.

The BBC ran [a piece](#) last week asking where all the new classic sitcoms were, pointing out that a *One Show* poll of the best-loved BBC series had

seen 10 sitcoms named by viewers, but none of them made in the last 15 years. Naturally *Derry Girls* wouldn't count, as a Channel 4 resident, but that last episode tipped it into the category of new classic sitcom for me, and I suspect it will be rewatched for years to come.

Star man Sam Ryder makes a virtue of second spot



Sam Ryder gives it his all at Eurovision. Photograph: Stefania D'Alessandro/Getty Images

There is an old movie, from 2009, called *Whip It*, a sweet little film directed by Drew Barrymore, about the sport of roller derby. I get a brief, fairly unimportant bit of dialogue from it stuck in my head all the time. When the team we're supposed to root for loses a match, they happily start chanting "We're number two! We're number two!". The joke being that there are two teams in a roller derby match.

This year's *Eurovision Song Contest* has been quite the journey, for any number of reasons, not least a victory for Ukraine that arrived on the wave of a definitive and heartening public vote. But for the first time in a great many years, [the UK was a contender](#). Sam Ryder's Space Man had a second chance last week, with Ryder cheerfully campaigning for it to be the first British Eurovision entry to go to number one since Gina G's Ooh Aah... Just

a Little Bit, in 1996. Alas, Harry Styles, in what might be the only unpopular move of his career, pipped Ryder to the post with As It Was. But if Ryder has learned anything over the last seven days, it's how to be gracious in defeat. He's number two! He's number two!

Rebecca Nicholson is an Observer columnist

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[The Observer](#)[Dominic Cummings](#)

If Dominic Cummings were still running No 10, would we have given up on Ukraine?

[Nick Cohen](#)



It's one thing to enjoy the ex-adviser's attacks on the PM, another to read his line on autocrats



Dominic Cummings: ‘The man who campaigned for Britain to take back control from the EU is arguing against Ukraine’s right to exist as a sovereign state’. Photograph: Neil Hall/EPA

Sun 22 May 2022 02.00 EDT

Play the “what if” history game and it is easy to see the west betraying the people of Ukraine. What if Donald Trump had won the 2020 US presidential election? You do not need to go back and read of his envious admiration of Vladimir Putin and every other quasi and actual dictator, when he is currently condemning the Biden administration for [sending \\$40bn to Ukraine](#) instead of putting America First.

What if Jeremy Corbyn had won the 2019 UK general election? We do not need to remember his [appeasement of Putin](#) after Russia’s nerve agent attack in Salisbury now that the great anti-imperialist has decided that a war of colonial aggrandisement by Europe’s last empire is exactly the right moment to say that he wishes to see Nato “[ultimately disbanded](#)”.

And what if [Dominic Cummings](#) still controlled Downing Street?

The answer takes us to the heart of a misreading of the past 30 years. The conventional wisdom holds that right and left were committed to liberal democracy and free markets. Their principled/complacent/ corrupt (delete according to taste) worldview was shattered by the arrival of strongman nationalist leaders in the 2010s, as if from nowhere.

Long before Trump, Conservatives were following the path that ends at the grim terminus of dictator worship

Nothing comes from nowhere. The belief that democracy needs to be defended only when the system allows the right to win was there long before 2016. As was the contempt of reactionaries for liberal rights, and their conviction that the progressive elite was destroying the ethnic essence of the nation by cynically importing migrants who would vote for centre-left politicians. Resentment and paranoia stewed not only on the far right but in the supposedly elevated minds of Tory intellectuals, and pushed them ineluctably to authoritarian conclusions. As Cummings has been busy showing us.

The man who campaigned for Britain to take back control from the EU is arguing against Ukraine's [right to exist](#) as a sovereign state. He says the US and UK have "deliberately discouraged peace talks" – as if Putin has shown the smallest interest in withdrawing his forces. "Much of Ukraine is wrecked, thousands dead and hundreds of billions in damage," he continues. Agreed, but who did the wrecking and killing? Cummings is too tongue-tied to say. He airbrushes away Russia's responsibility for its crimes and then sinks lower by asserting that Russian propaganda contains more than a grain of truth. "Some" of the aid we send to Ukraine is "going to actual Nazis, as Putin claims", Cummings opines. While actual mass murderers are indulged, Volodymyr Zelenskiy is denounced as a self-obsessed warmonger. He is "happy to escalate". He has a "PT Barnum-feel for manipulating the media, and is loving it".

If Cummings's advice had been followed, no British anti-tank and surface-to-air missiles would have been [sent to Kyiv](#), and the Ukrainian resistance would have felt their absence.

As it is, Cummings is reduced to showing us the smoulderings from the fag end of the British imperial mindset. Great powers can do as they please. We should not mention their unprovoked crimes against humanity, but acknowledge that they are right to say that, among the mounds of corpses they leave behind, are “actual Nazis”. Meanwhile, the Ukrainians and their ridiculous leader must stop escalating a conflict Russia imposed on them and accept that their fate is to submit.

When they were friends, Cummings and Johnson had a fair crack at turning authoritarian theory into practice

Long before Trump, Conservatives were following the path that ends at the grim terminus of dictator worship. Leftwing critics of the last Labour government found it an insipid, Tory-lite affair. We would have understood it better if we had registered how fervently rightwing opinion hated Blairism. They no longer understood their country. The multiculturalism, the sexual tolerance and the very fact Labour was in power for 13 years induced disgust and a despairing willingness to embrace any white, Christian regime that proclaimed itself the enemy of liberalism. Cummings’s mentor at Oxford, Norman Stone, a decent historian until the drink did for him, ended his days penning apologias for Hungarian authoritarianism. Viktor Orbán was so impressed by the flattery that he attended Stone’s funeral. Roger Scruton, who is still regarded as a thoughtful philosopher among unthinking Conservatives, and Margaret Thatcher’s speech writer John O’Sullivan also bent the knee to Orbán in their old age. It is not only the Fox News wing of the American right that cannot decide whether it prefers Hungarian or Russian autocracy.

When they were friends, Cummings and Johnson had a fair crack at turning authoritarian theory into practice. They purged the Conservative party of critics, unlawfully suspended parliament and assaulted every independent institution that might check them. A serious government, said Cummings, was “not cowed by officials and their bullshit ‘legal advice’”. It could dispense with laws that stood in the way of a true Brexit.

As it turned out, Cummings was the bullshit that was dispensed with. Luckily for Ukrainians, Johnson fired him. Johnson himself is now as far

from a strongman as it is possible to imagine: a bloated, enfeebled leader, in fear of his backbenchers and without an idea about how to cope with today's crisis, he ricochets from one buffeting to the next like an overgrown child on a bouncy castle.

You can be relieved at our democracy's escape until you examine the detail. The Tory party rebels against Johnson to stop the building of new homes or the imposition of anti-obesity measures but it never objects in sufficient numbers to the attacks on the BBC and Channel 4, or to the threats to the independence of the civil service, or to the freedom to protest, or to the Human Rights Act.

Conservatives resent comparisons between Johnson and Trump, let alone Johnson and Putin. But on one point there is equivalence. Johnson took Britain out of the EU as Putin invaded Ukraine, to assert national greatness. Both enterprises have been disastrous because neither leader had the smallest idea of how to make their adventurism work.

We are left with "what if" questions of our own. What if the next election sees voter suppression so endemic that two million are [denied the franchise](#)? What if a cowed BBC dare not challenge the ruling party? What if the failure of Brexit sends the Conservatives into a spiral of revanchism and stab-in-the-back conspiracism?

We don't know the answers yet, only that our "what ifs" are not a game.

Nick Cohen is an Observer columnist

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Sat 21 May 2022 12.43 EDTFirst published on Fri 20 May 2022 17.49 EDT

[Amy Remeikis](#), [Christopher Knaus](#) and [Nino Bucci](#)

Sat 21 May 2022 12.43 EDTFirst published on Fri 20 May 2022 17.49 EDT

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Summary

The story of this election is not just the change of government, but the warning to the major parties they can no longer take any seat for granted. There is no longer any such thing as a safe seat.

Primary votes for the major parties are down. The Nationals saw a swing against it as well. Minor parties, particularly the Greens, have had a massive moment. Independent candidates have swept through moderate Liberal seats, changing not just the country but the future of the party of Menzies.

After floods, fires and a pandemic, all in the space of three years, Australia gravitated towards candidates who made action on climate change their number one issue. After almost a decade of being told there is nothing to see here, Australians voted for candidates who wanted to see integrity back in politics.

And after women were dismissed, over and over again by the government, the government's blue ribbon voters voted for women.

Scott Morrison was [Scott Morrison](#) to the end, thanking the defence force, police and tradies, but mentioning not a word of the teachers, nurses, frontline staff, health workers or aged care workers who got us through the pandemic.

Anthony Albanese promised to govern for all Australians, even those who did not vote for him.

He's got his work cut out for him.

Over on Sky News, **Paul Murray** was telling his viewers “the resistance starts now”. But if anything, this election showed that it wasn’t what the media as a whole was serving up which won hearts and minds. It was the issues of every day life. Not demonising one of our most vulnerable communities. Not gaffes. Not gotchas, or numbers, or photo ops or scare campaigns.

It was all the questions people were asking which weren’t being addressed by the campaigns. Climate. Integrity. Cost of living.

In the end, Australia told its leaders what it wanted, instead of its leaders dictating what they thought it needed.

The major parties are on notice. It’s entirely up to them whether they rise to the occasion or not.

Thank you for joining us tonight (and this morning).

We will be back tomorrow with more of the fall out and the count.

But please – sleep tight. And take care of you.

A x

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Updated at 12.05 EDT

[15h ago 11.43](#)

State of play



Ben Raue

As a final summation of the state of play in the House of Representatives. At the moment Labor is leading in just enough seats for a slim majority, but there are still 19 seats we haven't called. I suspect quite a few of those will be ready to call in the morning, but some will have to wait for most of the postal votes to be counted.

If Labor falls short of a majority they'll have many options from an estimated 16 crossbenchers.

This includes two to four Greens, right-wing crossbenchers like **Dai Le** and **Bob Katter**, and a large bloc of teal independents. Even if Labor wins a majority they will be aware that their majority is very slim and could be vulnerable in 2025 – so I'm sure they will still look to form alliances.

This has been a historic election, in part because Labor has been returned to government, but also because the two-party system has been seriously weakened. On the latest numbers, Labor and the [Coalition](#) have polled just over 68% of the primary vote between them, down from just under 75% in 2019. Labor looks set to form government with a primary vote currently sitting on 32.7% and the Coalition's challenge of winning back power is

made far harder because they've lost so many of their seats to independents, not just to a government that will be judged on its record.

In the Senate, the Greens have done very well, and are on track for 12 seats. It seems likely that Labor, Greens and ACT Senate candidate David Pocock are on track for 39 out of 76 seats.

The Coalition has lost Senate seats to the left, but also look set to lose seats to right-wing minor parties. Their third seats in Queensland, [Western Australia](#), Victoria and Tasmania appear lost, along with their sole ACT Senate seat, and they don't look up to the task of winning back a third seat in South Australia.

This may see a larger group of right-wing and minor parties winning the final Senate seat off the [Liberal party](#) in a number of states: One Nation, Jacqui Lambie Network and possibly United Australia. Even Legalise Cannabis appears to be in with a chance!

Overall this election result can look like a landslide victory or a slight victory, depending on how you look at it. It was a landslide defeat for the Morrison government, but only a slim victory for Labor, with the difference made up by a crossbench that will be bigger than ever in both houses.

There will be time later to examine the trends, but it is clear that the Coalition's defeat didn't come in the traditional marginal seats of regional and outer suburban Australia, but rather in their heartland inner city seats, where both major parties went backwards. These are seats where the campaign was dominated by demands for stronger climate action, a change in the treatment of women in politics, and the establishment of an integrity commission with teeth.

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[15h ago](#)[11.01](#)

Do not be surprised if Labor chooses to nominate a speaker for the parliament who is not from the Labor benches. An independent (or even **BrIDGET ARCHER** as a long shot) is much more likely to get the nod to protect Labor's numbers on the floor.

Plus it might bring back some fairness to the proceedings, after **Andrew Wallace's** very short reign.

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Updated at 11.15 EDT

[15h ago](#) [10.59](#)



Ben Raue

On current numbers, Labor is leading in 76 seats, the [Coalition](#) is leading in 59, and crossbench candidates are leading in 16.

There are quite a few seats that are very close, but on the current numbers, Labor is in majority territory.

At the moment, Labor is leading in 10 seats (as opposed to having won them), but five of those we are close to being willing to call.

The Coalition has won 41 and is leading in a further 18, but we are close to calling another seven.

The crossbench has won nine seats and is leading in seven, but two of these we are close to calling.

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Updated at 11.02 EDT

[15h ago](#)[10.57](#)

OK, we are going to start wrapping up the night.

Anthony Albanese appears to be giving individual interviews to the journalists at his function so he may be there until 4am, but we have beds to hit. In another couple of hours or so.

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Updated at 11.00 EDT

[16h ago](#)[10.38](#)

Grace Tame has entered the chat:

A grateful nation is crying with you.

And who said I didn't smile at the prime minister?
pic.twitter.com/srvgZYU40z

— Grace Tame (@TamePunk) [May 21, 2022](#)

•

•

[16h ago](#) [10.32](#)

And **Kevin Rudd**:

Congratulations to Albo on becoming the 31st Prime Minister of Australia. Well done, mate. A new page in Australian history is now to be written. pic.twitter.com/BrEmEJ69w7

— Kevin Rudd (@MrKRudd) [May 21, 2022](#)

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[16h ago](#) [10.31](#)

Anthony Albanese victory speech

And in case you missed this:

Anthony Albanese victory speech: Labor leader to be Australia's next PM after election – video

•

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Updated at 10.34 EDT

[16h ago](#) [10.30](#)

Scott Morrison concession speech

For those who missed it:

Scott Morrison concedes defeat to Labor's Anthony Albanese in Australian election – video

•
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16h ago [10.29](#)

Likely Senate numbers



Ben Raue

Candidates of the left appear to have made a number of gains in the Senate. It looks like the Greens will gain a seat from the LNP in Queensland and a seat from centrist independents in South Australia, while Labor looks likely to gain a seat from the Liberal party in [Western Australia](#). Labor has lost a seat in New South Wales to the Greens.

The Liberal Party looks set to lose a number of other seats to minor parties. The third Liberal candidate trails the UAP in Victoria, One Nation in Queensland and the Jacqui Lambie Network.

If these results fall in this way, it would mean that Labor, the Greens and David Pocock would have a slim majority, with the option to work with five other crossbenchers as needed.

ALP 26

GRN 12

IND 1

JLN 2

ON 2

UAP 1

LNC 32

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Updated at 10.34 EDT

[16h ago](#)[10.28](#)

I'll be back shortly with a summation of the seat count at this point, but I wanted to draw attention to the historic nature of the crossbench result. At the moment we've called nine seats for the crossbench and have them leading in seven others for a total of 16.

The previous record for crossbenchers was six, in 2010 and 2019.

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Updated at 10.31 EDT

[16h ago](#)[10.27](#)

Senate update

Western Australia looks like delivering four seats to Labor and two to the Coalition

South Australia – two Labor, two [Coalition](#), one Green and possibly one One Nation

Queensland – two Labor, two LNP, one One Nation, and one Greens

Tasmania – two Labor, two LNP, one Green and possibly Jacquie Lambie Network

Victoria – two Labor, two LNP, one Green, and possibly one UAP

ACT – one Labor and most likely David Pocock

NT – one Labor and one country [Liberal party](#).

NSW – two Labor, two Coalition, one Green and most likely one One Nation

-
-

Updated at 10.30 EDT

[16h ago](#) [10.18](#)

Bill Shorten is also celebrating tonight:

"Weight has come off my shoulders."

Former Labor leader Bill Shorten has just reacted to Prime Minister elect Anthony Albanese's speech, describing it as a "sense of relief". [#AusVotes](#) | LIVE on Channel 9 pic.twitter.com/ftefDX7M39

— 9News Australia (@9NewsAUS) [May 21, 2022](#)

•
•

Updated at 10.21 EDT

[16h ago](#)[10.16](#)

It has taken floods, fires and a pandemic – all in the last three years – but Australia has finally had its climate crisis election.

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Updated at 10.18 EDT

[16h ago](#)[10.14](#)

Julia Gillard made a late campaign appearance:

Congratulations to [@AlboMP](#) and the Labor team! Australia has chosen change and progress. I look forward to seeing vitally needed changes for equity, diversity and inclusion.

— Julia Gillard (@JuliaGillard) [May 21, 2022](#)

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Updated at 10.22 EDT

[16h ago](#)[10.13](#)



Nick Evershed

This map shows the vote % for One Nation, United Australia party and the Greens, with the UAP in particular doing best in regional and outer suburban areas, while the Greens vote is concentrated in inner city seats, with the exception of Richmond, which covers the top of northern NSW

Swings

One Nation's vote is not surprisingly highest in Queensland, but also currently over 9% in the NSW electorate of Hunter

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Australian election 2022

Election day: Morrison accuses UAP supporters of ‘making stuff up’ as Albanese relishes the ‘wind at his back’

PM ditches planned event in Chisholm to race back to Sydney while Labor leader joins candidate in Higgins and meets a cavoodle called Bismarck

- [Australia federal election 2022 LIVE – latest news and updates](#)
- [Election 2022 results: live votes tracker and federal seat counts](#)
- [Get our free news app; get our morning email briefing](#)



Anthony Albanese pats a dog while supporting the Labor candidate for the seat of Higgins, Michelle Ananda-Rajah, at a polling booth in Carnegie.
Photograph: Lukas Coch/AAP

[Josh Butler](#) and [Paul Karp](#)

Sat 21 May 2022 03.13 EDT Last modified on Sat 21 May 2022 04.23 EDT

The prime minister, Scott Morrison, and the Labor leader, [Anthony Albanese](#), finished their respective campaigns on home turf in Sydney – Albanese in Marrickville in the seat of Grayndler, and Morrison in Lilli Pilli in the electorate of Cook. Guardian Australia's Josh Butler and Paul Karp were with the leaders on Saturday for their final pitch to voters.

Anthony Albanese

Albanese's last public message to voters before polls closed was that he wants to make Australians "proud".

"My big concern with this government is, what is there to be proud of?" he asked.

The Labor leader's campaign ended where it all began for him, deep in Sydney's inner west, surrounded by family. Albanese's son, Nathan, accompanied him as he cast a ballot for himself; his partner, Jodie, a quiet but constant presence on the election trail beside her beau; his dog, Toto, the shy cavoodle who Albanese clearly adores.

The emotion of the campaign seems to have caught up with Albanese in recent days. Yesterday he swallowed back tears as he spoke of how his late mother Maryanne would be "proud as punch" of him right now. Standing on the steps of the Marrickville town hall, moments after he cast his vote, Albanese wouldn't start his election day press conference until his son was by his side, wanting to share the moment with his boy.

"I want to unite the country," he told media.

"Once [the election] is done, we need to unite and move forward as a nation. I believe we can."

Albanese said he "slept quite well" on Friday night, after blitzing through four states in a day. He woke in Melbourne today, telling breakfast TV interviews that people should "give Labor a crack" in government after nine years of [Coalition](#) rule. He visited a polling booth in marginal Liberal-held

Higgins, joining Labor candidate Michelle Ananda-Rajah to meet a cavoodle named Bismarck wearing a Labor button, a black greyhound in a red jacket, and dozens of Labor supporters chanting “Albo, Albo”.

Liberal party volunteers brandishing signs for the Higgins incumbent Katie Allen yelled “what’s the unemployment rate?”. Just as he left, a Liberal-shirted man ran across the road with a Bluetooth speaker, pumping the dance remix of the “hole in your bucket” song and dancing as Albanese’s car took off.

A flight to Sydney and a drive back to Marrickville, to vote at the town hall that’s barely 100 metres from his electorate office. Walking Toto, Albanese told Labor volunteers “we’re almost there”. Toto was a hit with supporters outside, with volunteers and journalists posing for photos with the most famous dog in [Australian politics](#). Albanese joked his pet was also running for an important position – “first dog”.

Numerous cars whizzing by along busy Marrickville Road spotted the leader and his entourage, beeping and yelling support. After 26 years as the local member, Albanese said he aimed to stay “grounded” if he won tonight.



‘My heart is here’: Anthony Albanese after casting his vote at Marrickville town hall. Photograph: Lukas Coch/AAP

Asked by Guardian Australia how he would act as PM while also being the member for Grayndler, Albanese said he'd still try to catch Newtown Jets rugby league games at the local Henson Park whenever he could, and looked forward to rejoining his local tennis competition.

"I'm hoping to get a couple of games in over the next little while," Albanese laughed.

"My heart is here. I grew up, I've lived in this area, the inner west, my whole life."

In the back of the press conference, several Albanese advisers hugged and smiled, appearing drained after a gruelling campaign. They have been worn down by the six weeks, the campaign and its leader complaining privately and publicly about the media coverage from those on the bus – but with the final event of the campaign drawing to an end, several staffers looked pleased to be at what they called "day zero".

Albanese himself has told multiple media interviews in recent days that he had "left nothing in the tank, nothing on the field".

With polls showing Labor still in the lead, albeit with the gap narrowing, Albanese's team looked confident but nervous. Many of them speak openly of "PTSD" after the 2019 shock loss, and none have uttered a single word even hinting that they think the result is locked.

Albanese said he wasn't being presumptuous about tonight's outcome, but appeared confident.

"I believe we have the wind at our back, and I'm very positive about and hopeful about a good outcome," he said.



Scott Morrison with wife Jenny and daughters Lily and Abbey arrives to vote at Lilli Pilli public school. Photograph: Reuters

Scott Morrison

Morrison delivered an election day bombshell in one last ditch attempt to scare voters against voting for Labor.

But first, a round of interviews, addressing the conundrum of whether he represents change or continuity.

On Weekend Sunrise, Morrison acknowledged that women's issues were "an area where clearly I need to communicate better".

On ABC News Breakfast, Morrison said "the strength that I have described in the way that I did [bulldozer], that remains, but we will be going into a different gear". Morrison's own bulldozer analogy is now evidently so meaningless or counterproductive that he couldn't even bring himself to say the word.

Morrison attended a polling booth in McEwen, rejecting conspiracy theories from United Australia party supporters that the government is handing

control over to the World Health Organization. “That’s a complete lie,” he said. “You’re just making stuff up.”

Morrison cut short his Melbourne trip, ditching a planned event in Chisholm to race back to Sydney.

He voted at Lilli Pilli public school around midday, arriving to supportive chants of “Scomo! Scomo!” from young children either enthusiastic to see him re-elected or, perhaps more simply, to get on TV.

At a doorstop after he voted, Morrison confirmed a report that a boat from Sri Lanka had been intercepted on its way to Australia – an apparent breach of the protocol he established as immigration minister not to comment on on-water matters. He refused to answer interjections on that point.

And then he was off, pursued by the cries of a climate protester, Desiree, from Tomorrow Movement.

Desiree from the Tomorrow Movement has a message for Scott Morrison and Australians voting today pic.twitter.com/FMQFxUf7et

— Paul Karp (@Paul_Karp) [May 21, 2022](#)

The next we will see him is when he takes the stage to announce his second “miracle” election victory or concede that this really was his last political gasp.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/may/21/election-day-morrison-accuses-uap-supporters-of-making-stuff-up-as-albanese-relishes-the-wind-at-his-back>

[Police](#)

Police chiefs to apologise for ‘racism, discrimination and bias’ in race plan

New 50-page plan will avoid admitting institutional racism which critics say could doom promised reforms



The document and planned reforms comes after decades of promises by policing to stamp out racism in the ranks, and failure to deliver. Photograph: Oli Scarff/Getty Images

[Vikram Dodd](#) Police and crime correspondent

Fri 20 May 2022 14.06 EDT Last modified on Sat 21 May 2022 00.14 EDT

Police chiefs will declare they are “ashamed” about racism remaining in law enforcement, and apologise for the “discrimination and bias” still plaguing forces in a new race plan launching next week.

The plan from National Police Chiefs Council and College of Policing will [avoid admitting institutional racism](#), which critics brand a failure which

could doom the promised reforms.

However, it will instead commit to being “institutionally anti-racist”, and aim to start winning back the confidence of black people, which among black Caribbean people is 20% lower than the national average.

They vow to end the treatment which black people find “stigmatising and humiliating”, and police chiefs from England and Wales will say: “We accept that policing still contains racism, discrimination and bias. We are ashamed of those truths, we apologise for them and we are determined to change them.”

The plan, running to more than 50 pages, follows months of intense and at times bitter discussions.

It was triggered by the mass protests after the [murder of George Floyd](#) in the United States by a police officer, and has taken so long it will be published just a day before the second anniversary of his death.

The document and planned reforms comes after decades of promises by policing to stamp out racism in the ranks, and failure to deliver.

In 1999, policing was declared to be institutionally racist by the [Macpherson inquiry](#) into the police blunders that allowed the racist murderers of Stephen Lawrence to escape justice after he was stabbed to death at a London bus stop.

Policing has in large parts – especially in the Met –declared that the label no longer applies. [The Guardian has revealed](#) chiefs were debating a public declaration, almost a quarter of a century on from Macpherson, that policing remained so.

Some chief constables and community experts they consulted insisted that accepting the label was the essential starting point to repair the damage, otherwise any plan risked never even getting a hearing from communities weary of promises and false claims they had been delivered.

Police leaders could not agree to accept forces were still institutionally racist, even holding a vote

The chiefs will say: “Much has been done in the intervening years by policing to address racism in the police and society.

“Despite this, change has not been fast nor significant enough in Black communities. As we have prepared this plan, we have heard the views of Black people and their experiences of policing. We have listened to the voices of our own Black colleagues about the service they belong to.

“The challenge for reform, set out by Macpherson, cannot be said to have been unambiguously answered by policing. Many people believe policing to still be institutionally racist and have grounds for this view.”

The murder of [George Floyd](#) in the US saw over 250,000 people take to British streets in support of Black Live Matter and calls for racial justice in a phalanx of protests, despite the country being in lockdown.

Discussions within policing with ethnic minority officers saw some chiefs realise the race problems in their forces were more severe than they had realised.

The document says: “We have much to do to secure the confidence of Black people, including our own staff, and improve their experience of policing – and we will. We will be held to account and we welcome scrutiny.

“That need for change is evident. Policing lags behind almost every part of the public service as an employer of choice for Black people. Confidence levels are much lower, and our powers are disproportionately applied to Black people. In some crimes, victimisation rates are higher.

“Black officers and staff leave policing earlier in their careers than White staff and the fact we have only seen two Black officers reach chief constable or assistant commissioner rank in policing’s history is a failure. “

One chief constable who supports accepting policing is institutionally racist said: “All the figures show it still is.”

One chief who opposed it said the label was “unhelpful” and not accurate.

Victor Olisa, former head of diversity at Scotland Yard, said failing to admit institutional racism will blow the credibility of the new promises: “They may say they will do better, but without an admission of institutional racism, it won’t be believed in communities.

“Police chiefs are being insular and doing what suits them and not the service of the public.”

The chiefs will say the argument that policing reflects biases in society is not good enough: “Policing has a much higher obligation than any other public service, given its ability to deprive liberty and use the most intrusive powers. The collective trust of society is critical to a police service built upon consent.”

Sources involved in discussions said while high on aspiration, the plan risked lacking specifics.

Chiefs will adopt a policy of “explain or reform” on racial disparities, such as stop and search, and the plan will say: “Black people are seven times more likely to be stopped and searched than White people and five times more likely to be subjected to the use of force. Testimonies tell us that Black people find these encounters – particularly stop and search – confrontational, stigmatising and humiliating.

“10% of our recorded searches, 27% of use-of-force incidents and 35% of Taser incidents involved someone from a Black ethnic group. The latest estimates suggest that only 3.5% of the population is Black.”

Chiefs have brought in independent scrutiny and the public will be encouraged to give their views on the plan.

The plan is produced by the NPCC and College of Policing and will now be consulted upon and may change. They state their aim is: “Our vision is for a police service that is anti-racist and trusted by Black people.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/may/20/police-chiefs-to-apologise-for-racism-discrimination-and-bias-in-race-plan>

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Boris Johnson

Boris Johnson among dozens warned they face criticism in Sue Gray's report

PM notified before publication next week, as an ex-civil service chief says 'real issue' is the No 10 leadership



Boris Johnson alongside his cabinet secretary, Simon Case. The PM received a fixed-penalty notice while Case did not. Photograph: WPA/Getty Images

[Rowena Mason](#) and [Heather Stewart](#)

Fri 20 May 2022 13.50 EDT Last modified on Sat 21 May 2022 00.14 EDT

Boris Johnson is among dozens of No 10 officials warned by Sue Gray they are facing criticism in her Partygate report next week, as a former civil service chief said the "real issue" was the leadership of the prime minister and his cabinet secretary, Simon Case.

Johnson is one of 20 to 30 current and former staffers who have been notified by letter that accounts of their conduct will feature in her final

report on the lockdown-busting parties. This is now likely to be published next week after Scotland Yard [handed out 126 fixed-penalty notices](#) to people from No 10, including one for Johnson but many for more junior staff.

On Friday night, it emerged Johnson and Gray had a private meeting about the investigation some weeks ago, although sources on both sides insisted the contents of the report was not discussed. One described it as a progress meeting taking stock of the process.

Whitehall sources said the report was likely to be heavily critical of the culture that arose in the civil service, which Johnson has attempted partly to address this week with [a shake-up of his No 10 operation](#) to bring more under his own control.

However, Bob Kerslake, a crossbench peer and former leader of the civil service, said Partygate was “about conduct and behaviours that can’t be dealt with by changing structures”.

He said: “It could improve efficiency but I’m not sure that in itself could have altered the course of events when the real issue was the leadership at the top, truthfully with the prime minister, and I have to say potentially with the cabinet secretary but until we see Sue’s report it is hard to make that judgment.”

Case is not among those who received a fixed penalty, despite a party in his office having been under investigation. He was due to appear at the public administration committee next week but has pulled out, leading its Tory chairman, William Wragg, to say it “puts government transparency in a poor light”.

He added: “The session with the cabinet secretary was an important one considering the number of propriety and ethics issues on the agenda.”

Asked why Case had pulled out, a Cabinet Office spokesperson said: “The cabinet secretary and director general for property and ethics have been rescheduled to appear at the committee in June.”

The cabinet secretary, who formerly headed up the civil service in No 10, is the subject of considerable anger among officials, many of whom feel they have been unfairly penalised after cooperating with the Gray report – unlike their superiors.

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Gary Graham, a deputy general secretary of the Prospect union, suggested in a BBC interview on Friday that the prime minister should consider his position. He said the key issue in the Gray report should be “who were the key decision-makers in No 10 and who set the culture … there were a number of quite catastrophic decisions made at senior level, including by the prime minister, and those should not be put at the door of junior staff.”

A spokesperson for the PCS, the union that represents 180,000 civil servants and will next week vote on national strike action, was also highly critical of the way junior civil servants appeared to have been punished for events that were known about by more senior staff.

“It’s one rule for the prime minister, cabinet ministers and senior civil servants who organised the Downing Street parties, another for junior staffers,” he said. “Once again, this government shows little – or no – respect to our members who worked so hard keeping the country going during the pandemic.”

Whitehall sources said No 10 had been pressing for Gray’s report to be published as early as Monday, giving those sent warning letters the weekend to respond if they wish.

But the report is understood to be more likely to come midweek, given some of the recipients of warning letters may want to challenge the findings or even hire lawyers to dispute any facts.

Not all of those sent a letter will be named, but they have been sent summaries of how their conduct is portrayed in the report. No 10 said on Friday it was not blocking the release of any names, which are likely to be at senior civil service level only.

After Gray's report is published and Johnson makes a statement to the Commons giving his own account of the Partygate saga, the prime minister is keen to turn public attention to his government's response to the cost of living crisis.

He told the Conservative conference in Wales on Friday that he wanted to “use the firepower we have built up to put our arms around people, just as we did during the pandemic”.

Secure contact details for Guardian politics

There had been speculation that No 10 and No 11 could come to an agreement on help for households, including measures to help people with bills, by the middle of next week. But despite Johnson's hint of help to come, a Treasury source played down the idea of an imminent move, suggesting it was unlikely an announcement from Rishi Sunak, the chancellor, would come before the House of Commons rises for a Whitsun recess next Thursday.

“Rishi is still looking at a whole variety of options, and hasn't settled yet on what the best way forward is: we're a bit of a way off,” the source said. Options under consideration include an expansion of the existing warm homes discount, which cuts the energy bills of the poorest consumers; another one-off payment like the council tax cut that came into force in April; or much more costly across-the-board interventions such as a VAT cut, or bringing forward the income tax reduction planned for 2024.

With a potential delay to the announcement on cost of living, Conservative backbenchers are concerned about political drift, and have urged Johnson's team to “knuckle down” in the weeks ahead.

“There's a lot of frustration that although there are some departments doing good things, there's nothing that threads it all together: there's no central theme, there's no central purpose,” said one former minister. “If I were in No 10, instead of feeling exuberant I would be knuckling down.”

MPs expressed bemusement at the Met's handling of the investigation, with one describing what they called colleagues' “general mystification”, adding:

“It does seem very unclear as to how some people at the same event have been fined and not others.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/may/20/boris-johnson-among-dozens-warned-face-criticism-sue-gray-report-partygate>

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Employment law

Junior staff could have risked career by not attending No 10 parties, lawyer says

Refusing a boss's request may harm relationship and cause employee to take legal action, according to expert



Women and Downing Street staffers on low salaries have reportedly been disproportionately hit by Partygate fines. Photograph: Yui Mok/PA

*[Amelia Hill](#)
[@byameliahill](#)*

Fri 20 May 2022 12.57 EDT Last modified on Sat 21 May 2022 00.14 EDT

Junior civil servants who did not want to attend lockdown-breaching parties held at 10 Downing Street risked being forced to take legal action and put their careers in jeopardy, a senior employment lawyer has said.

The law expects people to stand up for themselves, experts have said, with employees largely expected to comply with their bosses. Whistleblowing

legislation is rarely used because people are worried about repercussions.

“You’re going to struggle as an employee to effectively have any protection against doing what your boss asks you to do unless it is unpleasant, discriminatory or illegal,” said Kathryn Evans, a partner and the head of employment law at Trethowans Solicitors.

“But even if there is a legal breach, as [in the case of these parties](#), the employee needs to decide whether to refuse and risk damaging their relationship with their boss. If they fear this might happen, they have no choice but to bring legal proceedings, which means being prepared to stand up and be counted – and accept that their relationship with their boss is probably at an end.”

Philip Landau, a partner at Landau Law, agreed. “Deferring to their boss’s interpretation of the rules – even though those bosses wrote the rules – is not a plausible and credible defence.

“If your boss puts you in the position where you feel you need to attend a party or lose their favour, there is actually no elegant or subtle way out of it,” he said. “If you feel exposed in this way, you may need to lodge a grievance to protect your position and if this doesn’t resolve matters, bring a case for constructive dismissal. This does mean resigning from your position, however.”

Rustom Tata, a partner and chair at law firm DMH Stallard, said the “law expects people to be able to stand up for themselves. That’s really tough on employees but the situation here is whether they broke the law or they didn’t. Whether you knew it was the law or why you broke it is irrelevant.”

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But, said Tata, one of the general principles of employment law is that everybody should be subjected to an appropriate penalty. This, he pointed out, is said not to have happened in the case of the lockdown parties, where

women and Downing Street staffers on low salaries have reportedly been disproportionately hit by fines.

“Given that no police interviews took place and this all rested on questionnaires, if somebody junior is receiving a fixed-penalty notice for being honest about what they did, compared to somebody senior to them who doesn’t get fined, that isn’t fair,” said Tata.

The question then is what the junior employee can do about it. “This is where it becomes very hard,” said Tata. “The junior employee doesn’t know who they’ve got beef with: is it their boss, who didn’t fill the form out honestly, or is it with the police for selective prosecution?”

But Dave Penman, the general secretary of the FDA, the trade union representing professionals and managers in public service, said junior civil servants may have attended the parties through choice – and senior civil servants may have been fined.

“Clearly this is a unique environment where a relatively junior civil servant could be invited to something by some of the most senior people in the country but let’s not forget, there were civil servants who chose not to attend these parties,” he said.

“We also don’t know who has been fined,” he added. “Junior civil servants might think they’re the only ones but because there’s no obligation to report it if you’ve received a fine, we don’t know who actually has.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/law/2022/may/20/junior-staff-could-risked-career-not-attending-no-10-parties-lawyer-says>

2022.05.21 - Spotlight

- [How to manage anxiety What I wish I'd known about living with an anxiety disorder](#)
- [Novelist Julie Myerson on sharing her children's secrets 'I've got in so much trouble'](#)
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What I wish I'd known about living with an anxiety disorder



Daisy Buchanan: 'My panic was physical before it was mental.' Photograph: The Guardian

When Daisy Buchanan was diagnosed with anxiety in her 20s she finally had a name for what she was feeling, but not the tools to cope. Here's how

she has learned to live with it

Daisy Buchanan

Sat 21 May 2022 05.00 EDT

To some extent, anxiety is an entirely logical response to being alive, and being a human among other humans.

When I was diagnosed with generalised anxiety disorder in my 20s, this thought would have been helpful. To know that the way I responded to some ideas and possibilities was extreme, but it wasn't unusual or illogical. However, that was not how I saw things. I decided that I was a dog, my anxiety was fireworks, and every night was Bonfire Night.

“Sorry, I can’t, I have anxiety,” was a brilliant excuse. At the time, I meant it. My anxiety felt overwhelming and debilitating. The thoughts in my head were hard to corral, but my panic was physical before it was mental. The breathlessness, the pounding heart and the nausea would come without warning, stimulating pure fear. Hit the ground, said my body. Leave the building. I left myself no room to assess the situation. I did not have the tools to look beyond the darkness and realise that the peril had been magnified by my imagination.

Everyone who struggles with anxiety will be responding to a different set of circumstances. The violent bullying and abuse I experienced when I was a child left me feeling worthless, with very little confidence in my abilities. I suspect many of us are afraid of the same things – being rejected, making a mistake, feelings of failure. I also suspect that many of us are high-functioning anxiety sufferers. Doing as many things as we can, as perfectly as possible, is a way to shore up shaky self-esteem and create a feeling of safety.

Perfectionism is my anxiety’s evil twin. One voice whispers: “Stay indoors and hide away for ever”, the other says: “Achievement will keep the bullies at bay! Just do twice as much as you did yesterday, and four times as much tomorrow.” Almost 15 years after I was diagnosed, I’ve managed to

introduce a third little voice. One that simply says: “Come on now, is that actually true?” It’s quiet, but loud enough to drain the drama from any situation I’ve invented.



Cultivate your ‘Is that actually true?’ inner voice ... Daisy Buchanan.
Photograph: Jill Mead/The Guardian

Anxiety is something that I’ve gradually learned to live with. For a long time, I hated it for making me miserable, sick and frightened. I pushed it away, tensing myself against the panic and avoiding any situation that might exacerbate it. Something shifted when I started trying to embrace it. Instead of running from the terror, I started allowing it, sitting with it, and asking myself what it was, not why it was. I thought of it as a kind of emotional food poisoning. It might have been undercooked chicken, it might have been out-of-date hummus, but tracing the source is an arbitrary exercise when you’re spending the night on your bathroom floor. And, like food poisoning, you think the misery will last for ever, but it does pass, and the ending of an anxious spell brings extreme relief, bordering on bliss.

If life with anxiety feels like a struggle, I realise getting better might sound impossible. Because anxiety lies to us. It tells us that we are beyond help. It tricks us, making us feel too sharp, too wired and too sensitive, when it is dulling so many of our senses and telling us to believe we’re not strong

enough or resourceful enough to cope. I promise that what seems impossible today won't feel that way in a week, or a day, or even an hour.

Here's what I wish I had known when I started experiencing anxiety – and what I'm so glad that I have learned.

Trust your instinct about trying medication

If you're anxious, it is entirely understandable to have some anxiety about introducing a new drug to your body. My personal experience is that medication gave me the energy to attempt some significant emotional heavy lifting. After a few years, I came off it very gradually, under medical supervision, to see if I felt OK without it. I do – but I wouldn't hesitate to use it again if it felt right.

This might not be your experience. Do some research, ask lots of questions, prepare for side-effects, and listen to your body and your doctors. Don't listen to anyone who has strong, unsolicited opinions about why you shouldn't take it. You can trust yourself to know what feels right. And if you try something and it doesn't work out for you, that's OK. There are always other options.

Therapy only works if you are prepared to work

It is easy to assume that we are all terribly blasé about therapy now – here's what I wish I'd known. Firstly, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) – can be excellent if you want to work with a counsellor to resolve a specific issue. It did not help me because I needed a more holistic approach, but that didn't mean the system or I were broken. Therapists are wise but not psychic, and to get the most out of a session, you have to prepare. A therapist can only work if you're ready to work with them. Therapy is expensive and should be more readily and cheaply accessible, but then, we could say the same about dentistry.

It is thanks to therapy that I was able to develop my inner “are you sure?” voice and find compelling evidence that I didn't need to feel anxious all of the time. Some of us find a course of therapy restores us. Some of us find it

useful to stay in therapy indefinitely. Many of us return to it during challenging periods. Therapy can be a highly effective tool for managing anxiety. But it isn't the only tool.

Make time for positive habits when not anxious

During spells when I have been in the pit of despair, kind people have made all sorts of well-meaning suggestions that have made me want to hit them. I love baths and long walks, but when life itself is bringing you to your knees, sitting in warm water probably won't give you the relief you need. Cultivating a practice of tiny, manageable hobbies can be a very effective way of building emotional core strength. I've found that if I make time for these positive routines when I'm not feeling unwell, the anxious periods become easier to navigate.

I try to move my body as much as I can. Sometimes that means running around the park, sometimes that means walking to the end of the road and back. I try to read from a book every day. If I'm too anxious to concentrate after a couple of pages, that is fine, I can try again tomorrow. But making it a regular practice has improved my concentration and made me calmer. I'm one of the many people who fell in love with baking over lockdown. I find it restorative to follow a simple recipe and produce something edible at the end.

I don't think it matters what you do, as long as you do it often. You could start by spending two minutes a day skipping or teaching yourself to juggle. Any strange new skill – especially anything that brings you back to your body, engages a different part of your brain and keeps you off your phone – will bring benefits. I still have days when I feel anxious and useless, but then the little voice says: "That's not entirely true. You're a reader, a runner and a baker!"

I have found that alcohol worsens my anxiety, so I cut back. Now, when I do indulge and the anxious feelings return, I am able to remind myself that the world isn't ending, it is just the effects of an extra glass of wine and it will pass.

Spending too much time online can aggravate anxiety

My longest and most painful period of anxiety coincided with a time when I was using social media heavily. I don't think that is a coincidence. But it's complicated. For many of us it isn't practical or realistic to say "don't go on the internet" or "Instagram is bad". We go online seeking information, connection and community. We get inconsistent positive feedback, which reinforces our bad habits. Nine times out of 10, if I pick up my phone and check Twitter, I will see something that will make me feel worse. But knowing there's even a slim chance of a compliment or a friendly message will send me to the app in search of validation. It's a little like gambling. The odds are never in my favour, but sometimes I can't resist playing the game.

However, when I'm online, I'm constantly consuming information, and I am what I eat. There is so much to be anxious about right now: opinions masquerade as news, and every piece of information comes with instructions telling us how worried to be about it. Anxiety loves company, and the people we hope to connect with might be lashing out at us, or broadcasting gloom. Anxiety loves these conditions, and it spreads like mould. That's not to say that we shouldn't ever go online. It's just important to be aware that the internet is a space filled with emotional risks, as well as rewards.

In the past, I've blamed myself for the way social media has made me feel. Now, I'm aware that being online for too long will aggravate my anxiety, just as rolling in a hedgerow will aggravate my hay fever. My body responds, and I'm learning to listen to it. The anxiety exists, but it is no longer the part of me that shouts the loudest.

Careering by Daisy Buchanan is published by Sphere (£14.99), order your copy at [guardianbookshop.com](https://www.guardianbookshop.com).

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Julie Myerson

Interview

Novelist Julie Myerson on sharing her children's secrets: 'I've got in so much trouble'

Lisa Allardice

She was accused of 'betraying motherhood' when she was revealed as the author of the Guardian's Living With Teenagers column. Will her novel about a child with addiction issues reopen old wounds?



Julie Myerson: 'I felt I had brought terrible things on my family through my work.' Photograph: Harry Borden/The Guardian

Sat 21 May 2022 04.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 21 May 2022 15.26 EDT

Few writers have published and been damned with quite the ferocity Julie Myerson was back in 2009 for her memoir *The Lost Child*. The book, which included descriptions of her 17-year-old son Jake's cannabis addiction and

her painful decision to lock him out of the family home, was debated everywhere from Mumsnet to newspaper opinion pages – “[a betrayal of motherhood itself](#)” – and even the [House of Commons](#). Extended family members were doorstepped and Jake was approached by a tabloid to sell his story at a time when he was extremely vulnerable.

“A little bit of me broke,” the novelist says, looking back. She was no longer able to drive, and certainly wasn’t able to do live radio or TV (she had been a regular commentator on the BBC’s Newsnight Review). “It was terrible. My anxiety reached peaks that were just unmanageable. It was so shameful for me. I felt I had brought terrible things on my family through my work.”

Now she has written another book about parents struggling with a teenager’s drug addiction. Narrated by a writer, it is called Nonfiction: A Novel. Why has she returned to a subject that left her so badly scalded?

“I’ve got to be careful. I’ve got in so much trouble in the past,” Myerson says, almost to herself, as we settle in the jewel-coloured living room in the Camden townhouse she and her husband, playwright Jonathan Myerson, have recently renovated. A gallery of photos of their three, now grownup children (Jake, Chloë and Raphael) line the stairs. Their collie dog, Rabbit, waits patiently by french windows overlooking the garden with Jonathan’s state-of-the art office-shed at the bottom. “Why am I jumping straight in?” she asks, tingling with nervous energy.



Myerson in 2004 with her children, from left, Jake, Chloë and Raphael.
Photograph: Zoe Norfolk/Camera Press

Myerson got back late the night before from a holiday with Jonathan in Sicily. The author, who will be 62 next month, is recovering from a hip replacement, following a mastectomy after she was diagnosed with breast cancer during the Christmas lockdown of 2020. The past five years have been dogged by ill-health, starting with the onset of chronic fatigue syndrome, which she believes was caused by the furore over *The Lost Child*.

She might have been forgiven for retreating and writing a historical novel or a thriller, both of which Myerson has done very well over a career spanning nearly 30 years and 14 books. Indeed, she has published three novels since *The Lost Child*: *Then*, set in a post-apocalyptic London, which ends with a mother smothering her children (no prizes for guessing what's going on there: "I was still in a place of some trauma when I wrote that novel"); a crime novel, *The Quickening*, and *The Stopped Heart*, a gothic mystery with even more than Myerson's usual quota of dead babies. As she quips, you can recognise a Myerson novel by the number of illicit affairs and dead children, and Nonfiction is no exception. Myerson thinks it is perhaps her best, although it is the one she has wrestled with the longest. There are plenty of knotty issues raised, right from that tricksy title: Nonfiction: A Novel (her publisher suggested the subtitle to avoid confusing booksellers).

“This book is completely made up. It is also completely true,” Myerson says, helpfully.

I’ve always wanted to write things that feel brave. That make people uncomfortable. I want to be on the edge of what is OK

Writing about your family, even as fiction, is a fraught affair as [Hanif Kureishi](#) and [Rachel Cusk](#) have found to their cost. To do so again seems not so much to be writing from the wound, but picking it open. Courageous or reckless, she says her new novel is her “riposte” to all those who vilified her back in 2009. “It makes you brave having had cancer,” she says (she finished the final edits in hospital days before her mastectomy). Obviously she would hate for her family to be targeted again, but if the book is going to be attacked in the same way as *The Lost Child*, she says part of her thinks, “Bring it on. Because this is who I am. This is the writer I am. This is the person I am. That isn’t the same as saying it is nonfiction, because it is not.”

So why call it Nonfiction? “I was lying in bed one morning reading the paper and I said to Jono, ‘I’ve had an idea what to call my book,’ and he didn’t know what my book was and said, ‘That’s a great title.’ I liked the word. I think fiction tells the truth often more than nonfiction does,” she explains. “I think it is quite a cool title.”

Really? “Did I know as I wrote it that people would be thinking it is about us? Yes of course I did. Yes. Absolutely deliberate. It is a tease of a title.” She has tried “to write a novel about some of the hardest things that there are to say about writing, which is that sometimes you do feel your writing damages the people you love, and obviously I’m a really good example of that.”

Myerson first got into trouble for writing about her children over an anonymous column for this paper that ran from 2006 to 2008, called [Living With Teenagers](#). Her children were between the ages of 14 and 17 when it started, and the column took in everything from temper tantrums to pubic hair, with a lot of swearing in between. It was a huge hit (when she was in hospital people still told her how much they identified with it) and later became a book, with the subtitle [One Hell of a Bumpy Ride](#). She regrets

letting it run for so long without telling her children: “We got that wrong ... but it was an innocent mistake.” When they were very little she had written about them in a column for the Independent, appearing alongside [Helen Fielding’s Bridget Jones’s Diary](#). Later, they would read these columns aloud at the dinner table, because the antics of their younger selves were so funny.

In the altercations over The Lost Child, Jake accused his mother in a tabloid interview of being [“addicted” to writing about them](#). Now she is returning to a subject so close to home, you can’t help but wonder if he had a point. “I’m addicted to trying to be as truthful as possible about the world that I see around me,” Myerson says.

“I’ve always wanted to write things that feel brave. That make people slightly uncomfortable. I like reading work that makes me slightly uncomfortable. That’s why I write. I want to be on the edge of what is OK. I don’t want to hurt anybody I love, of course not. But I need to be as honest as I possibly can.”



‘I’ve accidentally hurt people I would rather not hurt, but I didn’t do it with a bad heart.’ Photograph: Harry Borden/The Guardian

The Lost Child had begun as an investigation into the disappearance of a 19th-century child called Mary Yelloly, but Myerson found herself “too distracted and distressed” by the crisis at home not to write about Jake, so she “let the two strands weave together on the page, just as they seemed to in life”. (No one bothered much with the Mary Yelloly bits; in fact very few of her critics had actually read the book at all, as proofs weren’t even available – something that’s “going to give me grief to the end of my days”, she says.) It describes the couple’s decision to turn Jake out of the house – “No parent asks a child to leave except as a last terrible resort,” she wrote – along with well-documented incidents such as Myerson ending up in A&E with a perforated eardrum after her son struck her.

A while after The Lost Child, Jake came home and things seemed to be getting better. But then, like the daughter in Nonfiction, he started using heroin (Myerson only mentions this because Jake revealed it in a further [newspaper interview](#) in 2014).

While Nonfiction might not be explicitly Jake’s story (the child is a girl), like many of Myerson’s novels it imagines the worst-case scenario: a tragic possibility that for a long time seemed all too real. People had stopped talking to them because of what was happening with Jake, she says. She used to imagine a day when someone asks, “‘How’s Jake?’ And I say, ‘Oh he died.’ And they say, ‘I’m so sorry. How’s your work going?’ People just couldn’t talk about it.”

But Myerson is adamant that she is writing the mother’s story: “I would never try and write about what it is like to be the teenager.” It is about parents who’ve had an addictive child: “I could not possibly have written it had I not experienced being the mother of somebody suffering from addiction.”

You cannot have a child addicted to a substance and not feel the most immense guilt. It devastates you as a parent

The book is dripping with maternal guilt: “I’ve been a bad parent to you, I’ve been selfish, neglectful. Again and again I’ve put myself first … I’ve lied. I’ve been greedy. I’ve said yes to things I shouldn’t have said yes to.

I've hurt the people I love," the narrator confesses in a self-laceration that goes on for pages.

"You cannot have a child addicted to a substance – your darling child who you have done everything possible for, put fluoride on their teeth, got them to school, done homework with them, and tried to excite them about the world – and not feel the most immense guilt. Although all the addiction books tell you it's not your fault," she says. "Jake at the age of eight was the most switched on, responsible, communicative and happy boy. It devastates you as a parent."

Although she is clear she didn't want either *The Lost Child* or *Nonfiction* to be read as campaigning or issue-driven books, she feels middle-class families need to talk truthfully about skunk cannabis and heroin: "So if my novel provokes a bit of that, that is entirely good."

The other drug Myerson wanted to explore in this novel was writing: "It's difficult for families living with a writer. It's very difficult having a mother who is a writer. You want to be a good person and parent. But you really want to tell the truth," she stresses. "I don't know how you square it, really."

As her daughter, Chloë, pointed out, it is "a sort of meta-novel". "I'm not quite sure what 'meta' means," Myerson muses now, but a conversation on the ethics of fiction runs throughout the novel as the narrator reflects on her craft, teaches creative writing and talks to fellow writers. Anyone who has ever sheltered from the rain in the yurt at the Edinburgh festival or tiptoed through muddy fields at Hay-on-Wye will enjoy the scenes set at book festivals, mischievously inviting readers to wonder about the identities of the female poet or pompous journalist. "Good, you are supposed to wonder," Myerson says, clapping her hands together.



‘I do think men are far less often accused of mining their own real lives in their fiction.’ Photograph: Harry Borden/The Guardian

In one central scene at a book event, the narrator is pushed to admit she has had affairs, because they appear in her fiction. “I *do* think men are far less often accused of mining their own real lives in their fiction,” Myerson says. For the record, unlike the narrator in *Nonfiction*, she didn’t have an affair, “and I wouldn’t tell you if I had”, she laughs. “The more things you put in that are fictional the better, because it distracts people,” she says. Although she will say that the marriage in the novel is based on her own: “Jono is such a good man.”

As if on cue, Jonathan bounds in from the garden. He is off to meet a man about a musical, though he hadn’t mentioned it to her before. There is a bit of chat about who is going to walk the dog. “All marriages need their mysteries,” he calls back as he leaves.

But ever since her first novel, *Sleepwalking*, which she published in 1994 when she was 34, written while she was on maternity leave after having Chloë and pregnant with Raphael, her real life has seeped into her fiction. Beginning with the suicide of the heroine’s father (Myerson’s father killed himself the night Chloë was born – although the two events were not connected), *Sleepwalking* is the story of a woman who has an affair late in

her pregnancy. “I try and write about the things I find most difficult to imagine happening,” she says. Hence all the dead babies. She is most proud of *Laura Blundy*, her 2000 historical novel about a Victorian woman haunted by the loss of her son. “Who could have known that years later I’d in effect lose my son, or almost lose him,” she says. “I seem to have this need to talk about loss.”

The other big loss in *Nonfiction* is that of her mother, who died when Myerson was in the earliest stages of writing the novel. All cigarette smoke and catty comments, the narrator’s mother is the standout character and the one Myerson is most prepared to own as being drawn directly from life. Spiteful incidents, such as sending Myerson her baby photos because she didn’t want them any more, really happened, she says. Myerson’s mother never liked her writing, or her husband, even though they’ve been together for more than 30 years. “She said she was ashamed of everything I’d written. She was very competitive with me and couldn’t be proud. It has given me a lot of pain,” the author says.

Can a writer ever be trusted with their own story? My answer would be no. You can’t trust a writer

Myerson chose to cut off nearly all contact with her mother, and didn’t see her before she died. She was forbidden from attending the funeral, and told there would be people there to send her away if she tried to come. “I’ve had to wrestle my way out from under her to some extent, as a person, as a writer and definitely as a mother.” She would never have published the novel had her mother still been alive, she says (although, as she points out, she had already begun writing). “My mother would have been appalled by this book.”

Yet Myerson describes her childhood as “inspiring” rather than miserable. The eldest of three sisters, she was “a very shy, very anxious child”. She credits her mother with turning her into a writer by making her excited about books; ironic, given that she hated Myerson being published. When she was 12 her mother left her father for another man; a “brave” thing to do, Myerson says, as her father was hitting her, which the young Julie witnessed, “so I suppose you would class that now as unhappiness, but I

didn't feel unhappy". After being made to pay her school fees by a court when she was 17, her father told her he never wanted to see her again. They didn't meet for many years, until Jonathan insisted they take a newborn Jake to see him: "he wasn't very welcoming," she says. He killed himself on New Year's Eve, within hours of Chloë's birth. "It sounds more dramatic than it is," she says matter-of-factly, as they were estranged at the time. She was cut out of both her parents' wills, something that "hasn't happened to anybody else I know", she says.

Despite all this, Myerson has never had proper therapy: "All my children think I should talk to somebody," she says. She winces at the idea of writing as therapy, but does think part of the artistic process is to make something "constructive and positive" out of trauma; indirectly, all her novels have been a way of coming to terms with her past. She suspects that the experience of having cancer, of being forced "to really peer into an abyss", will inevitably surface in her work. "That shapes you as a person and a writer."

It's a funny thing getting older, she reflects. Looking back, there was a time when she thought she might become the bestselling, award-winning writer she had longed to be since she was eight (when she wrote fan letters to Daphne du Maurier): "Then you begin to realise time has passed and maybe it is not going to happen. There are all these great young writers coming up, and you suddenly realise you are one of the older ones."

At events she is often introduced as "prize-winning", she says, "and I think, I wish". It particularly irks her that she has never even been longlisted for the [Women's prize for fiction](#). "People always think I am posher and more successful than I am."

Given the shrillness of the attacks against her, it's hard not to think Myerson was partly punished for being pretty and appearing on TV to talk about books and art. [Antonia Fraser](#), who's featured in her share of gossip columns over the years, told her: "This has only happened to you because you are blond", she recalls. "I'm only a bottle blond," Myerson adds, laughing.

But she will never stop writing: “I’m still this very strange little person who used to shut herself away in her bedroom with an old typewriter that I got from my grandfather and write these things that I had to write.” Both Chloë and Raphael have inherited the writing gene – Jake is a musician – and she is quite prepared to see herself in a novel at some point.

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Has Jake read Nonfiction? (Much was made at the time of the fact that when Myerson and Jake met to discuss The Lost Child, he said “I can’t stop you publishing it.”) He has been sent the new book, but she’s not sure he has read it. “I wish any of my children would read my books,” she laughs. She is confident that he is in a much better place now, “he’s not an addict”, and that he would respond very differently today. They are in regular contact and she is currently helping him do up a flat. While Jake is “still working himself out in a way”, they are all much happier. “We feel like a family again.”

She feels Nonfiction has drawn a line under The Lost Child, “which I may or may not get away with, but it feels good to have written it”. She refuses to apologise for her books again. “Now that I’m in my 60s and have had cancer, which may or may not come back, I’m just going to relax and carry on doing the thing that I do best.” she says. “I’ve accidentally hurt people I would rather not hurt, but I didn’t do it with a bad heart.”

Two things are clear: she is devoted to her writing and to her children, and, as she discovered, sometimes it is impossible to serve both masters. There is no right answer as to what a mother can write, she concludes. But it is an important question to raise, and that is what she set out to do with this book. “I’m saying, Can a writer ever be trusted with their own story? My answer would be no. You can’t trust a writer. You can’t know if they are telling the truth or not. How much came from real life and how much didn’t,” she says. “But Nonfiction is definitely a novel.”

Nonfiction: A Novel is published by Corsair at £16.99. To support the Guardian and Observer, order your copy at guardianbookshop.com. Delivery charges may apply.

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Consumer affairs

Pet travel after Brexit: taking a dog to the EU could cost £300 a time

With pet passports issued in Great Britain no longer valid, owners fork out for health certificates and jabs



Even if you are not going away until July or August, you should find out now what you need to do for your pet, with some vets heavily booked.
Photograph: Clynt Garnham Lifestyle/Alamy



Rupert Jones

Sat 21 May 2022 03.00 EDT

If you are thinking about taking your dog elsewhere in [Europe](#) this year, then brace yourself for an expensive and time-consuming headache.

Pet owners say they are having to fork out hundreds of pounds for the necessary paperwork after post-Brexit rule changes.

Pet passports issued in Great Britain are no longer valid for travel to EU countries (you can still use a pet passport issued in an EU country, Northern Ireland or a few other places but check it will be accepted before you travel).

Now, before a pet dog – or cat or ferret – can travel to the EU or Northern Ireland, its owner has to obtain an [animal health certificate](#) (AHC) for it.

Make three trips to the EU with your pet and you could face paying almost £1,000 for the certificates now required

To get the certificate, the pet must be microchipped and vaccinated against rabies. A rabies jab typically costs about £50 but some vets charge as much

as £80.

You must take your pet to your vet to get an AHC and – crucially – do this no more than 10 days before you travel.

Make three trips to the EU with your pet and you could face paying almost £1,000 for the certificates that are now required, although prices vary hugely.

Even if you are not going away until July or August, now is the time to act because some vets are already heavily booked up for this summer. If vet practices end up having to turn people away, it could threaten a pet version of the UK's [passport delay chaos](#).

The coronavirus pandemic triggered an explosion in pet ownership levels but surveys have indicated that the majority of dog owners are [unsure of the rules](#) concerning taking their animal to the EU.

Mairead McErlean was this week told it would cost £220 to get an AHC for her English bulldog, Pepper, plus another £65 for the rabies jab needed to get the certificate, and £15 for the worming treatment required for her trip – a total of £300.

She is travelling to Ireland in July and says £300 “is more than my ferry and my petrol ... I’m so cross about the whole thing”.



Mairead McErlean and her English bulldog, Pepper. Photograph: Mairead McErlean

McErlean has family in Ireland and says: “If I make three trips a year, which, pre-Covid, would have been pretty normal for me, that’s nearly £1,000 to take her with me.”

Pepper, who is almost five, is a rescue dog and has abandonment issues, so putting her into kennels is not an option, she adds.

Later in the summer, McErlean is going to France with friends, and is planning to take Pepper, so that is at least another £220 she will have to pay, plus whatever fees a vet in France charges for the paperwork for the return trip.

When she phoned her vet this week she was told that July was “really busy” and she would be lucky to get a slot as other people had already booked the AHC appointments.

Eventually the vet told McErlean, who lives in Milton Keynes, that they would squeeze her in.

However, she adds: “If my parents move to Ireland permanently, what do I do in an emergency? The only option would be for my partner to stay at

home with Pepper.”

The Kennel Club says an AHC typically costs [between £100 and £200](#). This usually includes the consultation and reviewing the paperwork. However, each veterinary practice sets its own price and there have been reports of some vets charging more than £300.

You can add up to five pets to an AHC, and often you will pay less for the additional animals.

One woman [posted on Facebook earlier this month](#) that she had paid £230 to take two dogs to France. “While there, I obtained two worming tablets and two French pet passports for €34 (£29),” she said, adding: “I did have to provide proof of a French address.” However, it was recently reported that the rules for obtaining French pet passports [have been tightened up](#).

When Guardian Money did a price check this week, we found that many of the vets who are part of the CVS Group – which runs more than 500 practices – are charging £250 for the first pet and £50 for any additional animals.

At the cheaper end, we found [a practice in Folkestone, Kent](#), that says it charges from £75, and [one in Havant, Hampshire](#), that charges £99 for a standard AHC.



An animal health certificate lasts for four months. Photograph: Konstantin Aksenov/Getty Images/iStockphoto

The certificate needs to be signed by an “official veterinarian”, or OV, not just anyone at the practice. Some practices do not have an OV, and those that do will often limit how many AHC appointments they book in. We spoke to a practice in north-east London that is booking in only one a day.

Once issued, an AHC lasts for four months, which includes any travelling around Europe.

However, the certificate is valid only for a single trip into the EU. So every time you make a new trip to an EU country or Northern Ireland from Great Britain, your pet will need a new AHC, even if your last one was issued only a few weeks earlier.

Vets say the reason the certificates can be pricey is that there is quite a lot of work involved: the form runs to about 10 pages and needs to be completed in English and the language of the “country of entry” to the EU.

Dr Ed Hayes, the head of public affairs at [the Kennel Club](#), says Covid travel restrictions have delayed the impact of AHCs, adding: “It’s going to be a bigger issue this year.”

However, he says owners of second homes who make multiple trips may be able to obtain an EU pet passport issued by that country. “Try to find a local vet,” he says.

The British Veterinary Association says AHCs are considerably more complex and time-consuming than the previous EU pet passport system, so practices have to factor in the extra resources required to complete them when setting their costs and deciding how long they may need to offer for an appointment. “Some practices have had to make the difficult decision not to offer AHCs, as they simply don’t have the time and capacity to deliver them. It is also important to note that the vet needs to be a certified official vet, so legally only some vets can sign the certificates.”

BVA president Justine Shotton says changing the requirements is outside of the profession’s or the UK government’s control, as they are set by the EU, but it has asked ministers to offer practical support for “simplifying and streamlining” the process.

Other things to be aware of

A vet must treat your dog for tapeworm and record it on the AHC or pet passport if you are travelling directly to Northern Ireland, Ireland, Malta, Finland or Norway.

Also (although this is not a new requirement), when coming back to Great Britain, dogs must typically receive treatment for tapeworm one to five days before returning.

You cannot take more than five pets to an EU country or Northern Ireland unless you are attending or training for a competition, show or sporting event.

It is not clear how many owners get turned down for a certificate. A veterinary industry expert says the vets who provide AHCs “do so within a very narrow scope, with specific conditions needing to be met (for example, rabies vaccination requirements and specific timing requirements), and if a client is turned down, it may be because they do not meet these conditions”.

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Food & drink industry

Can meat-free nuggets challenge chicken on the UK high street?

US-based Impossible Foods launches plant-based bite as vegetarian and vegan versions grow in popularity

- [‘Delicious’ – Felicity Cloake tastes meat-free chicken nuggets](#)



Impossible's meat-free 'chicken' nuggets are made from plants. Photograph: handout

Zoe Wood

@zoewoodguardian

Sat 21 May 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 21 May 2022 05.23 EDT

It is being called the year of the nugget as plant-based “chicken” nuggets that claim to be “better for you and the planet” compete with the real thing in UK chicken shops.

A new brand of faux nuggets, made by the high-profile US plant-based food company Impossible Foods, arrived on the high street this week and will be rolled out to thousands of takeaways, restaurants and pubs, as well as supermarkets, within the year.

Impossible Foods founder [Patrick Brown](#) said the company, which is worth about \$7bn (£5.6bn) and has a star-studded cast of investors including Bill Gates, Jay-Z and Katy Perry, that it was possible to make meat from plants that is more sustainable, nutritious and delicious than animal products.

The former Stanford University biochemistry professor said: “Our mission is to completely replace the use of animals in the food system globally by 2035 and I would say we’re gonna do it. Every single day, we’re getting better and more efficient and the cow is not, and the pig is not, and the chicken is not.”

Impossible is better known for its faux burger which Brown describes as a “knock your socks off” product. However, soy leghemoglobin – known as heme – the secret ingredient it uses to create the “meaty” taste is produced by genetically modified yeast and has not been approved by the Food Standards Agency, which is considering its application.

Chicken is the country’s most popular meat, with consumption levels far outstripping beef, lamb or pork and, while less popular than burger chains, the UK’s more than 3,500 chicken shops sold close to £2bn worth of fried chicken wings, poppers and nuggets last year, according to market researchers Mintel. However the popularity of these cheap and filling foods is seen as a contributing factor to the [UK’s obesity problem](#).

Companies including Impossible will face an uphill struggle to convert fast food customers to alt-meat products, according to Mintel, because Britons favour meat-based comfort food such as burgers and fried chicken. However, fast food chains are eager not to miss out on the [booming popularity of plant-based diets](#) and earlier this year Burger King [started selling vegan nuggets](#) made by Unilever’s The Vegetarian Company.



Impossible's nuggets have 1g of salt per 100g, 25% lower than a standard chicken bite, although not McNuggets have half that level. Photograph: Steve Parsons/PA

Like many plant-based options, Impossible's nuggets are more expensive than the products they are trying to replace. The Chicken Cottage menu, which is a guide for its franchisees, suggests they charge £1 per meat-free nugget, with a "five for £5" deal. By comparison, the actual chicken nuggets on the menu cost £3.50 for six, making it a hard sell during a [cost of living crisis](#).

Impossible says its "chicken" nuggets are better for the environment because their production requires 55% less water and 24% less land than animal chicken nuggets. Made from soy and wheat flour the nuggets have 1g of salt per 100g which Impossible says is 25% lower than a standard chicken bite although not McNuggets which have half that level.

Trish Caddy, a senior analyst at Mintel said it looked like it was shaping up to be the "year of the nugget" after a previous wave of innovation focused on [plant-based burgers](#). However high prices would turn off value-conscious fast food customers, she suggested.

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Some food experts argue that alt-meat is junk food in another guise but Brown disputes this. “We are incredibly conscientious about making foods that are better than what they replace. Our chicken nuggets are not intended to replace a lentil salad. They’re intended to replace a chicken nugget, made from a chicken, and from a nutrition and health perspective, it’s a net positive.”

Marisa Heath, the chief executive of the Plant-based Food Alliance said anything that helped the shift to foods with a lower environmental impact was to be welcomed.

“It is an important time for change and the products Impossible are bringing to the UK will make it easier to make those changes,” she said. “With 75% of people eating chicken weekly and intensive chicken farming on the rise in this country this has to be a good thing for the environment and sustainability.”

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Food & drink industry

‘Gratifyingly greasy’ – Felicity Cloake tastes meat-free chicken nuggets

None of the late-night takeaway crowd will twig Impossible’s meat-free rivals aren’t chicken

- [Can meat-free nuggets challenge chicken on the UK high street?](#)



‘Fresh from the fryer, Impossible’s nuggets have a crisp, gratifyingly greasy breaded shell, and a highly seasoned interior’



[Felicity Cloake](#)

Sat 21 May 2022 05.00 EDT

If you'd asked me about my relationship with the chicken nugget before I tried the Impossible version, I'd have denied all knowledge of the things. Though I'm sure I must have eaten them growing up, until Impossible's golden, perfectly oval discs appear under my nose, I have next to no memory of it. But one whiff of that weird more-chickeny-than-actual-chicken scent and I'm back at a 10th birthday tea at the local leisure centre, thrilling with the excitement of normally forbidden fruit – because, as one bite confirms, nuggets are, I'm afraid, delicious, however old you are ... and whatever they're made from.

Fresh from the fryer, these have a crisp, gratifyingly greasy breaded shell, and a highly seasoned interior that's as salty and savoury as any turkey dinosaur – to my relief there's no trace of the aggressive amounts of dried herbs usually employed by meat substitutes hoping to disguise the fact they have all the flavour of their cardboard packaging. The texture is juicy and ever-so slightly bouncy in the peculiar fashion of highly processed meat, but with (I poke it with a cautious finger) just enough discernible strands of fluff in there to vaguely remind one of the real thing.

Because that's the point here. Impossible are not, I'm imagining, attempting to recreate a chicken breast goujon, they're mimicking a chicken nugget, which is, frankly, a very different beast. Ross Forder, founder of vegan chain Halo Burger, which has just put them on the menu, agrees they're very much a "fast food nugget" whose nostalgic associations are a large part of its appeal. I suggest that, at the east London location where we're sitting, a lot of the late-night crowd will never twig what they're actually eating. He laughs. I get the feeling that's kind of the idea.

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2022.05.21 - Opinion

- As a psychologist helping Ukrainians, I am a witness to the terrible traumas of war
- Like Deborah James, I confronted cancer wearing a great outfit and high heels
- Trump isn't out there with a gun, but he's enabled this war against black people
- We obeyed Covid rules as our dad died. I'm angry the PM has dodged a Partygate reckoning

OpinionUkraine

As a psychologist helping Ukrainians, I am a witness to the terrible traumas of war

[Anna Shilonosova](#)

We can support those trapped in shelters or struggling with survivor's guilt. But some emotional damage is irreparable



'Those who were besieged were finding it hard to cope with the sleep deprivation and constant levels of tension and alertness.' A bomb shelter in a metro station in Kharkiv, Ukraine, 28 April. Photograph: Carol Guzy/ZUMA Press Wire/REX/Shutterstock

Sat 21 May 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 21 May 2022 23.28 EDT

All four of my grandparents survived the second world war, and all four were scarcely willing to talk about it, having either survived the siege of

Leningrad or come back from the frontline wounded. On the rare occasions they did, their memories would leave them devastated.

The lifelong PTSD they experienced was quite possibly one of the reasons I became a psychologist. I wanted to do something to end the vicious circle of trauma, abuse, self-neglect and fear. But during my training, I could never have predicted the way I would be applying my skills a decade later.

On 25 February, the day after the Russian invasion of [Ukraine](#), I volunteered to join several crisis hotlines where psychologists were working to support those affected by the war. I couldn't stop the war, but at least I might try to lessen the damage. My colleagues come from many different countries – some of the Ukrainian psychologists kept working between bombings, while others had evacuated to a safer place. Quite a few of us, myself included, are living abroad in safety — a privilege too often taken for granted.



Part of Anna Shilonosova's documentary project in which she takes portraits of psychologists on video calls. Photograph: Screengrab

During the first weeks of the war, most of the Ukrainian people who texted or called us had either just been evacuated or were still in areas of heavy shelling. Those who managed to escape were suffering from survivor's guilt, along with shock from the war in general. Those who stayed were

experiencing shock in a different way, trying to navigate through their daily spikes of anxiety.

My first client was a person besieged in Ukraine. Their whole family had been [hiding in a bomb shelter](#) for days and they were experiencing panic attacks, partly from the sudden responsibility of having to care for elderly relatives and beloved pets. They had to make the kind of decisions no one should have to face.

As the war developed, everyone's stress tolerance was wearing thinner and thinner. Those who fled Ukraine reported apathy and a loss of the will to live. Old traumas have resurfaced, tightening their grip and making it harder to breathe. Those who were still besieged were getting weaker mentally and physically, and they were finding it harder to cope with the sleep deprivation and constant levels of tension and alertness. In such situations, the main way we can offer support is by validating the person's feelings; helping them find things they can control; and finding self-regulatory techniques that work, such as body relaxation or breathing techniques.

It became the eerie norm to receive text messages from people who had managed to come online in pauses between hiding in the shelter from bombs. However, none of us could get used to having to guess whether a delay in response meant the person had no network connection, or that they were no longer alive. Messages such as "I feel drained", "I need an urgent vent call" and "I need to talk to someone, I feel it's taken a toll on me" started to appear in our internal specialists' support chats more often.

As a response to this, psychologists who specialise in supervision support started to organise webinars and video conferences in order to help each other work through the tension generated by the sessions. A [group of dance movement therapists](#) has recently launched a series of virtual meetups where they show how dance and movement can be used to cope with stress. I find such initiatives very important: if we burn out now, we won't be able to help.

Messages such as this keep us going: "Thank you for helping me find the strength to let my husband go to war"; "Thank you for this talk, I needed to

be heard. I found the courage to try and evacuate, and I'm in a safe place now."

My grandma – the only grandparent still living – struggles to relive her wartime memories without tears. But she emphasises the importance of truth, especially during the times we're living in, and of preserving these memories. Lately, my family and I have been spending hours on video calls with her as she shares them with us.

To honour my colleagues' work I recently started a documentary project, taking their portraits via video calls. It feels important to make a record of this almost invisible part of war. When I publish the project later this year, I hope the war will be over. But a huge volume of trauma repair work is still to be done.

- Anna Shilonosova is a documentary photographer and assistant psychologist currently based in the UK
- If you know someone who might need help and support from a Ukrainian- or Russian-speaking psychologist, please let them know about these services; they are free of charge and available 24/7:
https://t.me/PsihologDopomogaWarInUa_2022;
www.instagram.com/psy_for_peace; https://t.me/psyhelp_Ukraine;
<https://sppu.com.ua/>

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OpinionCancer

Like Deborah James, I confronted cancer wearing a great outfit and high heels

Joanna Moorhead



There is something scarier than dying – and that is not living. Stylish and joyful, the host of You, Me and the Big C reminds us to seize every moment



‘She’s a celebrator of life, and I’m one of the many millions who love her for it.’ Deborah James. Photograph: Mark Waugh

Sat 21 May 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 21 May 2022 08.17 EDT

She doesn’t look like a cancer victim; she doesn’t sound like a cancer victim; she doesn’t dress like a cancer victim; and she certainly doesn’t behave like a cancer victim. And that’s because Dame [Deborah James](#) is *not* a cancer victim. She’s not a victim of anything; she’s a celebrator of life, and I’m one of the many millions who love her for it.

I’ve been following Debs’ [Instagram account](#) and listening to her [podcast](#) for the last five years; like many people, I’ve never met her, but I feel I know her. I felt drawn to her because I think I have just the slightest inkling of what it’s all about for her, and I admire her more than I can say for her spirit of refusing, point-blank, to even be associated with however cancer is supposed to make you look and feel and act.

Even a ‘cure’ has its caveats; they only find out they really have got rid of it when you die from something else

I was diagnosed with malignant breast disease a little over eight years ago. I didn't come even near to being told it was terminal; but there's a time, for everyone who gets cancer, when the medical people don't yet know what they're going to find inside you – and, in the absence of knowing, they err on the side of caution. What that means is, if you've had a cancer diagnosis, you've probably lived, at least for a few weeks, with the possibility that you might be told the disease is life-threatening. (And of course, even a "cure" has its caveats; they only find out they really have got rid of it when you die from something else.)

What I discovered, as I was looking down the barrel of "Is the news here just going to get worse and worse?" was that the scariest thing, yes, is facing death. But right behind it is another fear: that you're going to be defined, consumed and marked for ever by your diagnosis. That was something I was desperate to avoid, and it feels to me as though Debs had exactly the same instinct. She is sometimes described as a commentator on cancer, and, of course, You, Me and the Big C – the podcast she created with [Lauren Mahon](#) and the late [Rachael Bland](#) – is all about living with the disease. But on Instagram, which is where I mostly commune with Debs, her posts are about life, and about living it to the full. There are posts about fitness gear and face creams; posts about wall art and running; posts about her lovely kids, her magnificent mum and the husband she always calls her rock. Most of all, though, there are pictures of Debs looking just amazing; her sense of style is awesome, and she has a gorgeous figure. She knows exactly what suits her, and how to wear it to the best advantage – if I didn't know she'd been a deputy headteacher before becoming a media personality, I'd have thought she was a model. She is always honest when things are going against her – as they have been for a while – but she still seems to be dancing round the Royal Marsden in Kensington, boogying round her chemo pump, eating chocolate in the sunshine on a balcony, or raving about her favourite dry shampoo.

I get it, because nothing (apart from not dying) mattered to me more than being normal when I had cancer. I worked hard, as Debs works hard, to banish it to the edges of my life – to live in the moment, giving it as little space as possible. One of my finest moments was when I rocked up to the Marsden, on my own, for one of my operations, wearing a great outfit, high

heels and sunglasses. At the ward desk the receptionist asked who I had come to visit; I said I'm not a visitor – I'm here for surgery. And as I walked off down the corridor, I heard her whisper behind me: "I'd never have thought *she* was a patient." Reader: it more than made my day – it made my year.

One of the great things about being treated at the Marsden is that, if you're up to it, you walk out slap, bang into the arms of a lovely wine bar or restaurant – and it seems a shame not to enjoy it. One time I'd had day-case surgery there, and was discharged in time for supper at Carluccio's, with a daughter who had come to pick me up: you're not allowed to leave hospital on your own if you have had a general anaesthetic. You're not supposed to drink alcohol after one either, but what's the harm in a small glass? And then the waiter appeared and asked: "Small or large?" And I thought: "Christ, I've just survived a cancer operation. Mine's a large." On another occasion, I was invited to the races on a radiotherapy day: I arrived for my treatment in a glamorous outfit and a big hat – and did my makeup for my day out in the clinic loo.

I guess, thinking about it, I realised eight years ago that there was something scarier than dying – and that was not living. Not living as fully, as passionately, as enjoyably, as daringly, as outrageously as possible. Debs gets that, too: and, honestly, she's not going to be remembered as a woman who had cancer. She's going to be remembered as a woman who truly knew how to make the most of life. She knows what matters, she knows what keeps her going, she knows how to wring every last, enjoyable drop out of this rollercoaster they call life. She knows that, while the length of time you're around matters (and *how* it matters, when you've got young kids like her), your spirit also matters – and it outlives you. Debs' spirit, her *joie de vivre*, her role-modelling of the importance of seizing the moment, her example of living for now, her ability to not allow fear to dominate her actions, all will go on influencing not only the way her family lives into the future, but also how other people she has never met, and now never will, go on living.

- Joanna Moorhead writes for the Guardian, mostly about parenting and family life

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[OpinionRace](#)

Trump isn't out there with a gun, but he's enabled this war against black people

[Cornel West](#)

White supremacy is as American as apple pie, as the latest killings in Buffalo show. Biden needs to take a stand against neofascists



Mourners at the scene of a mass shooting in Buffalo, New York, 19 May 2022. Photograph: Matt Rourke/AP

Sat 21 May 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 21 May 2022 05.13 EDT

Last weekend, just as I finished a live performance in California of Four Questions, the Grammy award-winning jazz collaboration for which I provided spoken words, word reached me about the [racist killing of 10 people](#) as they shopped in Buffalo, New York. I try never to be surprised by evil and never paralysed by despair. Instead, my immediate reaction was

“here we go again”, with the horror, the suffering and then the now familiar routine of rhetorical gestures and superficial posturing.

On Tuesday, Joe Biden [described white supremacy](#) as a poison, and he is right, but – as ever – he fails to understand the gravity of his failure to make racial justice a priority; to see this cowardly white supremacy as a threat to American democracy.

The simple truth is that you cannot see this latest neofascist attack in isolation. Think of the attack on the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal church in [Charleston](#), when a white supremacist terrorist killed nine African Americans during their Bible study in 2015. Think of the attack on the American Asian community in Atlanta last year, when [four people were murdered](#) amid assertions from prosecutors that the attack was fuelled by [race and gender hatred](#). Or the attack on [Chicanos in El Paso](#), Texas, in 2019, when 22 people were killed in an allegedly hate-motived shooting; and the [murder of 11 Jewish Americans](#) at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh the same year by a man who said Jews “were committing a genocide to his people”.

White supremacy is as American as apple pie. It was constitutive of the founding of our nation, like a serpent wrapped around the legs of the table on which the Declaration of Independence and constitution were signed. What we saw in Buffalo at the weekend is another manifestation of it.

From what we know, the alleged shooter was a young and gullible man who got caught in the web of neofascist propaganda. But it is important to look beyond him – to look to those who have created this atmosphere of anger and hate.

After the death of [George Floyd](#), there was a marvellous display of multiracial solidarity, not just here but around the world. But the US has been unable to fight against this neofascist challenge. The Trump forces have got stronger. They have become the public face of US neofascism, and their targets are black people and indigenous people and LGBTQ people.

Trump is not out there with a gun, but he is leading a campaign continuing what Malcolm X called a war against black and coloured people. He is doing it within the electoral political system. He is not killing folks. But he bears responsibility in terms of the context. Have no doubt, he is still the dominant figure.

The campaigning and reflection after the death of George Floyd should have made things better in the US. And, for a beautiful moment, it did. But that moment passed. The press is fickle, the pandemic started to kick in, and other issues such as Ukraine and inflation captured attention. Look at the polls and see how issues of race have fallen down the list of people's priorities.

The impact of the George Floyd marches was blunted. Congress was unable to enact any meaningful legislation, including the [George Floyd bill](#) itself, which would have given us some mechanism with which to address police misconduct and brutality. The Democratic party was not even able to act decisively to uphold [voting rights for black people](#). That is a colossal failure of the Biden administration, but then Biden bears a lot of responsibility when it comes to the position and arrogance of these white supremacists.

Last year Biden said [America was not a racist country](#), and his vice-president, Kamala Harris, backed him on that. But these are lies, and those lies have their effect. If we operate on that level, how can we ever address the vicious legacy of racism and white supremacy?

To the president and Democrats in power, I say: "Shame on you, you dropped the ball." They must be vigilant and stop acting as if these murders are something they can address in a couple of weeks and then move on. Race is the most explosive issue in the history of this country: from war to civic strife to Buffalo.

The president can't stop a rightwing gangster killing black people, but he can send a message. He can say: I am being consistent because one of my major priorities is to ensure black people have their rights. If, after all the demonstrations and the campaigns, racists pick up the message that

politicians don't really care about black people, we end up exactly where we are today.

Neofascists and the far right have momentum with their narrative of the [great replacement](#), but someone – and ideally it would be Biden – needs to explain to them what is really going on: that in some places there is replacement in the name of fairness. That sometimes they are seeing visible black folk where they did not previously see them. The racists need to know that they are living in a changing society and we are concerned about them being treated fairly, just as they should be concerned about others being treated fairly. There is a fascist story about replacement and a progressive story about replacement. The neoliberal story cannot counter the fascist story, and we on the left have been unable to get our story out.

So how should black America respond? Since the shootings, I have spoken to so many people and appeared on so many radio stations. People are devastated. The answer is to be a love warrior of the highest sort, a justice warrior, to never give in and never give up. The anger is there, and I don't aim to calm it down, but I want to rechannel it. Our organisation must be perennial. But counter-terror in the face of terror and counter-violence in the face of violence are not the moral and spiritual options that we need.

It is for us to respond with the same grace and dignity as the people who were killed in that store last weekend: they were very dignified people. Think of [Ruth Whitfield](#). She was 86, a strong member of her community, and had just been visiting her husband in his nursing home. We have to be continuous with the best of our history.

Above all, remember [Mamie Till](#), the mother of Emmett Till, the 14-year-old black boy abducted and lynched by Mississippi racists in 1955. She said: "I don't have a minute to hate, I'll pursue justice for the rest of my life."

- Cornel West is an American philosopher, author, critic, actor, civil rights activist and Dietrich Bonhoeffer professor of philosophy and Christian practice at Union Theological Seminary (NYC)

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Opinion[Boris Johnson](#)

We obeyed Covid rules as our dad died. I'm angry the PM has dodged a Partygate reckoning

[Robbie Hadden](#)

The fact that he has been fined only once shouldn't matter – any decent politician would have resigned by now

- Robbie Hadden is a builder from Northamptonshire



‘Johnson just doesn’t seem to be a proper politician. He’s a journalist: he cares about how to play a game with the news.’ Photograph: Dan Kitwood/Getty Images

Fri 20 May 2022 11.36 EDT Last modified on Fri 20 May 2022 11.57 EDT

Hearing the news that Boris Johnson appears to have got away with “Partygate” quite simply made me angry. The number of fines that he personally receives – which people now think will only be the one – doesn’t matter to me. The point is that he was ultimately responsible for the atmosphere in No 10, for which 126 fines have been issued. It’s the place where the decisions were being made and where the orders were coming from. It’s where he stood at that podium, waffling on.

The vast majority of the country complied with the Covid restrictions. Everybody made sacrifices. Mine was one of many families who was denied a chance to say goodbye to a loved one because of the restrictions. My father suffered from vascular dementia. He was bed-bound and in a nursing home when the pandemic struck. But he was still quite lucid. He recognised people well. You could go and have a perfectly normal conversation with him.

When we went into lockdown, we could no longer visit, so for the six weeks prior to his death we didn’t see him at all. We all used to go once a week; my sister would go two or three times a week. The home was nearby and we had a good relationship with the staff. Then, in March 2020, my mother got a call saying that he didn’t have much longer. She was allowed in to see her husband of some 60 years, but literally for about half an hour. And that was it.

Only 16 of us were able to attend his funeral in April 2020, which was difficult as we are a family of six children who are all married with their own children. My dad’s best friend, who he’d known since they were six years old, wasn’t able to go either. That devastated him. The atmosphere was so strange in the crematorium: we had to sit six feet apart at all times, with the chairs spaced out.

And so when I hear the prime minister use rhetoric to deflect what he did – “We need to get on with the job of running the country” – of course I feel angry. He doesn’t seem to care about what Partygate means to us. What’s more, the government is not even doing a good job of getting on and running the country.

There are plenty of excuses: they were operating in a bubble, the work gatherings were a continuation of the work day. But that misses the point. If you're in a position of power and you're asking people to do something that they wouldn't normally do, then you have to lead by example.

Johnson just doesn't seem to be a [proper politician](#). He's a journalist: he cares about how to play a game with the news; the idea that there's a story one day and if you just let it rumble on it'll disappear. So we have Partygate and they talk about Rwanda. Or streamlining the civil service. It's just distraction after distraction.

I do consider myself to be left-leaning, and for a while the pandemic seemed to add an almost socialist background to everything. People were worrying about one another. They were concerned about those who were homeless, on less money, who worked in care homes, were nurses. We did the clap for the NHS. The hypocrisy of that became so clear when Johnson offered them a [1% pay rise](#). I don't know how anybody can carry on looking at the government and not feel anger with the way it has carried on.

I would like to see Johnson resign because of this. And I think almost any other politician would have already. They would've said, "The buck stops here. This shouldn't have gone on under my watch." But there just seems to be a class of people running the country who have an inability to admit they're wrong. Why won't they admit to their mistakes?

- Robbie Hadden is a builder from Kettering, Northamptonshire

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2022.05.21 - Around the world

- [US Trump pays \\$110,000 in fines after being held in contempt of court](#)
- ['That racist took my mother' Buffalo mourns shooting victims as first funeral held](#)
- [France Black historian Pap Ndiaye appointed as education minister](#)
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- [US 'Any number of rights could be next' if Roe v Wade goes, says Buttigieg](#)

Donald Trump

Trump pays \$110,000 in fines after being held in contempt of court

A Manhattan judge had fined the ex-president for not complying with a subpoena related to the investigation of his businesses



Donald Trump must still submit additional paperwork to have the contempt order lifted, the New York attorney general's office said. Photograph: Joe Maiorana/AP

Associated Press in New York

Fri 20 May 2022 16.06 EDT Last modified on Fri 20 May 2022 16.14 EDT

Donald Trump has paid \$110,000 in fines after being held in contempt of court for being slow to respond to a civil subpoena issued by the attorney general of New York state.

The news on one front in the former president's many legal battles came shortly after a big development on another, the [news](#) that Trump's former US attorney general, William Barr, is in discussions about testifying in front of the House committee investigating the deadly Capitol attack.

The House investigation of January 6 has produced a criminal contempt charge for one Trump ally, the former White House strategist Steve Bannon.

Letitia James, the [New York](#) attorney general, is conducting a civil investigation of Trump's business affairs.

Last week, a lawyer for James's office said evidence could support legal action against Trump, his company or both, but a final decision had not been made.

James, a Democrat, has said her three-year investigation uncovered evidence the Trump Organization misstated the value of assets like skyscrapers and golf courses for over a decade.

Trump, a Republican, denies James's allegations. He has called James's investigation "racist" and a politically motivated "witch-hunt". Trump's lawyers have accused James of selective prosecution. Trump is suing James in federal court, seeking to shut down her investigation.

Trump paid the contempt of court fine on Thursday but must still submit additional paperwork to have the contempt order lifted, James's office said.

A Manhattan judge declared Trump in contempt of court on 25 April and fined him \$10,000 a day for not complying with a subpoena in the long-running investigation into his business practices.

Arthur Engoron agreed on 11 May to lift the contempt order if Trump paid the fines by 20 May and submitted affidavits detailing efforts to search for the subpoenaed records and explaining his and his company's document retention policies.

Engoron also required that a company hired by Trump to aid the search, HaystackID, finish going through 17 boxes in off-site storage and for that

company to report its findings and turn over any relevant documents. That process was completed on Thursday, James's office said.

Engoron told Trump to pay the money and for the attorney general to hold it in an escrow account while Trump's legal team appeals the original contempt finding.

Engoron stopped the fine from accruing on 6 May, when Trump's lawyers submitted 66 pages of documents detailing efforts to locate subpoenaed records. The judge warned that he could reinstate it, retroactive to 7 May, if conditions were not met.

A message seeking comment was left with Trump's lawyer.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/may/20/trump-pays-fine-contempt>

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Buffalo shooting

‘His heart is broken’: Buffalo mourns shooting victims as first funeral held

Civil rights and community leaders gathered the night before to plead with the nation to confront and stop racist violence



People gather outside the Tops supermarket for a memorial for the shooting victims on Friday. Photograph: Spencer Platt/Getty Images

[Edward Helmore](#) in Buffalo and agencies

Fri 20 May 2022 13.44 EDT Last modified on Fri 20 May 2022 13.54 EDT

The first of 10 funerals for the [10 Black people killed in a Buffalo supermarket](#) was held on Friday following an impassioned gathering of Black civil rights and community leaders at a church the night before where speakers pleaded with the nation to confront and stop racist violence.

Set against accused shooter Peyton Gendron’s silence in court earlier on Thursday, the community and relatives of Andre Mackneil, Geraldine Talley

and Ruth Whitfield gave voice to the grief and anger coursing through East Buffalo.

Jaques “Jake” Patterson, 12, who lost his father, covered his face with his hands as his mother spoke, then collapsed into the arms of the Rev Al Sharpton, the veteran civil rights activist, and cried silently using his T-shirt to wipe his tears.

“His heart is broken,” said his mother, Tirzah Patterson, adding that her son was having trouble sleeping and eating. “As a mother, what am I supposed to do to help him get through this?”

Her ex-husband, Heyward Patterson, a 67-year-old church deacon whose funeral was held on Friday, was gunned down at Tops Friendly Market. So was Robin Harris’s 86-year-old mother and best friend, Ruth Whitfield, on a day when the pair were supposed to go see the touring Broadway show Ain’t Too Proud.

“That racist young man took my mother away,” Harris said, trembling and stomping her feet. “How dare you!” she shouted. “I need this violence to stop. We need to fix this, and we need to fix it now.”

Whitfield’s son, Darnell Whitfield Jr, who is the city’s former fire chief, told the Guardian his family “is grieving deeply, but we’re good”.

Whitfield spoke of the community’s response to the massacre. “I’m absolutely encouraged. This is our community and they’ve blessed us. This is what we do. We’ve come together as a community and a body of faith.”

The family had not yet broken the news to their father that his wife has passed. “We put our arms around him, but we’re still deciding how to do that.”

Mark Talley, holding a photo of his slain mother, Geraldine Talley, 62, said “I constantly think about what could have been done”.

Talley said the last time he heard from his mother was on Mother’s Day when she texted him to thank him for a gift. “I never would have thought it

would be the last time I would speak to her or hear from her,” Talley said. “I never would have thought my mother would be shot dead – have a bullet go through her right temple on her head.”

Inaction on the threat of white supremacist violence, Talley added, led to last weekend’s bloodshed. “It’s like Groundhog’s Day. We’ve seen this over and over again,” he said.

Also at the families meeting was Ben Crump, the civil rights attorney representing several families affected by the tragedy. “I’m optimistic that these families are going to define the legacy of their loss and it won’t be this act of hate that defines them.”

Crump said he and attorneys working with him were determined to hold gun manufacturers and distributors responsible. “We’re going to use the right weapons to fight hate. That is, we’re going to use intellect, diplomacy and strategic thinking. That’s what we need to fight hate, because this white supremacy is the most dangerous thing in the world.”

Others said that the swift response of Buffalo leaders – including the mayor, Byron Brown, the judiciary and a community group called the Peacekeepers – to get Gendron indicted quickly on Saturday afternoon after the shooting had helped to avert a destructive response to the shooting.

In an address at Antioch Baptist church in East Buffalo, Sharpton, whose civil rights activist group the National Action Network plans to cover funeral expenses for those killed, said America was faced with “a rightwing element” that was trying to take back civil rights advances.

“It’s time for us to start fighting back. Enough is enough. For all the viciousness and hate that was shown at Tops, the Black community didn’t break one window, burn down one store or turn over one car,” Sharpton said. “We’ve shown this nation what this nation’s never showed us – respect. We’ve shown that this time we’ll stand up and do it right.”

The Rev Gregory Witherspoon at Buffalo’s Faith Missionary Baptist church said: “We can’t complicate the issue. If people go out and start breaking windows then that’s the problem, not the real problem.”

Others said that a de facto truce between neighborhood gangs had held, despite widespread anger that Gendron had been allowed to surrender when, many felt, a Black man would probably have been shot.

“The police are chilling out. They’re not pulling anybody over because people are mad they didn’t kill that dude,” said Orlando Tate, a security guard. “They would have killed anybody else.”

At the funeral on Friday, several hundred mourners turned to honour Patterson, who was gunned down helping an elderly Tops customer load groceries into the car. The public open-casket viewing attracted as many as 1,000 members of East Buffalo’s Black community.

The mayor as well as police officials and Sharpton – who was asked by Patterson’s family to deliver the eulogy – were among the mourners at Lincoln memorial church.

“It’s very sad, tragic, and for what purpose?” said Karla Warburton outside the church. “He was fun-loving. He had a heart and he could sing.”

Tony Marshall, the lead driver at Tops, said: “It is going to be a tough day and we’ve got many more coming.”

Viola Brown and Denise Brown, her niece, said they were anticipating a tough week of services. “He was a real good person, always helping people with their groceries and giving them rides.”

Donna Robinson, a community activist who said all her family were residents of the East Buffalo zip code 14208, said she “would never sit by and be complicit. It’s not in my nature.

“I’m feeling very emotional because this was a friend of a family member and I know he did good things, great things, for the community,” Robinson added.

When Trump took office, she said, the Ku Klux Klan, “[which] had always been in the community, got empowered and took their hoods off”. Now, Robinson said, some people openly fly the Confederate flag in south Buffalo.

“The ones that used to have the hoods on are taking them off so you can see. Anyone with nominal intelligence can see that 18-year-old had help.”

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[France](#)

France: Black historian Pap Ndiaye appointed as education minister

Expert on colonialism and history of race relations faces persistent social inequalities in the school system



Pap Ndiaye alongside outgoing education minister Jean-Michel Blanquer at the handover ceremony. Photograph: Gonzalo Fuentes/Reuters

[Angelique Chrisafis](#) in Paris

@achrisafis

Fri 20 May 2022 14.24 EDT Last modified on Fri 20 May 2022 14.38 EDT

Pap Ndiaye, the renowned Black French historian and expert on US minority rights, has been appointed education minister for the start of [Emmanuel Macron's second term](#), as the country faces persistent social inequalities in the school system.

“I’m a pure product of republican meritocracy,” Ndiaye said, referencing his mother who taught science at a middle school outside Paris. He said he was also “a symbol of diversity” which gave him a sense of “duty and responsibility” to the young people of [France](#).

Ndiaye, an expert on colonialism and the history of race relations on both sides of the Atlantic, was head of France’s Museum of Immigration and is seen as on the left. His appointment to Macron’s mix of rightwing and centre-left government ministers under [the new prime minister, Élisabeth Borne](#), was a surprise.

Ndiaye represents a break with the previous education minister, the rightwinger Jean-Michel Blanquer, who while in office founded his own thinktank to oppose what he called the US-imported “doctrine” of “wokism”.

France has one of the most unequal school systems in the developed world. A pupil born and schooled in a deprived neighbourhood in France has less chance of escaping their socio-economic background than in most other developed nations, according to the OECD.

Ndiaye, born outside Paris to a Senegalese father and French mother, gained national prominence with his 2008 work “The Black Condition, an essay on a French minority.”

In an Associated Press interview last year, Ndiaye said France had to conquer racial injustice by confronting its often-violent colonial past, noting that “the French are highly reluctant to look at the dark dimensions of their own history.”

Ndiaye, whose sister is the award-winning novelist, Marie NDiaye, told [Le Monde](#) in 2017 that structural racism existed in France, whereby institutions such as the police may have certain racist practices.

Ndiaye was for many years a professor at the elite Sciences Po university in Paris.

“In the field of history, he is someone who has been innovative and able to show a new way of understanding the past,” the historian Pascal Blanchard told AFP. “He’s a teacher who knows what it’s like to be in front of a class of students. In a diverse society, it is important to have someone who is attentive to diversity.”

The far right’s Marine Le Pen swiftly attacked Ndiaye’s appointment, saying it symbolised “the deconstruction of our country, its values and future”.

Macron is under pressure to deliver on his election promise of renewal and a “new method” for politics in his second-term, with less top-down leadership and more listening to voters’ concerns. He has been criticised by opposition parties for waiting almost a month after his April presidential win against Le Pen to finalise a new government to serve under Élisabeth Borne, France’s first woman prime minister in more than 30 years.

The new government appointments mark the start of a bitter battle for next month’s parliamentary elections. Macron’s centrist grouping needs to win a solid parliament majority if he is to have a free-hand for his domestic overhaul of the pensions and benefits system, as well as changes to schools and the health-service. A historic left-wing alliance led by the radical left’s Jean-Luc Mélenchon is aiming to increase its seats.

Catherine Colonna, France’s ambassador to London and a former spokesperson to late rightwing president Jacques Chirac, was appointed foreign minister, making her only the second woman to hold the job, after the right’s Michèle Alliot-Marie over a decade ago.

Many of the government appointments were a continuation of Macron’s last term, with loyal ministers rewarded. Two key ministers on the right – Bruno Le Maire at the economy ministry and Gérald Darmanin at the interior ministry – both kept their seats. The justice minister Éric Dupond-Moretti also remained.

Macron’s promised environmental drive for France to become “the first major nation to abandon gas, oil and coal” will be led by the prime minister with two ministers who had previously served in Macron’s first term: Amélie de Montchalin, and Agnès Pannier-Runacher.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/20/france-black-historian-pap-ndiaye-appointed-as-education-minister>

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[Coronavirus](#)

Covid cases and hospitalizations rising in US as vaccine rates for children lag

Most children ages five to 11 are still unvaccinated and new coronavirus strains are expected by fall



Five-year-old Lydia Jones received her booster in Schwenksville, Pennsylvania, on Thursday. Photograph: Hannah Beier/Reuters

[Joanna Walters](#) in New York and agencies

[@Joannawalters13](#)

Fri 20 May 2022 15.31 EDT Last modified on Fri 20 May 2022 15.39 EDT

[Rising](#) coronavirus infections and hospitalizations across the US are spurring fears of an uncertain summer amid new calls for children to be vaccinated.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has now recommended a vaccine booster for children aged five to 11 after an

advisory panel voted to back them, despite some experts disagreeing that they are necessary at this stage.

The CDC director, Rochelle Walensky, said in a statement that she “endorsed” the panel vote.

“To expand eligibility for Covid-19 vaccine booster doses, children five through 11 should receive a booster dose at least five months after their primary series,” she said.

The White House coronavirus response coordinator, Ashish Jha, [told ABC](#)’s Good Morning America on Friday that parents should “absolutely” be taking their children in that age group to get boosted, while ABC [cited data](#) showing fewer than 30% of those children in the US have received their first two doses.

Jha said he would take his 10-year-old to get boosted “probably in the next few days”.

Walensky said more than 18m booster doses have been administered to five- to 11-year-olds.

“We know that these vaccines are safe and we must continue to increase the number of children who are protected,” she said.

The advisers considered data from the CDC that showed protection from the initial two coronavirus vaccinations starts to wane over time, and that boosters in older age groups improved efficacy against severe Covid and hospitalizations.

The Food and Drug Administration authorized booster doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine for the youngest age group so far.

But Paul Offit at Children’s Hospital in Philadelphia, who advises the US Food and Drug Administration, [indicated to NPR](#) in an interview last month that he was not wholly convinced.

For five- to 11-year-olds getting boosters, he said: “If there is clear benefit for a third dose – and to me, the definition of benefit is enhanced protection against serious illness – then, of course, get the third dose. But absent that, I don’t see a compelling reason to give a third dose now.”

Helen Keipp Talbot, a professor at Vanderbilt University, was the lone advisory panel member to vote against recommending young kids get boosters, arguing that the focus should be on increasing the overall vaccination rate in the age group.

“Boosters are great once we’ve gotten everyone their first round,” she said.

There are now about 100,000 new known infections with Covid-19 in the US daily, with many more probably unreported as fewer people are needing hospitalization than at the height of initial and recent waves of infection, and many are testing and convalescing at home.

Cases are rising in [most states](#), up about 50% in the last two weeks, according to multiple outlets’ [data reporting](#), including [among children](#).

Meanwhile, the FDA is still reviewing data from vaccine maker Moderna before giving the green light to a vaccine for under-fives.

“I know a lot of parents who have kids under five who really, really want this,” said Jha, adding he hoped for news from the regulator in the next few weeks.

Jha also encouraged over-50s, who are eligible for a second booster, to get it now, not wait until any possible fall surge.

“There’s no reason to wait,” he said, adding that “we’ll see where things are in the fall.”

Companies are already looking into the possible need for redesigned Covid-19 vaccines for the fall to target new variants of concern.

Jha has urged the US Congress to pass a bill now stalled on Capitol Hill that includes crucial funding for continued Covid testing, treatments and vaccine

development. The president, Joe Biden, has requested \$22.5bn in fresh Covid funding.

“If Congress doesn’t step up we are going to have a lot of difficulties ahead. We are going to run out of treatments, we are not going to get the next generation of vaccines that other countries are starting to sign up for, we are going to run out of testing. It’s going to be a real challenge,” Biden said.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/20/covid-cases-hospitalizations-rising-vaccine-children-us>

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Roe v Wade

‘Any number of rights could be next’ if Roe v Wade goes, says Buttigieg

US transportation secretary says supreme court’s ruling could determine future generations’ freedoms



US transport minister Pete Buttigieg said he was ‘very concerned’ about
Photograph: Christian Jungeblodt/The Guardian

[Kate Connolly](#) in Berlin

Sat 21 May 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 21 May 2022 02.01 EDT

[Pete Buttigieg](#), the US transportation secretary and the first openly gay member of a US administration, has expressed his worry that the expected overturning by the supreme court of the 1973 landmark decision which made abortion legal, may be the start of a series of eliminations of other groundbreaking rights and protections.

Earlier this month a leaked document showed that five conservatives on the nine-justice supreme court had voted to reverse their predecessors' ruling in [Roe v Wade](#) nearly 50 years ago. The provisional ruling could lead to abortion being outlawed in more than half of US states unless it is changed substantially before becoming final.

Buttigieg said he was “very concerned” about the developments.

“It’s been 50 years since we first had this framework – my entire lifetime. So if something as essential as a woman’s right to decide about her healthcare is up for reversal, then any number of other rights and protections could be next,” he told the Guardian.

Buttigieg has been married since 2018, after coming out in 2015, the year same-sex marriage was first legalised in the US. He also served in the military under the ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ policy.

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

He was mocked by some on the right last year when [he took paternity leave](#) after he and his husband became parents to twins.

“The fundamental question before us, is, did we who live in the 2020s live to see the high-water mark of rights and freedoms in this country, or will we in fact restore our pattern of each generation enjoying more and not less rights and freedoms than the last?” he said.



A pro-choice campaigner protests outside the home of US Supreme Court Justice, Brett Kavanaugh. Photograph: Bonnie Cash/Getty Images

“That question will be settled largely at the supreme court in this decade.”

Buttigieg has spoken out about the new Florida law which prohibits discussion of sexual orientation or gender identity in primary grade levels, dubbed by [critics the ‘don’t say gay’ bill](#).

“Bottom line, it’s hurting kids,” he said. “I think about what life might be like for our kids when they start school. If they were in a place like [Florida](#), it might stop them from mentioning they had a great time over the weekend with their dads.”

His husband, Chasten, said on Twitter it would “kill kids” and make the state “a harder place for LGBTQ kids to survive in”.

Ahead of his appointment as transportation secretary, Buttigieg recalled how as a 17-year-old in Indiana he had watched on television as President Clinton nominated James Hormel as US ambassador to Luxembourg in 1998, only for some Senate Republicans to unsuccessfully oppose his nomination because he was gay.

“I learned something about some of the limits that exist in this country when it comes to who is allowed to belong,” he said in a speech. “But just as important, I saw how those limits could be challenged.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/may/21/buttigieg-roe-v-wade-abortion-rights>

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Headlines

- [Live Met says Partygate investigation now closed, with 126 fines issued](#)
- [Partygate Met police conclude investigation into Downing Street gatherings](#)
- [Politics Ex-Labour MP must pay £434k damages to woman he repeatedly assaulted](#)
- [Cost of living crisis Don't let people off if they steal food in desperation, minister tells police](#)
- [Business Helping cash-strapped Britons won't add to inflation, says CBI](#)

[Skip to key events](#)

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

Partygate: Boris Johnson ‘told barefaced lie’, says Labour, as Covid victim group urges Tory MPs to remove PM – as it happened

This live blog is now closed. You can see our latest Partygate stories below:

- [PM will not face further fines over lockdown parties, says No 10](#)
- [‘I can’t look at Johnson without feeling sick’: readers on Partygate](#)
- [The shaming of Whitehall: how Partygate scandal unfolded](#)
- [Partygate: 12 events that were under investigation](#)
- [Don’t let people off if they steal food, minister tells police](#)

Updated 3d ago

[Andrew Sparrow](#)

[@AndrewSparrow](#)

Thu 19 May 2022 12.36 EDTFirst published on Thu 19 May 2022 04.09 EDT



Boris Johnson has been told by the Metropolitan police that he won't face any further fines on Partygate. Photograph: Joshua Bratt

[Andrew Sparrow](#)

[@AndrewSparrow](#)

Thu 19 May 2022 12.36 EDTFirst published on Thu 19 May 2022 04.09 EDT

Key events

- [3d agoAfternoon summary](#)
- [3d agoBeergate controversy has not significantly damaged Labour's standing with voters, polls suggest](#)
- [3d agoCampaigners for Covid victims urge Tory MPs to remove Johnson as PM](#)
- [3d agoLabour says PM told 'barefaced lie' about parties as conclusion of Met inquiry means privileges committee probe can start](#)
- [3d agoMet says 35 men and 48 women in total fined over Partygate](#)
- [3d agoStarmer restates call for PM's resignation over Partygate – but mostly criticises him over cost of living crisis](#)
- [3d agoDowning Street says Sue Gray's report into Partygate to be published 'as soon as possible'](#)

Show key events only

Live feed

Show key events only

From 3d ago

[08.54](#)

Labour says PM told 'barefaced lie' about parties as conclusion of Met inquiry means privileges committee probe can start

The conclusion of the Met investigation into Partygate does not just mean that the Sue Gray report into the lockdown-busting events will be published imminently; it also triggers the launch of the privileges committee inquiry into claims that [Boris Johnson](#) deliberately misled MPs when he said the rules were followed at all times.

The Commons voted for this investigation to go ahead last month, but [the motion passed by MPs](#) said the committee would “not begin substantive consideration of the matter” until the Met inquiry was over.

In an interview with Radio 4’s World at One [Emily Thornberry](#), the shadow attorney general, said that Johnson told a “barefaced lie” in the Commons and that this was the most important reason why he should resign. She said:

Based on the 126 fines from the parties as at No 10, just looking at the sheer scale of law breaking which has been laid bare by the police, what we know now, for absolute certainty, is that when Boris Johnson came to the House of Commons and said there were no parties in Downing Street and no rules have been broken, that that was a barefaced lie. There is no possible way in which he can claim that he was unaware that these parties that he was attending didn’t break the rules here.

And for that - we think it's an extremely important point, always been the most important point - he should resign.



Emily Thornberry. Photograph: Tayfun Salci/ZUMA Press
Wire/REX/Shutterstock

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[3d ago](#)[12.30](#)

Afternoon summary

- [Boris Johnson will not receive any more fines for lockdown-breaching parties, it has been confirmed, after the Metropolitan police said they had completed their investigation into gatherings in Downing Street and Whitehall.](#) The government is now expected to publish the Sue Gray report next week, which will set out in more detail how the lockdown rules were broken in No 10. Johnson will respond with a statement in parliament. The conclusion of the Met investigation also means the Commons privileges committee is free to start its

inquiry into whether Johnson deliberately misled MPs about the parties, although it is not clear yet exactly when this will start. Labour says Johnson told a “barefaced lie” about the parties, and that this, above all, is why he should resign. (See [1.54pm](#).)

- [**The EU ambassador to the UK has rejected Liz Truss's demand that the Northern Ireland protocol be rewritten, and issued a blunt warning of retaliation if the government passes a law disapplying aspects of the agreement.**](#)
- Downing Street has denied reports claiming it is blocking the Treasury from imposing a windfall tax on energy companies (see [9.48am](#)) as the chancellor faced pressure from the CBI to “help the hardest-hit now” with financial help to get them through the cost of living crisis. (See [9.09am](#).) As PA Media reports, the PM’s spokesperson said he had seen “lots of reports” on division between the departments, but he insisted Boris Johnson and Rishi Sunak were “aligned” on the issue. Labour accused the government of acting like “headless chickens” on the matter and suggested a U-turn was inevitable. (See [12.52pm](#).)
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Updated at 12.36 EDT

[3d ago](#)[12.18](#)

Here is an article explaining what some of our readers are saying about their response to Partygate.

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Updated at 12.26 EDT

3d ago12.10

These are from **Danny Shaw**, the BBC's former home affairs correspondent, on why Boris Johnson may have received just one fine over Partygate.

Why did @metpoliceuk give Boris Johnson only one fixed penalty notice?

The clue is in their statement.

“We took great care to ensure that for each referral we had the necessary evidence to prosecute the FPN at court.”

In other words, they set a high evidence bar for all FPNs

— Danny Shaw (@DannyShawNews) May 19, 2022

We don't know for certain what evidence they had and what evidence they didn't have.

Speculating about it is a bit pointless.

We'll see the evidence against an individual only if a case comes to court or if the Commons Privileges Committee publishes it...

— Danny Shaw (@DannyShawNews) May 19, 2022

..and while I think @metpoliceuk statements and communications about Downing Street parties have been really confusing and unclear....

....it looks to me as if the detectives involved have tried to conduct a thorough and fair investigation, as swiftly as possible.

— Danny Shaw (@DannyShawNews) [May 19, 2022](#)

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[3d ago](#)[12.09](#)



Keir Starmer visiting a park and ride in Leeds, where he was meeting Labour mayors on Thursday. Back row: Steve Rotheram, the mayor of Liverpool city region, and Dan Norris, the West of England mayor. Front row: Starmer and Tracy Brabin, the mayor of West Yorkshire.

Photograph: Danny Lawson/PA

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Updated at 12.25 EDT

[3d ago](#)[11.42](#)

Earlier this year, as the Partygate scandal first erupted, **Sir Charles Walker**, a former vice-chair of the Conservative backbench 1922 Committee, said he

thought Boris Johnson would have to resign because [he thought his position was irrecoverable](#). In an interview with Newsnight, Walker now says he was wrong. Johnson was able to defy predictions because he is an “extraordinary politician”, Walker says.

"I just felt his position was unrecoverable... I was wrong."

Conservative MP Charles Walker tells [#Newsnight](#) Boris Johnson is an "extraordinary politician" as he's recovered after the Partygate scandal like a written off cricketer scoring a century<https://t.co/i0YomnYQ6t>
pic.twitter.com/HF0AykmuQ6

— BBC Newsnight (@BBCNewsnight) [May 19, 2022](#)

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Updated at 12.00 EDT

[3d ago](#)[11.32](#)

The Conservative former chancellor **George Osborne** thinks [Boris Johnson](#) will survive as PM for now because none of his rivals are determined enough to oust him.

My observation a month ago - it's never been about police fines or cabinet office reports; it's always been about whether anyone wants it enough to try wresting the crown from Boris. The answer for now is a resounding ‘no’ <https://t.co/h5a0TxHnuZ>

— George Osborne (@George_Osborne) [May 19, 2022](#)

In the run-up to the Brexit referendum in 2016, Osborne and Johnson were arguably the two best-placed candidates in the contest to succeed David Cameron as prime minister. Johnson got there in the end, and Osborne now chairs a museum. He knows more than most people about how power struggles can turn out.

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Updated at 11.35 EDT

[3d ago](#)[11.17](#)

Nadine Dorries, the culture secretary, shares her Netflix account with four other households, including her mother's, she told MPs at the culture select committee this morning, calling the streaming service an “incredibly generous system”. My colleague **Alex Hern** has the story here.

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Updated at 11.21 EDT

[3d ago](#)[11.05](#)

This is from **Adam Wagner**, the barrister and lockdown regulations specialist, on why [Boris Johnson](#) may have been able to avoid being fined for his attendance at the BYOB party in the Downing Street garden on 20 May 2020.

Because it was during a brief period (the first two months of the pandemic) where the regulations technically allowed you to host a party in your garden and only attendees would be fined. That changed on 31 May 20 <https://t.co/omnwwS077L>

— Adam Wagner (@AdamWagner1) [May 19, 2022](#)

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[3d ago](#)[10.58](#)

Beergate controversy has not significantly damaged Labour's standing with voters, polls suggest

There are two new polls out today. Both of them suggest that the Beergate controversy has not caused any significant damage to Labour's prospects.

According to **Ipsos Mori**, Labour has a six-point lead over the Conservatives – up one point from last month (when the Beergate story had yet to reach full intensity). Here are the figures.

NEW [@IpsosUK](#) / [@standardnews](#):

1/ Labour lead at 6 points (changes from April):

Lab 39 (-1)
Con 33 (-2)
Lib Dem 12 (+2)
Green 5 (-2)
Other 11 (+3)

Fieldwork 11-17 May.

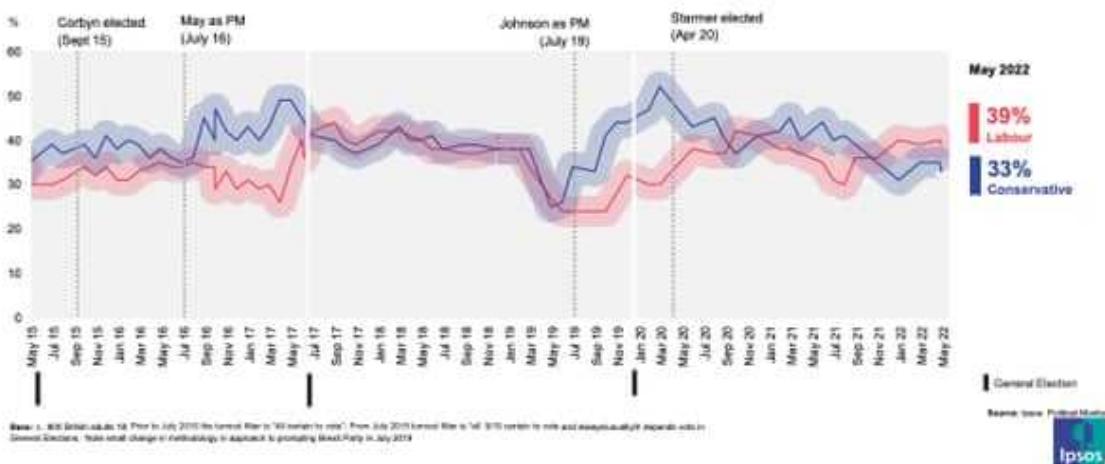
THREAD

— Keiran Pedley (@keiranpedley) [May 19, 2022](#)

Here is a chart illustrating this.

Headline voting intention: Since the 2015 General Election

How would you vote if there were an election tomorrow?



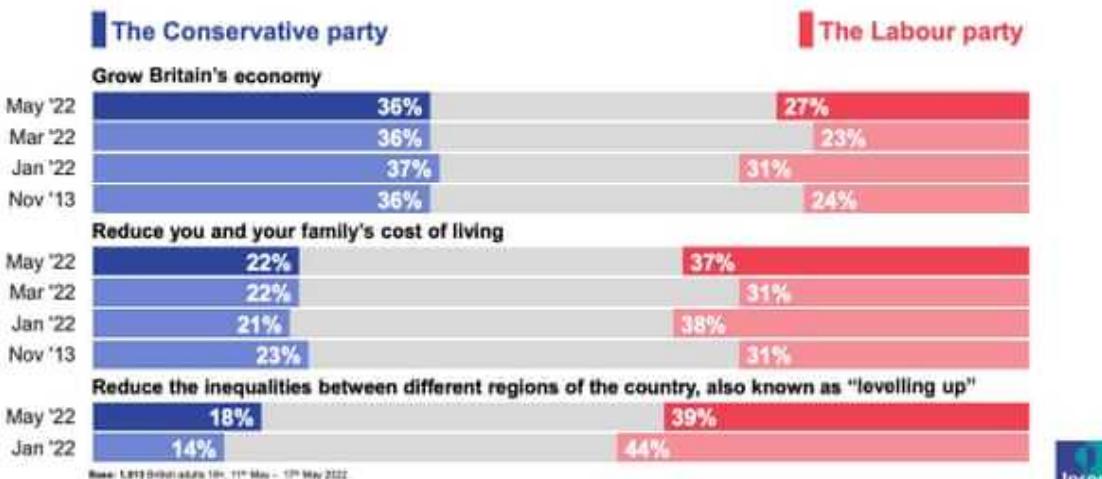
© Ipsos | Ipsos Political Monitor | May 2022

Latest polling Photograph: Ipsos MORI

And here is [the full write-up](#), which points out that Labour has a 15-point lead over the Conservatives on the cost of living, while the Conservatives have a nine-point lead on expanding the economy.

Party trust on key issues: Trends

Which party, if any, do you trust most to....? The Conservatives, Labour, Liberal Democrats, SNP (Scotland Only), Plaid Cymru (Wales only) or some other party?



11 © Ipsos | Ipsos Political Monitor | May 2022

Polling on issues Photograph: Ipsos MORI

And **Savanta ComRes** has a poll giving Labour a seven-point lead over the Conservatives – up two from early May (when Beergate was prominent as a story).

□New Westminster Voting Intention□

- Con 34 (=)
- Lab 41 (+2)
- LD 10 (-1)
- SNP 4 (=)
- Green 4 (+1)
- Other 7 (-2)

2,196 UK adults, 13-15 May

(chg from 6-8 May) pic.twitter.com/3N3JXUtYCH

— Savanta ComRes (@SavantaComRes) [May 19, 2022](#)

The same poll suggests Keir Starmer's favourability ratings have fallen. But Boris Johnson's have fallen even more, and Starmer has a narrow lead over him on who would be the best PM.

Drops in favourability once again for both Johnson and Starmer, but Starmer remains ahead of Johnson on the 'Best PM' metric for the 6th month in a row.

Net Favourability
Johnson -30
Starmer -10

Best PM
Johnson 34
Starmer 36 pic.twitter.com/lpLZKuM1Bm

— Savanta ComRes (@SavantaComRes) [May 19, 2022](#)

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Updated at 11.11 EDT

3d ago **10.30**

From Newsnight's **Lewis Goodall**

Think it's fair to say there are *a lot* of very unhappy junior civil servants right now. One, who did not receive a fine, but knows people who did texts: "As ever, we carry the can."

— Lewis Goodall (@lewis_goodall) May 19, 2022

•
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3d ago **10.25**

This is from the Mirror's **Pippa Crerar** on why Simon Case may not have been fined over the surprise birthday party for the PM. (See 2.58pm.)

One source claims this is because he was not captured in any of the pics - even though he was at some of the events - which raises possibility police may have been relying on photo evidence as threshold for FPNs.
<https://t.co/zD5tnzLzBr>

— Pippa Crerar (@PippaCrerar) May 19, 2022

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Metropolitan police

Boris Johnson will not face further fines over lockdown gatherings, says No 10

Met concludes Partygate investigation and says 126 fixed-penalty notices were issued covering 12 events

- [‘I can’t look at Johnson without feeling sick’: readers on Partygate](#)
- [Partygate: 12 events that were under investigation](#)



Boris Johnson and wife Carrie will not receive any further FPNs, it has been confirmed. Photograph: Michael Mayhew/Allstar

[Peter Walker](#), [Heather Stewart](#) and [Vikram Dodd](#)

Thu 19 May 2022 09.14 EDTFirst published on Thu 19 May 2022 05.54 EDT

Boris Johnson will not receive any more fines for lockdown-breaching parties, it has been confirmed, after the [Metropolitan police](#) said they had

completed their investigation into gatherings in Downing Street and Whitehall.

The police force said they had issued a total of 126 fixed-penalty notices, covering all 12 events investigated.

Johnson and his wife, Carrie, [received fixed-penalty notices last month](#) for attending a celebration for his birthday, but will not be fined again. “The Met has confirmed they are taking no further action as regards the prime minister,” Boris Johnson’s official spokesperson said.

It is understood a similar reassurance was given to Carrie Johnson. The cabinet secretary, Simon Case, who had not been fined before now, is not among the last tranche of penalties, officials said.

While Johnson receiving just one fine would seemingly limit the prospect of moves by Tory MPs to oust him, he now faces publication of the [full report into illicit gatherings by the senior civil servant Sue Gray](#), which officials say will be published next week.

A [brief, interim version of Gray’s report was published](#), but the full details were delayed for the police investigation. Gray has had access to significant amounts of information including photos of events, though it seems unlikely these will be released.

Opposition parties nonetheless reiterated their calls for Johnson to resign, with Keir Starmer saying the prime minister was “responsible for the culture” in Downing Street.

Johnson’s spokesperson said: “The PM is pleased that the investigation is concluded, and would like to thank the Met for their work.” Asked whether Johnson would be making a public statement, he said the prime minister “will update parliament in the first instance, once Sue Gray’s report is published”.

The spokesperson said Gray’s report would be published, “as received” from the senior civil servant. Asked whether photos or other evidence could be

published, he said: “It will be up to Sue Gray what information she includes in her report.”

The Met said it had imposed fines for events on eight dates. However, on several of these, more than one event took place. The Met said that of the 12 events referred to it for investigation, “all resulted or will do so in a FPN [fixed-penalty notice] being issued”.

The 126 fines were issued to 83 different people, the Met said. There were 53 FPNs issued to 35 men and 73 to 48 women, meaning 28 people received between two and five penalties.

The Met’s acting deputy commissioner, Helen Ball, said 97 fines had so far been paid, and none of those outstanding were beyond the 28-day period people have to make the payment.

She said the breach of the rules that led to each of the fines issues was “clear cut”.

“Our view is that these 126 referrals are clear cut. We made sure after a really thorough investigation that clear evidence existed of a breach,” she said.

Asked whether Johnson should still step down having received one fine, Starmer – who faces his own potential penalty for a possible Covid rules breach – said this had not changed.

The Labour leader said: “After an investigation that shows 120-plus breaches of the law in Downing Street, of course he should resign. He’s responsible for the culture.”

Ed Davey, the Liberal Democrat leader, said the concluded investigation showed Downing Street “was fined more times for breaking Covid laws than any other address in the country”.

He said: “It exposes a shocking level of criminality at the heart of Johnson’s No 10. It beggars belief that Conservative MPs are allowing our great country to be run by a prime minister who broke the law then repeatedly lied about it.”

The eight dates for which fines have been issued are:

- 20 May 2020, when “bring your own booze” drinks were held in the Downing Street garden.
- 18 June 2020, when a party was held to mark the departure of a No 10 private secretary.
- 19 June 2020, the date of Johnson’s birthday party, for which he was fined.
- 13 November 2020, when a leaving do was held for adviser Lee Cain as well as a party in the No 10 flat.
- 17 December 2020 when several parties were held, including one to mark the departure of Covid taskforce boss Kate Josephs.
- 18 December 2020, the date of the festive gathering which led to the resignation of Allegra Stratton.
- 14 January 2021, when gatherings were held to mark the departure of two private secretaries, as revealed by Sue Gray.
- 16 April 2021, the eve of Prince Philip’s funeral, when two parties were held, one of which culminated in Wilfred Johnson’s swing being broken.

In its statement, the Met said that while it did not routinely investigate historical Covid breaches, it would do so if there was evidence those involved knew they were breaking rules, where the case was clear, and “where not investigating would significantly undermine the legitimacy of the law”.

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The investigation saw 12 detectives work through 345 documents, including emails, door logs, diary entries and witness statements, 510 photographs and

CCTV images and 204 questionnaires.

Ball said: “Our investigation was thorough and impartial and was completed as quickly as we could, given the amount of information that needed to be reviewed and the importance of ensuring that we had strong evidence for each FPN referral.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/may/19/met-police-conclude-partygate-investigation-into-downing-street-gatherings>

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Labour

Ex-Labour MP must pay £434k damages to woman he repeatedly assaulted

Tribunal case against Mike Hill may lead to court action from other victims of sexual offences by MPs



Mike Hill conducted a campaign of sexual harassment and bullying against Woman A over a 16-month period in 2017-18. Photograph: Gary Calton/The Observer

[Rajeev Syal](#) Home affairs editor

Thu 19 May 2022 05.25 EDT Last modified on Thu 19 May 2022 14.58 EDT

A woman who was repeatedly sexually assaulted and harassed by a former Labour MP has been awarded nearly £435,000 by an employment tribunal in

a ruling that could have major implications for outstanding claims against MPs.

A central London employment tribunal on Wednesday ordered the former member for Hartlepool Mike Hill to pay £434,435 to Woman A.

She was [victimised after spurning Hill's advances](#), an employment tribunal ruled in July. He was found to have got into the victim's bed and to have sexually assaulted her in his parliamentary office.

The case is the first public compensation payment ordered against an MP for sexual assault, and is expected to prompt other alleged victims in parliament to take action through the civil courts.

Conservative officials are facing increasing pressure to remove the whip from an MP who was arrested on Tuesday over claims of rape and sexual assault.

Woman A told the Guardian she hoped Wednesday's order would encourage other women to come forward and seek justice through the courts as an alternative to the parliamentary process.

"It is important that the many women who have been sexually harassed and assaulted by MPs know that there is another way of seeking justice and compensation for their losses," she said.

"The parliamentary investigation route, which I went through, is arduous and very tough and conducted in private.

"Pursuing Mike Hill through the courts has meant that I might receive compensation for my financial losses and the process seems much more open and transparent."

Woman A said the decision to take on Hill had nevertheless left her homeless, traumatised by post-traumatic stress disorder, suffering from severe depressive disorder and with limited prospects of a career.

“I have gone through two and a half years of hell. I left my job with nothing while he took his pension, and several months’ pay and was covered by £250,000 towards his legal fees. I had to crowdfund my case. The system, even through the courts, is weighted in favour of MPs,” she said.

Woman A’s barrister welcomed the ruling and said she will now seek to enforce the order against Hill’s assets but may also sue the House of Commons if Hill is unable to pay.

Suzanne McKie QC said: “We will now look to enforce against Mr Hill’s personal assets and take action against the House of Commons for the shortfall.”

McKie told a remedy hearing in March that nearly all of the £250,000 insurance policy that the Commons had put in place to cover an MP facing an employment claim had been spent on Hill’s legal fees.

She told the hearing that the Commons bore responsibility for failing to keep some money for her client’s legal costs and compensation.

“Ms A now has to consider how to effect judgment against Mr Hill when there is almost nothing left in that pot of money, and whether to sue the House of Commons for failing to put in place a sufficiently protective policy,” McKie told the hearing.

MPs are covered by a £5m insurance policy if they are sued for libel or slander, but by a £250,000 policy if an employee claims sexual harassment.

Andrew Bridgen, the Conservative MP for North West Leicestershire who gave evidence on behalf of Woman A to the tribunal, said he would raise the issue of MPs’ insurance with Lindsay Hoyle, the Speaker, and Karen Bradley, the chair of the procedure committee, about the implications of the case for parliament.

“The Ipsa insurance cover should be increased to at least £1m and there should be a limit set on the amount that can be spent on defence lawyers’ fees to ensure that there is sufficient funds for compensation and the applicant’s legal costs,” he said.

Hill, who was then married, conducted a campaign of sexual harassment and bullying against Woman A over a 16-month period in 2017 and 2018, according to a reserved judgment. He was in breach of the Equalities Act in subjecting the claimant “to unwanted conduct of a sexual nature”.

The breaches included a telephone call on the evening of 22 September 2017 in which he told the claimant he loved her; “getting into bed with the claimant on 11 December 2017 and rubbing his erection against her”; and “sexual assaults on occasions at the Westminster office”.

He was also found to have victimised her with behaviour that included deactivating her security pass, ignoring her work-related text and emails, and terminating the claimant’s employment while stating he would put notice on the flat they shared in a text message.

[Hill resigned as a Labour MP in March 2021](#), resulting in a May byelection in Hartlepool and a victory for the Conservatives.

Hill has been approached for a comment.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/may/19/mike-hill-ex-labour-mp-compensation-woman-sexually-assaulted>

[Police](#)

Don't let people off if they steal food in desperation, minister tells police

Kit Malthouse says police watchdog's suggestion that cost of living will trigger more crime is 'old-fashioned'

Police should not ignore shoplifters stealing food in cost of living crisis, says minister – video

[Jamie Grierson](#)

[@JamieGrierson](#)

Thu 19 May 2022 04.02 EDT Last modified on Thu 19 May 2022 11.58 EDT

The policing minister, [Kit Malthouse](#), has disputed the suggestion of the chief inspector of constabulary, Andy Cooke, that the cost of living crisis will trigger an increase in crime, branding it "old-fashioned" thinking.

As inflation hit a 40-year high of 9%, [Cooke said on Wednesday](#) that officers should use their "discretion" when deciding whether to prosecute people who steal in order to eat.

Appearing on ITV's Good Morning Britain on Thursday, Malthouse, a longtime ally of Boris Johnson, said Cooke's thinking was "old-fashioned", adding: "Because people are challenged financially ... that doesn't necessarily mean they're going to turn to crime."

The chief inspector of constabulary is the head of the independent assessor of police forces in England and Wales. Cooke, a former chief constable of Merseyside police, took over from Sir Tom Winsor in the role last month.

Malthouse has told officers not to let shoplifters off if they are stealing food out of desperation during the cost of living crisis.

He later told LBC, ministers would ensure police do not turn a blind eye to shoplifters stealing food.

“In fact I wrote to chief constables just a year or so ago saying they should not be ignoring those seemingly small crimes,” he said.

Earlier, the minister told Times Radio: “The broad rule is that justice should be blind and I hope and believe that is the principle that sits behind not just the police but the operation of the courts as well.

“I have to challenge this connection between poverty and crime. What we’ve found in the past, and where there is now growing evidence, is that actually crime is a contributor to poverty. That if you remove the violence and the crime from people’s lives they generally prosper more than they otherwise would.”

Cooke had earlier said: “The impact of poverty, and the impact of lack of opportunity for people, does lead to an increase in crime. There’s no two ways about that.”

When asked how policing could avoid being seen as the arm of an uncaring state, he said forces across England and Wales were skilled in dealing with the tensions and dynamics of their communities.

“What they’ve got to bear in mind is what is the best thing for the community, and that individual, in the way they deal with those issues. And I certainly fully support police officers using their discretion – and they need to use discretion more often.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/may/19/dont-let-people-off-if-they-steal-food-in-desperation-minister-tells-police-kit-malthouse>

Cost of living crisis

Helping cash-strapped Britons won't add to inflation, says CBI

Chief of business association calls for stimulus that aids 'hardest hit' with rising food and fuel bills



Tony Danker says stimulating business investment will 'make sure that any downturn in our fortunes is short and shallow'. Photograph: Jonathan Brady/PA

*[Jamie Grierson](#)
[@JamieGrierson](#)*

Thu 19 May 2022 04.30 EDT Last modified on Thu 19 May 2022 10.50 EDT

Tackling rising food and fuel bills will not add to inflation and people who are "the hardest hit" need help now, the head of the UK's biggest business association has warned.

Official figures published on Wednesday revealed [UK inflation soared to 9% in April](#) – its highest level for more than 40 years – as the rising cost of gas and electricity pushed household energy bills to record levels.

Tony Danker, the director general of the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), told BBC Radio 4's Today programme: “You have to help the hardest hit now.

“Helping people with heating and eating bills will not fuel inflation.

“You need to stimulate business investment now – that’s not going to overheat the economy.

“It’s going to make sure that any downturn in our fortunes is short and shallow because growth is coming soon.”

The Office for National Statistics said the [54% increase in the energy price cap](#) in April, which took the average annual gas and electricity bill close to £2,000, was the main reason for the jump in the consumer prices index from 7% in March.

Average petrol prices rose to a record 161.8p a litre in April 2022 from 125.5p a year earlier. Diesel was another factor behind the increase in the consumer price index from 7% in February after the average cost at the pumps hit a record high of 176.1p a litre, leading to an average increase over the last 12 months in motor fuels of 31.4%.

Earlier, Kit Malthouse, the policing minister, said circumstances could warrant a windfall tax on oil and gas giants although the government was “intrinsically opposed” to such a tariff.

The clamour for a one-off levy on the energy sector – which has made huge profits as gas prices surge – has been growing, with Labour saying such a move is “inevitable”.

Boris Johnson has repeatedly argued that a windfall tax would force companies to abandon investments in domestic energy projects, while the

chancellor, Rishi Sunak, has reportedly asked Treasury officials to examine plans for a levy.

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Malthouse, a longtime ally of Johnson's, told Times Radio: "We are intrinsically opposed to that kind of taxation. We want to see a pattern of investment from that industry that will help us with our medium and long-term energy problems.

"But the chancellor reserves the right to take all steps he thinks necessary and he's in conversation with that industry all the time, I'm sure.

"My predilection as a Conservative generally is to have low and stable and predictable taxes, and that retrospective taxation is to be avoided, but there are Conservative administrations in the past who have felt the need to tax retrospectively and sometimes the circumstances might warrant that."

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/may/19/cbi-tony-dunker-inflation-help-rising-food-fuel-bills>

2022.05.19 - Spotlight

- 'Some things can't be repaired' How do you recover when a friend betrays you?
- 'There are no words for the horror' The story of my madness
- 'Gorgeous is my business' How blond billboard bombshell Angelyne became an LA icon
- 'How is that a real job?' Why parents are struggling to keep up with children's career options

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[Friendship](#)

‘Some things can’t be repaired’: how do you recover when a friend betrays you?



‘We are a social species; when someone betrays us, it’s a real threat to our wellbeing.’ Illustration: Marie Jacotey/The Guardian

With the ‘Wagatha Christie’ trial poring over the destruction of a celebrity friendship, four people share their experiences of treachery and trauma



Sirin Kale

Thu 19 May 2022 05.00 EDT

As [the libel suit](#) between Rebekah Vardy and Coleen Rooney rumbles on in the high court, the public has heard weeks of claims and counterclaims about Instagram stings, paparazzi ambushes and [phones lost in the sea](#). But one thing has been clear from the outset: one of the two women has been betrayed. Either, as Rooney claims, Vardy sold stories about her fellow Wag to the Sun, or, as Vardy maintains, Rooney's baseless accusation has dragged her good name through the mud.

It is a messy and sordid tale from which no one – except possibly the lawyers – emerges the better. Rooney has described [Vardy's WhatsApp exchanges about her as “evil”](#); Vardy has said that the threats and abuse she received after Rooney's accusations [made her feel suicidal](#). What is driving the former friends to spend millions airing their most intimate details?

Betrayal by a friend is not something you can just laugh off, says Dr Jennifer Freyd, a psychology professor at the University of Oregon. “The very place where you should be able to get help and protection from the harms of life becomes the source of harm.” She coined the term “betrayal trauma” to

describe the pain such treachery can cause. “We are a social species; when someone betrays us, it’s a real threat to our wellbeing.”

There are degrees of betrayal, of course. Most of us will have experienced a friend gossiping uncharitably behind our backs, for example – or perhaps we have been that friend. This is hardly Judas kissing Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. “But what we find overall is that betrayal is toxic,” Freyd says. “People who are betrayed are likely to have physical and mental health challenges.”

Annabel, who is in her 50s and lives in Wales, was betrayed by her former friend Jane. They met in the early 2000s. Annabel ran a specialist business at a food market; Jane visited her stand often and befriended her at a marketing event. “We just clicked,” says Annabel. “She was really friendly. We’d go to each other’s houses for meals.”

Annabel introduced Jane to her friends and gave her work on her stall, teaching her all about her business. Jane then announced that she planned to set up a rival stand, selling the same products at the same market. Annabel was horrified. “I told her that I was hurt and I thought it would be awkward and strange for other people,” says Annabel. “It didn’t work personally and from a business point of view we were going to be sharing customers.”

Jane was unmoved, even suggesting that, if Annabel was unhappy, *she* might like to consider moving markets. Just like that, their friendship was over.

At first, Jane’s stand didn’t affect Annabel’s sales too greatly, but over time her income declined. “The market could not sustain two similar businesses,” she says. Eventually, Annabel left. The experience made her feel “very lonely – like I couldn’t trust anyone. I felt that people might just be after what I had got.” She was, she says, “upset for a very long time”.



Better days ... Coleen Rooney (*left*) and Rebekah Vardy watch England play Wales at Euro 2016 in Lens, France. Photograph: Jean Catuffe/Getty Images

This is a common response to feelings of betrayal, says Holly Roberts, a psychotherapist with [the relationship charity Relate](#). “When you open up to a friend, you make yourself vulnerable to that person,” she says. “That’s what makes it hard. Because you’ve bared yourself emotionally to that person and been hurt by them.” Roberts says these feelings “can sit with you for a long time”. Annabel has moved on with her life. “I can be philosophical about it now,” she says. “But it ranks pretty highly in my history of painful personal experiences.”

Betrayal stories “are as old as time”, notes Dr Lucy CMM Jackson, an assistant classics professor at Durham University. Tales such as Euripides’ Medea, about a woman’s bloody quest for vengeance after her husband abandons her, “are so fascinating because they articulate a fear”, she says. “We tell stories about betrayal to make sense of it, in the hope that maybe we can avoid it or, if not, be better prepared for it. Ultimately, we come back to the idea of betrayal so often because we do have to trust each other.”

Medea “takes vengeance because her name has been dragged through the dust”, says Jackson. Does she see parallels with Vardy’s attempt to restore

her reputation? “It’s all quite petty,” she says. “I don’t get the sense that so much honour has been given up in this modern parallel.”

Like Medea, Stacy Thunes’ story of betrayal revolves around a duplicitous lover. Thunes, a 61-year-old actor and screenwriter from London, was betrayed by her close friend Billie in the early 80s. When Thunes fell in love with a handsome musician, she arranged for the three of them to go for breakfast. At breakfast, to Thunes’ horror, “his foot was actually touching hers under the table”, she says.

That evening, Thunes went to Billie’s apartment. The lights were off and Billie wasn’t answering the doorbell. Thunes climbed in through an open window. Billie emerged from her bedroom. “I knew by the look on her face that he was there,” Thunes says.

Being betrayed by Billie, she says, was more painful than being betrayed by her boyfriend. “It made me feel like we were never really friends,” says Thunes. “Like the friendship meant nothing. All those years of feeling that she had my back were gone in an instant.”

Those who are betrayed often feel shame, says Roberts. “People feel embarrassed. They think: how could I have opened myself up to this person and let them do this to me? How could I have been so naive?”



‘It made me feel like we were never really friends’ ... Stacy Thunes.
Photograph: Steffi Henn

Lisa, a disability support worker, knows this feeling well. “I couldn’t believe how stupid we’d been,” she sighs. Lisa met Anna in the 1990s when they worked in adjacent shops in Edinburgh. “She was funny and kind and generous,” says Lisa. “You knew where you stood with her. I liked that.”

When Lisa and her then-husband moved to a small village on the east coast of Scotland, Anna soon followed with her young son. Lisa helped out with childcare and even acted as a guarantor on her rental property. “She was my family and I was hers,” says Lisa. But everything fell apart when Anna’s landlord got in touch. Anna had fallen behind on the rent.

Lisa offered to lend her £1,500, the last of a small legacy her grandfather had left her. “She initially said no, but eventually agreed,” says Lisa. “I gave her the money in cash. And that was the last time I ever saw her.” Eventually, Lisa pieced together the story: Anna had used her money to run away with a boyfriend. “I felt more angry at myself than at her, for being so naive,” Lisa says.

Anna later wrote a letter to Lisa, apologising for hurting her – but not for taking the money. “She said it was my fault, because I forced her to do it,”

says Lisa.

Not everyone will get the closure that comes with an apology, however half-hearted. Cormac and Duncan met a decade ago as teachers at the same school. They became friends quickly and Cormac introduced Duncan to his social and professional circles. When a management post became available, Cormac asked Duncan if he planned to apply for it. “He said no,” Cormac says. “I would have had no problem if he’d said yes.”

Cormac spent weeks going over his interview strategy with Duncan. At his interview, he was stunned to see Duncan there, in a suit and tie. “He’d gleaned all the information from me and he’d used me to lay the groundwork for getting to know everyone on the panel,” says Cormac. Duncan got the job. “I was in tears, because I knew I’d been dealing with someone very clever and manipulative and careful, and it was devastating.”

To make matters more maddening, Duncan not only never apologised, but also spread false rumours about Cormac around the school. “I had to find my own resolution,” says Cormac. “I can’t let him live in my head rent-free. I told myself: ‘That is in the past and everything from here on out will be good.’” Cormac ended up moving to a different school. “I wanted to draw a line under it,” he says.

When you open up to a friend, you make yourself vulnerable to that person. That’s what makes it hard

Holly Roberts

Betrayal usually means the end of a friendship. “That urge to withdraw is a protective response,” says Freyd. “You don’t want to continue to be betrayed. It’s analogous to a fight-or-flight response.” After Billie wrote to beg for forgiveness, Thunes let her back into her life, but she never trusted her again. “Every time I was with someone, I knew she might have her eye on them,” says Thunes.

It is possible to rebuild the relationship “if you’re both invested in it”, says Roberts. “Check in with each other: how does this feel? But the trust may never come back. Accepting that can be a good step.” If you feel unable to

trust your friend, walk away. “You don’t have to put yourself through it,” she says. “Some things can’t be repaired, and it’s OK to acknowledge that.”

Surprisingly few of the betrayed wish harm upon their betrayers. They would rather let go of the hurt and move on. “I couldn’t let it drive me mad,” says Annabel. “I had to carry on doing my thing.” But all of them are more careful now; more tentative about who they let in, more thoughtful about what they do with the trust that others place in them. “I am reminded of it daily, not because I want to make myself feel bad, but because I don’t want to be that person to hurt other people,” says Thunes.

But the act of continuing to trust after being hurt so badly is a form of resistance in itself. They will not stop connecting with others, because to close off from the world is to let their betrayers win. Lisa says she would lend Anna the money again in a heartbeat, even knowing everything she does now. “I’ve had so much kindness shown to me over the years, too,” she says. “That’s what makes life beautiful.”

Some names have been changed

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2022/may/19/how-do-you-recover-when-a-friend-betrays-you>

‘There are no words for the horror’: the story of my madness

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Interview

‘Gorgeous is my business’ ... how blond billboard bombshell Angelyne became an LA icon

[Sian Cain](#)



‘Gorgeous skin is my business’ ... Angelyne on Hollywood Boulevard in the 1990s. Photograph: Robert Landau/Alamy

Mystery has shrouded Angelyne ever since her giant ads besieged LA. Now a new drama starring Emmy Rossum and Martin Freeman is telling her astonishing story – and she’s furious about it. We track down the pink-Corvette-driving star

[@siancain](#)

Thu 19 May 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 20 May 2022 05.54 EDT

In 1984, a billboard featuring a pouting, pneumatic blond woman appeared on Sunset Boulevard, the most feted thoroughfare in Los Angeles. “Angelyne rocks,” it declared. There was a phone number and nothing else. Any onlookers curious enough to call got through to her management: would they like to book Angelyne? I don’t know, those callers would probably have answered, who is Angelyne? Within a decade, there were 200 Angelyne billboards around LA – and still it was no clearer who Angelyne was or what she did. “I’m famous for being on billboards,” she [told one bemused interviewer](#).

Over the years, not much more was learned about Angelyne. She came from the midwest, she said, sometimes mentioning Idaho. There were no romances, no children. She sang in a punk band, did some art. Angelinos might see her driving in one of her many pink Corvettes, sometimes stopping to pout on the hood, or sell photos and merchandise. Investors, she said, were paying for the billboards, and the returns became obvious when she began appearing on screen.

She played a “Busty Lady” in *The Frisco Kid*, and her cleavage caused a car crash in [Earth Girls Are Easy](#). Her billboard turned up in the opening credits of *Moonlighting*, then *The Simpsons*, then *BoJack Horseman*. She sang with Moby in the [We Are All Made of Stars](#) video and became a mainstay in disaster flicks: in *The Day After Tomorrow*, a flying Angelyne billboard takes out a Fox journalist; in *Volcano*, her billboard is struck by a fiery ball of lava and explodes. Somewhere along the way, Angelyne became an LA

icon, the scrappy starlet who embodied everything that kept the city running: glamour and seediness, heartbreak and chutzpah.

Now she's the subject of a new miniseries called [Angelyne](#), with Emmy Rossum playing her alongside Martin Freeman and Hamish Linklater – which is why Angelyne is chatting to me today. “Are we on?” I hear her murmur, her Zoom window a wall of pink feathers. Then the feathers flutter up and there she is, wearing a black and silver leotard with pink elbow-length gloves. You look amazing, I say. “Well, you look pretty darn good, too,” she replies. “But you know what? It’s business for me. Gorgeous skin is my business. My astrologer would always say, ‘Angelyne, you have the most beautiful skin.’ She lived to be 104, you know that?”

I’m an alien. I came to this planet to help. This is probably one of the most difficult planets in the whole universe

When that first billboard went up in 1984, she says, “it was like BOOM! But to me, being huge is normal. I do well big, I do well at 100ft. Wherever I came from, whatever is core to me, I was born with that.” She was soon inundated with requests – “from regular fans, naughty ones, X-rated authors, TV shows, newspapers, films”. And the rumours started too. She rattles them off: “I’m married to a sheikh. Maybe I am a man. My husband paid for everything. A gay guy died and left me all his money. There is a new Angelyne every two years. I’m a prostitute. I was a mystery.”

In 2017, [the Hollywood Reporter \(HR\) announced it had in fact solved the mystery](#): Angelyne was really Ronia Tamar Goldberg, born in 1950 to two Holocaust survivors. The Goldbergs had met in the Chmielnik ghetto in Poland and endured horrors at various concentration camps. After the war, they married, then took their daughter to Israel before settling in the US. Her father was controlling; her mother died of cancer when she was 14. HR had been tipped off by a “hobbyist genealogist”, who thought it would be “fun” to discover Angelyne’s story.



‘Control is important to everybody’ ...Angelyne during her campaign to become governor of California in 2021. Photograph: Frederic J Brown/AFP/Getty Images

“Angelyne’s real identity is finally solved,” the headline ran. But did anyone truly need Angelyne’s identity to be solved? Why couldn’t Angelyne simply be Angelyne? HR granted the genealogist anonymity, while printing his reasoning that “she forfeited any claim of privacy when she ran, as a stunt or not, for governor of California”, in 2003. Even her ex-husband is quoted as saying she never talked to him about her past. “If I brought it up, it was shut down,” he told HR.

“Strangely enough,” the New York Times once observed of Angelyne, “she seems to evoke the most hostility from the men whom her sexpot persona would seem to be trying to please.” Certainly, over 30 years of interviews, numerous male journalists have complained that she hasn’t told them the whole truth, or they’ve made snide remarks about her \$20-a-photo fee and her merch-hustling.

Since the HR story ran, Angelyne has complained vaguely about “inaccuracies” in it, without totally denying she is Goldberg (or was, in another life). More often than not, she has just seemed peeved that someone else got in first. Having control seems important to you, I say. “Control is

important to everybody,” she replies, a bit snappishly. “It’s not important to you?” Sure, I say, but I’m not famous – no one has ever said I’m not entitled to privacy.

Angelyne is quiet for a moment. “It was horrible,” she eventually says of the article. “What do I say when somebody comes up to me crying, saying, ‘I relate to what happened to you?’ I mean, what do I say – ‘I’m sorry, that’s not true?’ I don’t have the heart to do that.”



‘They gave me millions’ ... Charlie Rowe, Emmy Rossum and Martin Freeman in the new miniseries. Photograph: Landmark Media/Alamy

Gary Baum, who wrote the story, told the *Guardian*: “I reported information available in public records.” He added: “Since my article was published nearly five years ago, Angelyne has never substantively challenged its facts .” Drawing on his piece, the show veers between drama and mockumentary. Rossum reportedly spent up to seven hours having prosthetics – including an enormous breastplate – applied. Freeman, meanwhile, plays a fictionalised version of Hugo Maisnik, the wealthy entrepreneur and printer who created the first billboards.

The fact that the miniseries draws on the HR article worries Angelyne. “There’s only one Angelyne, and I’m concerned that show might mislead

people.” Did she talk to its makers? “I refused,” she says, then laughs. “But they gave me a lot of money – millions – because my name is trademarked. They couldn’t do it without me.” Although she has no formal credit on the show, she says: “They wanted to make me executive producer. And I initially agreed because I didn’t know it was gonna be so bad.”

What does she think of Rossum’s portrayal? “It’s a bad pastiche. You know, they’ve tried to do Marilyn Monroe so many times and they could never get it right. But Marilyn was an actress – whereas I made myself. I don’t want to watch it. It’s disturbing to see someone misrepresent a beautiful artwork. She’s got a long face.”

We’re speaking by phone now and the line cuts out. When I call back, Angelyne sounds chastened. “You know why that happened? The universe hung up, because I started being very childish.” She adopts a babyish voice: “*She’s got a long face.*” The universe said, ‘No, no, no!’ I try to stay positive.” She has another go at explaining her feelings: “I’m an artist. I paint in the mirror. Everything has to be perfect – my eyes, my nose, my mouth. And for someone to take that and mess it up is painful. I can’t even watch it.”



‘I’m an artist. I paint in the mirror’ ... Angelyne in front of a billboard in 1987. Photograph: John T Barr/Getty Images

She is working on her own film, Angelyne: Billboard Queen, which will explain “what happened to me as a child, how I made it, how I talk to the men in a man’s world”. Would she have made this film if other people weren’t trying to tell their own version of her story? “I was planning a film, but I wasn’t in a mad rush. I have a lot of footage, 100,000 pictures. You are gonna love my film! It’s gonna transform you. It’s The Godfather of films.”

Do people sometimes forget that, under the big hair and the eyeshadow, there is a real person? “But I’m an alien!” she says airily. “I came to this planet to help everybody. And this is probably one of the most difficult planets in the whole universe. There is a lot of pain, a lot of problems, but every problem comes with a solution. And I’m the solution.”

[Back in 1987, she said in an interview](#): “It’s so much fun being famous for nothing.” It’s a line that now seems prescient: we’re used to people being famous for nothing. “I had to say nothing then,” she explains, “because people wouldn’t understand. I’m not famous for nothing – I’m famous for my essence. I’m sitting on top of a pink cloud, sending inspiration to the world. The difference between me and other famous people is that I’m only attached to Angelyne. I don’t do endorsements. I want my image to be clean – clean, clean for Angelyne.”

She doesn’t like being called an influencer, feeling the term “is used too much. I like ‘inspiration’. You know, the Kardashians, Paris Hilton – what have they done? I’ve talked to Paris, she’s very sweet. But so what? Kim said something nice about me. Good! But they don’t impress me. Nobody but Barbie impresses me. She’s open to anything because she doesn’t have any emotion. She can say, ‘Who cares? So what?’ She’s plastic. I love her.”

Occasionally, Angelyne allows glimpses of vulnerability. At one point, she tells me about a meeting she had with the executive of a billboard company. “He said to me, ‘Let me undress you and you can have all the billboards you want.’ From all the different attempts I’ve had on me, in that sexual arena, I developed a phobia. I have to always have a door unlocked – I have to know I can get out. I’ve been in huge studios with major executives and they’ll still try and pull something sneaky, you know, because I’ve got blond hair.”



‘I need my own Angelyne’ ... a billboard from 1999. Photograph: Paul Harris/Getty Images

Who is Angelyne really? Well, someone it is near impossible to get a grip on. But maybe who she is is up to you. To cheer her up, I tell her that a friend of mine in Sacramento regularly sees her driving around in her Corvettes and considers her a lucky charm. “I want to see Angelyne, too,” sighs the starlet. “I’d like to have a lucky day. I need my own Angelyne.”

She asks when I’m coming to LA. “I’d love to give you a ride in my car. You’ll get all the attention you’ll need for the rest of your life.” And then it’s “Big hugs!” and she’s gone.

Angelyne starts on Peacock in the US on 19 May, on Stan in Australia on 20 May and airs in the UK in the summer.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2022/may/19/blond-billboard-bombshell-angelyne-la-icon-martin-freeman-emmy-rossum>

Work & careers

‘How is that a real job?’ Parents struggle to keep up with children’s career options

Survey finds many feel overwhelmed as their children express interest in jobs they know nothing about



Parents should be encouraging their children to learn a mixture of art, science, computing and coding, says Bryony Mathew, author of *Awesome Careers of the Future*. Photograph: Alamy

[Amelia Hill](#)
[@byameliahill](#)

Thu 19 May 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 19 May 2022 06.46 EDT

When Leon Martin asked for his parents’ advice on how to pursue his dream of becoming a UX designer, they were flummoxed. “I literally didn’t have

the first idea what he was talking about,” said Anne, his mother. “I didn’t know whether he was talking about designing clothes, computer programmes or a fancy new brand of mountain bike.”

Even when 18-year-old Leon explained that the role was to do with “behind the scenes” online design, his mother floundered. “I felt like I’d totally failed as a parent,” she said. “My job as a parent is to open doors so my children can achieve their potential, but how can I do that when I don’t even understand what their ambitions are?”

Anne isn’t alone. Research has found that more than two-thirds of parents of 11- to 18-year-olds in England are lost in a “job fog”, feeling overwhelmed as their children express interest in careers they know nothing about.

The situation isn’t helped by the number of new career and education options available to young people. More than 75% of parents felt that giving relevant career advice to their children was almost impossible in such a fast-changing jobs market.

Michelle Rea, from [Talking Futures](#), which carried out the survey of more than 2,000 parents of secondary school pupils in England, said parents were concerned that their lack of knowledge could hinder career conversations.

“All the evidence points to the pivotal role parents’ attitudes and opinions play in shaping and influencing their children’s education and career choices,” she said. “The temptation is to stick with what we feel most confident talking about, and that’s usually what we know and have experienced ourselves. But things have changed since most of us were at school.”

[Bryony Mathew](#), a neuroscientist, British ambassador and author of Qubits and Quiver Trees: Awesome Careers of the Future, said the world was changing so rapidly that parents should not try to identify specific careers for their children.

“Children in primary school today will one day take on careers that don’t yet exist, and each child won’t have just one career but lots of different careers,”

she said. “This means that parents should be encouraging their children to learn a wide mixture of art, science, computing and coding, so that they can find or create their own niches. Parent can’t possibly teach a child what their niche is in such a fast-moving world; it’s something the young person has to discover themselves.”

Shamajul Motin, an educational consultant for [the Shaw Trust](#), employment consultants who work for the government and the Education Skills Funding Agency, said he spent most of his time talking to parents who did not understand their children’s career choices.

“For example, we have loads of young people who want to be streamers, and the parents are like: ‘How is that a real job when all they do is play computer games all day? How are they going to make a living out of that?’” he said. “But the parent doesn’t realise that the child actually can not only make a lot of money from doing exactly that – but go on to gain the attention of a big gaming company and then be employed by them. The world of work has changed and it’s taking parents time to realise that.”

Futuristic careers

UX designer

User experience design is the process of creating evidence-based designs for products or websites. Decisions in UX design are driven by research, data analysis and test results rather than aesthetic preferences and opinions. Senior UX designers and consultants can earn £65,000 a year or more.

Twitch streamer

Live streaming technology lets you watch, create and share videos in real time. A streamer plays video games live for an audience, speaking to viewers on microphone and camera. Viewers can respond through a dedicated chat channel. Streamers make money through viewer donations and advertising. An expert streamer can make up to £350,000 a year.

Machine learning engineer

A specific branch of artificial intelligence that uses big data to create complex algorithms to programme a machine (such as a self-driving car or digital voice assistant) to perform and carry out tasks like a human. The average salary for a machine learning engineer in the UK is £52,000.

Asteroid miner

Asteroids and minor planets contain important materials such as gold, silver and platinum that we need to make electronics. Asteroid mining is the hypothetical extraction and transportation of these minerals back to Earth using flying asteroid bots. A job of the future ...

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[Opinion](#)[Food security](#)

The banks collapsed in 2008 – and our food system is about to do the same

[George Monbiot](#)



Massive food producers hold too much power – and the regulators scarcely understand what is happening. Sound familiar?



Illustration: Eva Bee/The Guardian

Thu 19 May 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 20 May 2022 10.15 EDT

For the past few years, scientists have been frantically [sounding](#) an alarm that governments refuse to hear: the global food system is beginning to look like the global financial system in the run-up to 2008.

While financial collapse would have been devastating to human welfare, food system collapse doesn't bear thinking about. Yet the evidence that something is going [badly wrong](#) has been escalating [rapidly](#). The current surge in food prices looks like the latest sign of systemic instability.

Many people assume that the food crisis was caused by a combination of the pandemic and the invasion of Ukraine. While these are important factors, they aggravate an underlying problem. For years, it looked as if hunger was heading for extinction. The [number of undernourished](#) people [fell](#) from 811 million in 2005 to 607 million in 2014. But in 2015, the trend began to turn. Hunger has been [rising](#) ever since: to 650 million in 2019, and back to 811 million in 2020. This year is likely to be much worse.

Now brace yourself for the really bad news: this has happened at a time of great abundance. Global food production has been [rising steadily](#) for more

than half a century, comfortably beating population growth. Last year, the global wheat harvest was [bigger than ever](#). Astoundingly, the number of undernourished people began to rise just as world food prices began to fall. In 2014, when fewer people were hungry than at any time since, the global food price index stood at [115 points](#). In 2015, it fell to 93, and remained below 100 until 2021.

Only in the past two years has it surged. The rise in food prices is now a major driver of inflation, which [reached 9% in the UK last month](#). Food is becoming unaffordable even to many people in rich nations. The impact in poorer countries is much worse.

So what has been going on? Well, global food, like global finance, is a [complex system](#), that develops spontaneously from billions of interactions. Complex systems have counterintuitive properties. They are resilient under certain conditions, as their self-organising properties stabilise them. But as stress escalates, these same properties start transmitting shocks through the network. Beyond a certain point, a small disturbance can tip the entire system over its critical threshold, whereupon it collapses, suddenly and unstoppably.

We now know enough about systems to predict whether they might be resilient or fragile. Scientists represent complex systems as a mesh of nodes and links. The nodes are like the knots in an old-fashioned net; the links are the strings that connect them. In the food system, the nodes include the corporations trading grain, seed and farm chemicals, the major exporters and importers and the ports through which food passes. The links are their commercial and institutional relationships.

If the nodes behave in a variety of ways, and their links to each other are weak, the system is likely to be resilient. If certain nodes [become dominant](#), start to behave in similar ways and are strongly connected, the system is likely to be [fragile](#). In the approach to the 2008 crisis, the big banks developed similar strategies and similar ways of managing risk, as they pursued [the same sources of profit](#). They became strongly linked to each other in ways that regulators [scarcely understood](#). When Lehman Brothers failed, it threatened to pull everyone down.

So here's what sends cold fear through those who [study](#) the global food system. In recent years, just as in finance during the 2000s, key nodes in the food system have swollen, their links have become stronger, business strategies have converged and synchronised, and the features that might impede [systemic collapse](#) ("redundancy", "modularity", "circuit breakers" and "backup systems") have been stripped away, exposing the system to "globally contagious" [shocks](#).

On one estimate, just four corporations control [90% of the global grain trade](#). The same corporations have been buying into seed, chemicals, processing, packing, distribution and retail. In the course of 18 years, the number of trade connections between the exporters and importers of wheat and rice [doubled](#). Nations are now polarising into super-importers and super-exporters. Much of this trade passes through [vulnerable chokepoints](#), such as the Turkish Straits (now obstructed by Russia's invasion of Ukraine), the Suez and Panama canals and the Straits of Hormuz, Bab-el-Mandeb and Malacca.

One of the fastest cultural shifts in human history is the convergence towards a "[Global Standard Diet](#)". While our food has become locally more diverse, globally it has become [less diverse](#). Just four crops – wheat, rice, maize and soy – account for almost [60% of the calories grown by farmers](#). Their production is now highly concentrated in a handful of nations, [including Russia and Ukraine](#). The Global Standard Diet is grown by the Global Standard Farm, supplied by the same corporations with the same packages of seed, chemicals and machinery, and vulnerable to the same environmental shocks.

The food industry is becoming tightly coupled to the [financial sector](#), increasing what scientists call the "network density" of the system, making it more [susceptible to cascading failure](#). Around the world, trade barriers have come down and roads and ports upgraded, streamlining the global network. You might imagine that this smooth system would enhance food security. But it has allowed companies to shed the costs of warehousing and inventories, switching from stocks to flows. Mostly, this just-in-time strategy works. But if deliveries are interrupted or there's a rapid surge in demand, [shelves can suddenly empty](#).

A paper in [Nature Sustainability](#) reports that in the food system, “shock frequency has increased through time on land and sea at a global scale”. In researching my book [Regenesis](#), I came to realise that it’s this escalating series of contagious shocks, exacerbated by [financial speculation](#), that has been driving global hunger.

Now the global food system must survive not only its internal frailties, but also environmental and political disruptions that might interact with each other. To give a current example, in mid-April, the Indian government [suggested](#) that it could make up the shortfall in global food exports caused by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Just a month later, it [banned exports of wheat](#), after crops shrivelled in a devastating heatwave.

We urgently need to diversify global food production, both geographically and in terms of crops and farming techniques. We need to break the grip of massive corporations and financial speculators. We need to create backup systems, producing food by entirely different means. We need to introduce spare capacity into a system threatened by its own efficiencies.

If so many can go hungry at a time of unprecedented bounty, the consequences of the major crop failure that environmental breakdown could cause defy imagination. The system has to change.

- George Monbiot is a Guardian columnist
 - George Monbiot will discuss his new book, Regenesis, at a Guardian Live event on Monday 30 May. Book tickets in-person or online [here](#)
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OpinionFiction

**I used to read novels for pleasure, then
for exams – now I read them for their
little jewels of wisdom**

[Adrian Chiles](#)



Reading Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, I found her lines about living in London resonating intensely, so many years later



‘The plot soon starts to fade, and all you are left with is how it made you feel.’ Photograph: Luis Alvarez/Getty Images

Thu 19 May 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 19 May 2022 02.11 EDT

Novels. Why do I read them? My reading was at its most voracious when I was a kid. I suspect this was because my only purpose was enjoyment and escapism. From all 21 Famous Five stories – in order, naturally – to Anna Karenina, stuffed into a pannier on a cycling holiday, I was transported. Then, for A-levels and a degree, I read to pass exams. Slowly, tellingly, the joy faded. And I was no good at the exams either. When those last exams were done, more than 30 years ago, I was done with novels. I had fallen out of love.

Gradually, it has come back, but it’s all different now. I find I’m reading whole novels mainly to unearth little jewels of wisdom to shed light on what I’ve been feeling; feelings that I’ve been unable to articulate myself. For some reason [I picked up The Tenant of Wildfell Hall](#). A bit flabby in the middle, if I may say so, but generally I was transfixed by what started to seem like the greatest love story ever told. The plot soon starts to fade, and all you are left with is how it made you feel. This is nice, but what makes it all worthwhile is those specific insights that I make sure to harvest and go back to. For instance, Helen says of her new life in the big city: “At first, I

was delighted with the novelty and excitement of our London life; but soon I began to weary of its mingled turbulence and constraint.”

A few months later, I chanced upon Anne Brontë’s resting place in Scarborough. Standing over her grave, I looked up this little passage and appreciated anew how intensely it resonated with my own feelings about London. And there the poor young woman lay, gone 173 years and still making new friends. That’s quite something.

- Adrian Chiles is a broadcaster, writer and Guardian columnist
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OpinionUS baby formula shortage

The US is running out of baby formula: yet more evidence that new mothers can never win

[Emma Brockes](#)



Women have breastfed for thousands of years and yet there are still those who think we can just ‘switch on’ our milk



'Back it all came, in a nightmarish rush; the series of breastfeeding consultants; all the mad things I ate to increase my supply; having too little milk, then too much.' Photograph: Paul Hennessy/NurPhoto/REX/Shutterstock

Thu 19 May 2022 04.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 19 May 2022 14.22 EDT

I had an easy pregnancy, a textbook C-section and the gift of a two-week recovery period alone at home after my twins were sent to the newborn intensive care unit – or, having given birth in the US, “the [world’s most expensive](#) babysitting service”, as a nurse described it at the time.

One consequence of this was that I was fully healed by the time they came home. Another was that in the first two weeks of my babies’ lives, breastfeeding had to be supplemented with formula. By the time they left hospital, my supply was getting sketchy, which as it turned out was the least of our problems. Trying to get two preemies, not much bigger than guinea pigs, to latch was like asking them to eat peas off a beachball.

I’d forgotten about all this. As with everything to do with childrearing, there’s a scorched-earth psychology that means each stage renders its antecedents uninteresting. When something comes along to trigger the

memory of those first weeks and months – a friend having a baby or, as in the US at the moment, [a shortage of baby formula](#) that this week saw two babies in Memphis hospitalised – I’m struck simultaneously by just how absurd the experience was and how out of whack the conversation around it continues to be.

The formula shortage in the US is a result of supply-chain problems, exacerbated by one of the biggest suppliers, [Abbott Nutrition](#), recalling its formula after four babies who had consumed its product were hospitalised with bacterial infections. As a result, tins of formula have been listing on eBay for \$120 a pop and babies with specific nutritional needs, such as the two in Memphis, are in danger of various dire health failures.

These are the worst-case scenarios. The more bearable but still aggravating casualty is the equilibrium of breastfeeding mothers. It is so very weird that an activity undertaken by millions of women over thousands of years is still subject to such wilful misunderstanding. With an air of “let them eat cake”, up popped the commentators on social media asking mothers why they didn’t just switch on their boobs. It was mostly, although not exclusively, men. Women police each other, too, and along came Bette Midler, of all people, jumping on Twitter to say: “[Try breastfeeding!](#) It’s free and available on demand.”

When people shouted at her for being insensitive, she clarified: “No shame if you can’t breastfeed, but if you can & are somehow convinced that your own milk isn’t as good as a ‘scientifically researched product’, that’s something else again.” I don’t know anyone still labouring under the delusion that breast milk isn’t “good enough” for their babies. In fact, the opposite tends to be true, particularly in communities that over-invest in the word “natural”. But anyway, as all new mothers know, you can’t win. Whatever you do, someone, somewhere will surface to ask why you aren’t doing it the other way.

And, obviously, “available on demand” is not the case for lots of women. Back it all came, in a nightmarish rush; the series of breastfeeding consultants; all the mad things I ate (brewer’s yeast; endless oatmeal) to increase my supply; having too little milk, then too much. The formula

itself, gross-smelling and thin – standing in the kitchen, warming the bottles in a cup of hot water, wondering how they could stand to eat the stuff. The middle-of-the-night delirium in which I wondered whether Vietnam was worse than this, surely not. The body that wasn’t mine any more. The endless bloody how-to-breastfeed-your-twins classes. The sense of failure, and failure, and failure again.

And my god, the anxiety: the knowledge that with babies that small there is no margin for error. The old adage about children and food – “they won’t let themselves starve” – doesn’t work with six-week-old babies who weigh less than a pack of butter. They don’t eat quickly at that age. Eyes on the clock, watching the two-hour rotational feed take an hour and a half, knowing that, this cycle, you’ll only have 30 minutes off, so it’s cheat-with-formula or go actively mad.

I’d forgotten all this, as most women do. But in weeks such as these, the fact that this experience falls squarely within the normal range only makes the conversation around breastfeeding – as around everything to do with babies, from “too posh to push” to “cry it out” – inclined to trigger a rage that has been dormant for years.

- Emma Brockes is a Guardian columnist
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[The politics sketch](#)[Politics](#)

Johnson is so short of answers, he can no longer form complete sentences

[John Crace](#)



PM's pathetic Commons performance shows he and his government have no answer to the cost-of-living crisis



'Being prime minister is something beyond his shallow talents' ... Boris Johnson speaks during PMQs. Photograph: Jessica Taylor/UK parliament/AFP/Getty

Wed 18 May 2022 13.32 EDT Last modified on Thu 19 May 2022 00.12 EDT

It felt very much like the end of days. An intellectually and morally bankrupt government lurching from one crisis to the next while the country is left to flatline. No one is even surprised these days when yet another Tory MP is accused of sex offences. While we don't know what the truth of these new allegations will be, the fact that there are fresh claims is no more than people have come to expect. The MP hasn't even been suspended as he would have been in any other workplace.

The ongoing scandal at Westminster is one that might have proved fatally toxic for some administrations, but now has become normalised. Just wait for the next story to break. And with 56 MPs, including three cabinet ministers, being investigated for sexual misconduct, it may not be long before it does.

The Commons was nowhere near full for the first prime minister's questions of the new parliament. Many Tories had clearly decided they were better off

out of Westminster than enduring the laboured ramblings of their leader. No one could really blame them.

Waiting to take his place on the frontbench, [Boris Johnson](#) stood behind the Speaker's chairs while several of his parliamentary private secretaries patted him down and tried to smarten him up. But Joy Morrissey had no joy. Despite her best efforts, the Convict still looked a complete state. Crumpled, ill-fitting suit held together only by the stains. Tired and pasty-faced. An unbrushed toddler haircut. Johnson can't clean up his own act, let alone his party's.

With inflation rising to 9%, there was only ever going to be one subject on Keir Starmer's mind, and he duly devoted all six of his questions to the cost of living. Labour was all in favour of a windfall tax. [The Tories had voted against one](#), even though the chancellor had said only a few days ago that he hadn't quite made up his mind yet. Rishi Sunak needed a few more people to starve before reaching a decision. So where did Johnson stand?

The Convict scratched his head. Then his arse. Not the most attractive of habits. He looked puzzled. His mouth opened and a torrent of disconnected phrases poured out. Boris can no longer speak in complete sentences. Partly because he can't be bothered, but mainly because he now has no coherent answers to anything. Speech is no longer a form of communication, but more a smokescreen. That's when he's not lying, of course.

"Um ... er," he mumbled. It was like this. Starmer didn't even know what a woman was. He seemed to think this was a killer putdown, but he didn't even get any laughs from his own MPs. It was just random, tone-deaf nonsense. Playing the culture wars card while refusing to acknowledge the genuine hardships many people were suffering was not a good look. The Convict tried to change tack. The government was not, in theory, in favour of putting up taxes. Mmm. Possibly. But it definitely is in practice. Johnson and Sunak have done nothing but put up taxes since they took office.

The [Labour](#) leader continued to do his own scratching. Though rather more productively, as he was pawing away at the open sore of the windfall tax. A tax that almost everyone in the country thought was a good idea. A tax on

which it was inevitable the Tories would be forced to reverse-ferret on within a few weeks. Not that it would be called a windfall tax. That would be an admission that Labour had won the argument. So it would be an excessive profit levy.

None of which helped the Convict in his short-term ambition of merely getting through the next half-hour. Because Johnson really didn't know what he actually wanted, other than for Labour to stop bugging him and for the little people to be more grateful for what he was doing for them. Whatever that was. He couldn't remember exactly, but he was sure it would come to him in the end. His performance lapsed from the incoherent to the pathetic.

Nobody could have predicted the Ukraine war, but it was our duty to suffer alongside the Ukrainian people. The Ukrainians wouldn't expect a windfall tax at such a time, and neither should we Brits. In fact, Starmer was appeasing Putin by demanding one.

The Labour benches just looked bewildered. As did Tory backbenchers. Even by the Convict's recent standards, this was deranged. Johnson is decomposing before our eyes. Being prime minister is something beyond his shallow talents. He can no longer cope. He was only ever in it for the good times. The parties. The status. The Being There. A tanking, stagflating economy and an imminent recession is beyond his compass.

Starmer ended by telling the story of a man who could barely afford the costs of running the dialysis machine that kept him alive. Johnson was choosing to let people like him struggle. The Commons was unusually quiet as the Labour leader spoke, and Johnson should have been humbled. Except the Convict has no shame. The only pity he has is reserved strictly for himself. This was far too real for him, so he pawed the air, as if to bat Starmer away.

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Then he went on the attack. People should just be grateful they had jobs to do as they went hungry and cold. If they wanted luxuries, why didn't they just get jobs that paid a bit more, like Rachel Maclean had said? Hell, he had

taken a pay cut to be prime minister, so how about a bit of sympathy for *his* suffering? And what about some applause for Crossrail? That was all down to him. It wasn't, of course. It had been [Ken Livingstone's idea](#). But hey, if the Convict wants to take the credit for an infrastructure project that was years late and massively over budget, then who are we to stop him?

The rest of PMQs passed in a haze of anticlimactic apathy, the only highlight being Johnson insisting that no one worked well from home. He can speak for himself.

Labour could only sit and wait. They could make suggestions, but there was nothing they could do to force the government to tackle the cost of living crisis. The Tories, too, could only sit and wait, though they only had their crippling indecision to blame. They knew the Convict was just a hollowed-out, corroded hulk. There was no saviour rising from the streets to come to their rescue.

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2022.05.19 - Around the world

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Global development

‘Huge spike’ in global conflict caused record number of displacements in 2021

Those fleeing combat were internally displaced 14.4m times, with biggest toll in sub-Saharan Africa, report reveals



Women and children queue for food at the Silsa camp in Ethiopia. The country had a record 5.1m internal displacements due to conflict in 2021.
Photograph: J Countess/Getty Images

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[Lizzy Davies](#)

Thu 19 May 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 19 May 2022 02.02 EDT

Conflict and violence forced people from their homes a record number of times last year, a report has found, with sub-Saharan [Africa](#) bearing the brunt of mass internal displacement caused by “huge spikes” in fighting.

People fleeing violence were internally displaced 14.4m times in 2021, an increase of 4.6m on 2020, according to [figures published](#) by the Norwegian Refugee Council’s Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC).

[Graphic of internal displacements caused by conflict between 2012 and 2021](#)

Most of those displacements – 11.6m, or 80% of the total – took place in sub-Saharan African countries, with the war in northern Ethiopia dwarfing other conflicts in terms of the number of times people were forced from their homes.

Alexandra Bilak, IDMC director, said the geographic concentration of the conflict-related displacement across sub-Saharan Africa, from the Sahel to east Africa, was a huge concern. “These are, of course, countries that have

experienced long histories of conflict, but what these numbers show is that the conflicts are far from having been resolved,” she said.

“So on top of protracted crises, you get new waves of violence every year. In Ethiopia and Burkina Faso, we’re talking huge spikes of new violence that have led to incredibly large numbers being displaced and, at least for now, very little prospect for returns.”

New flare-ups of violence often collided with climate pressures such as drought or flooding, and resulting food insecurity, making it even harder for countries to give internally displaced people (IDPs) the help they needed, she said.

“There’s absolutely no window during which some kind of stabilisation could happen, and some degree of return or sustainable local integration. These constant shocks to the system mean that the numbers keep increasing.”

According to the report, there were 59.1 million IDPs globally in 2021, a cumulative figure, which has grown steadily since the IDMC began documenting [in 2003](#). Every year more displacement is caused by natural disasters than conflict, but last year the number of forced movements due to disasters such as such as storms, floods and volcanic eruptions – 23.7 million – was down considerably on 2020.

[Chart of displacements caused by conflict and violence, by country, 2021](#)

The number of times people were forced from their homes by violence was of particular concern to the IDMC. As the report deals with 2021, the figures do not include the huge humanitarian fallout from the Russian invasion of Ukraine, where [more than 7 million people are thought to be internally displaced](#).

The only place to rival that scale of displacement was Ethiopia, where conflict – chiefly [war between government forces and Tigrayan rebels](#) in the north of the country – triggered 5.1m internal displacements. Until the invasion of Ukraine, that was the highest annual figure ever recorded for a single country.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), which saw [2.7m displacements due to conflict](#), and Afghanistan, where the Taliban toppled Ashraf Ghani's government, also registered all-time highs. The [volatile situation in Myanmar](#), where the military staged a bloody coup, helped triple the overall figure for east Asia compared with the previous year.

With more than half the global IDP population under 25, and about 25 million under 18, the IDMC called for more targeted interventions to protect children and young people from the particular dangers they face. “The financial difficulties IDPs tend to face may force children to engage in dangerous income-generating activities, including crime, transactional sex or joining armed groups,” the report notes. “Strengthening child protection systems that consider these risks is essential.”



Afghan families at the Shaidayee camp for internally displaced people in Herat, February 2022. Photograph: Wakil Kohsar/AFP/Getty Images

Displaced girls and boys, it adds, confront different risks, with girls at greater risk of sexual violence and [child marriage](#), and boys of recruitment by fighters.

Bilak hoped the report would raise awareness of the worsening plight of IDPs, which historically had received “much less attention” from

governments and policymakers than that of refugees or migrants. “This is, first and foremost, a call for acknowledgment of the scale … and the urgency of the issue,” she said.

Faced with the stark increase in conflict-related displacement, she added, the IDMC urged greater investment in peace-building, “and in preventing those conflicts from happening in the first place”.

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Campaign 2022Australian election 2022

Monique Ryan to lodge legal challenge after AEC anomaly prevents thousands of Covid-positive Australians voting

Teal independent says she will lodge federal court challenge as AEC admits people who tested positive early this week but didn't register for postal ballot 'may not be able to vote' in Saturday's federal election

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Independent candidate Monique Ryan says she will launch a legal challenge after the Australian Electoral Commission said some Covid-positive Australians may be unable to vote in this Saturday's federal election.
Photograph: Joel Carrett/AAP

[Elias Visontay](#)

[@EliasVisontay](#)

Thu 19 May 2022 08.10 EDTFirst published on Thu 19 May 2022 04.22 EDT

A high-profile independent candidate is planning legal action after the Australian Electoral Commission conceded an anomaly means some people – possibly in excess of 100,000 – isolating with Covid may not be able to vote in Saturday's election.

Lawyers acting for Monique Ryan, the teal independent candidate in Josh Frydenberg's seat of Kooyong, will on Friday lodge an application in the federal court seeking to challenge the legality of a regulation the AEC has conceded will prevent some Covid-positive people from being able to vote.

The legal challenge will technically be brought on behalf of an affected voter, a spokesman for Ryan said.

On Thursday evening, Ryan claimed the disenfranchisement of voters “is the result of a decision by the Morrison government” and said the legal action would be brought against government MP Ben Morton, who is responsible for electoral oversight in his capacity as special minister of state.

“Ben Morton has passed flawed regulations that mean a significant number of Australians can't vote in this election,” Ryan said.

Some Australians who tested positive for Covid earlier in the week have found themselves caught in the voting eligibility anomaly whereby they missed the deadline to register for postal voting, but recorded a positive RAT test too early to access telephone voting.

People who tested positive for the virus from Sunday to Tuesday at 6pm, but failed to register to postal vote by the Wednesday 6pm deadline, could miss out on casting a ballot.

Some voters who tested positive on Tuesday had just 24 hours to register for postal voting while dealing with their diagnosis.

In anticipation of Australia's first federal election during the pandemic, the Electoral Act was amended to allow regulations to be made to temporarily expand telephone voting eligibility – a method previously only used by voters with vision disabilities and Australians working in Antarctica. The regulation allowed only those who test positive after 6pm on Tuesday 17 May to vote by phone.

Ryan launched a crowdfunding appeal for \$60,000 on Thursday night, to cover the costs of the challenge, and by 9.30pm, had raised more than \$73,000.

“Up to 200,000 Australians are now in an absurd situation. If they tested positive Covid at 6.01 pm on Tuesday they can vote by phone. If they tested positive for Covid at 5.59pm, they cannot vote by phone,” she said.

Ryan said “there’s a very clear solution here”, which is “the right to vote by phone should be extended to every Australian who is Covid-positive”.

“The Morrison government has had two years to prepare for an election where we knew people would be Covid positive. This is serious ineptitude resulting in the disenfranchisement of up to 1% of the electorate. This could be enough to change the result in many seats,” Ryan said.

□ We're taking Special Minister of State, Ben Morton, to the Federal Court tomorrow.

We're fighting to ensure up to 201,000 Australians with COVID can vote this election.

We need \$60,000 for this challenge, and we need to raise it ASAP!

Please help:<https://t.co/sJRJBzIShH> □

— Dr Monique Ryan (@Mon4Kooyong) [May 19, 2022](#)

The Human Rights Law Centre says the anomaly “risks disenfranchising tens of thousands of Australians”.

People who did not apply for a postal vote before the Wed 6pm application deadline, haven't voted yet, tested positive before 6pm Tues, and are in isolation through to after election day, may not be able to vote.

— AEC (@AusElectoralCom) [May 19, 2022](#)

The Guardian has also been contacted by affected voters who claimed they tried to register for postal voting before the deadline but were told their ballot papers would not arrive in time and they should wait until phone voting details became clear on Wednesday – only to ultimately be told they could not vote that way.

The exact number of people affected is not clear. The AEC has acknowledged that some in the cohort “may not be able to vote”. A spokesperson said there was no scope to change the voting eligibility rules because they were set out in legislation.

“We cannot change this,” they said.

Even those who applied for a postal vote before the registration deadline are not guaranteed to receive their ballots before Saturday.

The AEC spokesperson said “we will be doing everything we can to ensure people who applied for a postal vote will receive them” on time.

On Thursday, the Human Rights Law Centre called on the AEC “to interpret the provisions in a way that upholds the voting rights of all Australians”.

The centre’s executive director, Hugh de Kretser, said “the right to vote is the most fundamental part of our democracy” and was “enshrined in the constitution and has been upheld by the high court on many occasions”.

“We are alarmed that the AEC is adopting an interpretive approach that seems to be contrary to the intent of the Electoral Act. The AEC’s position

risks disenfranchising tens of thousands of Australians unless it is revised. We urge the AEC to clarify its position immediately,” De Kretser said.

I’m going to guess that young people, people who speak a different language at home, etc are VERY unlikely to have known about this.

— Dr Monique Ryan (@Mon4Kooyong) [May 19, 2022](#)

Ryan, whose contest with Frydenberg is expected to be tight in Saturday’s poll, called on the AEC to provide a way for those affected by the anomaly to vote. She said the issue “is not hard to fix”.

“It’s safe to assume that a great many people who were in their sick beds with Covid didn’t know about the postal vote deadline,” Ryan tweeted.

“I’m going to guess that young people, people who speak a different language at home etc are VERY unlikely to have known about this,” Ryan tweeted.

Greens senator Larissa Waters wrote to Tom Rogers, the Australian Electoral Commissioner, on Thursday to express concern both at the anomaly for Covid-positive voters and polling stations not being able to open due to staffing issues.

“High infection rates across the country mean that these issues could have a significant impact on voter turnout, particularly amongst young voters, voters from vulnerable communities, and voters in regional areas,” Waters said.

Waters sought clarification on what options would be available to electors who have tested positive prior to 6pm on Tuesday, but have either not registered for, or not received, a postal vote. She also asked for clarification of how someone in isolation alone could lodge a postal vote without someone to witness it or post it.

Kooyong voter Guy Miller tested positive for Covid on Monday and realised on Thursday he had missed the chance to register for a postal vote.

When his wife, Carol Miller, called the AEC a representative offered to take Guy off the list so he would avoid a fine for not voting, she said.

“I said that’s not the problem, he needs to be able to vote somehow.”

Carol Miller claimed the AEC representative then suggested Guy take another RAT test and because it would show positive after the phone voting eligibility came in he would be able to vote by that method.

“The AEC is back in the dark ages,” she said.

Guy Miller added via telephone: “It’s really slack. This is the first time ever that people have a real chance to make a change. Normally it’s a forgone conclusion in Kooyong ... I’d hate to be the one vote that could have swayed the election.”

Guardian Australia contacted Ben Morton for comment.

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[Venezuela](#)

Maduro glimpses political lifeline as US rethinks Venezuela policy



President Nicolás Maduro takes part in a ceremony for Workers Day, in Caracas, Venezuela, on 1 May. Photograph: Handout/EPA

Putin's war on Ukraine and political deadlock in Caracas have combined to herald a new dawn in US-Venezuela ties

[Tom Phillips](#), [Patrick Wintour](#) and [Julian Borger](#) in Washington

Thu 19 May 2022 05.15 EDT Last modified on Thu 19 May 2022 12.08 EDT

It was little more than a year ago that US officials were publicly rubbishing the prospect of engagement with Venezuela's President [Nicolás Maduro](#), who they described as a "dictator".

"His repression, corruption and mismanagement have generated one of the most dire humanitarian crises this hemisphere has seen," the state department spokesperson, Ned Price, [declared](#) in February last year. "We certainly don't expect any contact with Maduro any time soon."

Yet 2022 appears to have heralded a new dawn for Washington-Caracas ties, as geopolitical shifts caused by Russia's invasion of [Ukraine](#) and political deadlock in the economically devastated South American country prompt a major policy rethink from members of Joe Biden's administration – and offer Venezuela's authoritarian leader a once improbable political lifeline.

On Tuesday, the US announced a gentle easing of the economic sanctions it has spent years using to push for political change in [Venezuela](#) – including against a nephew of its first lady – a move senior members of Maduro's government celebrated.

"Venezuela hopes that these decisions by the United States of America will pave the way to the total lifting of the illegal sanctions which affect our entire people," the country's vice-president, Delcy Rodríguez, [tweeted in English](#) as the news emerged.

Simultaneously, her brother, another top Chavista called Jorge Rodríguez, shared a photograph of himself shaking hands with the chief negotiator for Venezuela's opposition, Gerardo Blyde, signalling the reactivation of stalled talks designed to bridge the country's toxic political schism.

"Congratulations!" [tweeted](#) Marcelo Ebrard, the foreign minister of Mexico, where those negotiations were happening until their suspension last October after the extradition of the Maduro ally Alex Saab to the US.

Some see Washington's change of heart as a direct consequence of Vladimir Putin's war against Ukraine. In March, days after Russia's onslaught began, [senior US officials flew to Caracas](#) for their first encounter with Maduro representatives in years.

That visit was partly motivated by a US desire to increase oil production in Venezuela – which boasts the world's largest proven reserves – in order to restrain global oil prices, which have soared as a result of Putin's war.

Christopher Sabatini, a Chatham House Latin America expert, said the war in Ukraine had also prompted a rethink in Caracas, which desperately needed new markets for its oil as well as access to western refineries, banking systems and investment. "It's true that oil prices have gone up with Russia's invasion of Ukraine but, because of sanctions, Russia is now increasing the sale of its oil to China, which was Venezuela's principal market," he added.



Children pass by a mural depicting Uncle Sam in Caracas this week.
Photograph: Ariana Cubillos/AP

Yet Sabatini believed Washington's shift had been planned well before Putin's invasion and reflected the US's realization that the Trump-era "maximum pressure" policy – [by which harsh sanctions were used to try to](#)

[topple Maduro](#) and replace him with the young opposition leader [Juan Guaidó](#) – had failed. “It is a demonstration that the US and much of the international community bet on a solution that simply hasn’t worked,” Sabatini said.

“That’s anathema to some people in the US Congress. It’s anathema to some elements of the Venezuelan opposition who always hoped and dreamed for some sort of cathartic collapse of the government and the fleeing of Maduro and his cronies. But clearly Maduro has hung on, [albeit] at a huge cost to his country … and now the US has to [engage].”

Representatives of Venezuela’s mainstream opposition, and the rival government Guaidó created when his campaign to unseat Maduro started in January 2019, now accept dealing with their foe is the only way forwards as the country heads towards its next scheduled presidential election in 2024.

Speaking to the Guardian during a recent tour of Europe, Guaidó’s deputy foreign minister, Isadora Zubillaga, admitted: “The reality is that we must talk. We were not able to wipe them out and they were not able to wipe us out either. That negotiation process must include discussion of the lifting of sanctions and penalties.”

However, Zubillaga warned the west against boosting what she called a Putin-led autocratic coalition by offering too many concessions to Maduro. “The Maduro regime is sustained by the international alliance, including countries like Iran, Russia, Cuba and China. If Maduro is helped, so is Putin,” Zubillaga said.

A senior US administration official said that it would calibrate its sanctions policy depending on the behaviour of Maduro’s administration and whether “ambitious, concrete and irreversible” steps towards free and democratic elections were achieved at talks.



The US embassy in Caracas. Washington has eased some of its tough sanctions on Venezuela. Photograph: Federico Parra/AFP/Getty Images

Members of the US right denounced the loosening of sanctions, which include allowing limited contact between the US oil giant Chevron and Venezuela's government. "Biden continues his effort to appease anti-American communist dictators," tweeted the Republican senator Marco Rubio, one of the cheerleaders for Trump's bungled anti-Maduro drive. A Wall Street Journal editorial condemned Biden's "dance with a Latin dictator".

Others expressed cautious optimism that, while there would be no overnight solutions to Venezuela's profound economic, humanitarian and political crises, the return of negotiations – and incentives for Maduro and others around him to offer concessions – was a step towards a democratic transition.

Geoff Ramsey, the director for Venezuela at the Washington Office on Latin America, said: "The only feasible transition is a pacted transition which is going to require some level of negotiations with political, military and economic elites.

“What we are seeing is a recognition of that reality. I don’t think that means that the US or other actors of the international community are ignorant or naive about the difficulties that lie ahead,” he added. “If the problem in Venezuela were simply a lack of dialogue we would have seen the crisis solved years ago.”

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US news

The person in the room? US court mulls if elephant has human rights

Nonhuman Rights Project argues that Happy the elephant's right to 'bodily liberty' is being violated at the Bronx Zoo



A New York court is set to decide whether Happy the elephant should be granted legal rights as a person. Photograph: Nonhuman Rights Project/Reuters

Associated Press

Wed 18 May 2022 19.43 EDT Last modified on Thu 19 May 2022 03.36 EDT

Happy, by species, is an Asian elephant. But can she also be considered a person?

That question was before New York's highest court on Wednesday in a closely watched case over whether a basic human right can be extended to

an animal.

The advocates at the Nonhuman Rights Project say yes: Happy is an autonomous, cognitively complex elephant worthy of the right reserved in law for “a person”.

The Bronx Zoo, where Happy resides, says no: through an attorney, the zoo argues Happy is neither illegally imprisoned nor a person, but a well-cared-for elephant “respected as the magnificent creature she is.”

Happy has lived at the Bronx Zoo for 45 years. The state court of appeals heard arguments over whether she should be released through a habeas corpus proceeding, which is a way for people to challenge illegal confinement.

The Nonhuman Rights Project wants her moved from a “one-acre prison” at the zoo to a more spacious sanctuary.

“She has an interest in exercising her choices and deciding who she wants to be with, and where to go, and what to do, and what to eat,” project attorney Monica Miller told the Associated Press ahead of the oral arguments. “And the zoo is prohibiting her from making any of those choices herself.”

The group said that in 2005, Happy became the first elephant to pass a self-awareness indicator test, repeatedly touching a white “X” on her forehead as she looked into a large mirror.

The zoo and its supporters warn that a win for advocates at the Nonhuman Rights Project could open the door to more legal actions on behalf of animals, including pets and other species in zoos.

“If there’s going to be an entire rewrite and a granting to animals of rights that they never had before, shouldn’t that be done by the legislature?” Kenneth Manning, an attorney for zoo operator [Wildlife](#) Conservation Society, asked the judges.

Happy was born in the wild in Asia in the early 1970s, captured and brought as a one-year-old to the US, where she was eventually named for one of the characters from Snow White and the Seven Dwarves.

She arrived at the Bronx Zoo in 1977.

Happy now lives in an enclosure adjacent to the zoo's other elephant, Patty. The zoo's attorney argued in court filings that Happy can swim, forage and engage in other behavior natural for elephants.

"The blatant exploitation of Happy the elephant by NRP to advance their coordinated agenda shows no concern for the individual animal and reveals the fact they are willing to sacrifice Happy's health and psychological wellbeing to set precedent," the zoo said in a prepared statement.

NRP's attorneys say no matter how Happy is being treated at the zoo, her right to "bodily liberty" is being violated. They argue that if the court recognises Happy's right to that liberty under habeas corpus, she will be a "person" for that purpose. And then she must be released.

Judges peppered attorneys for both side with pointed questions during oral arguments. Judge Jenny Rivera asked Miller about the implications of NRP's position on human-animal relationships.

"So does that mean that I couldn't keep a dog?" Rivera asked. "I mean, dogs can memorise words."

Miller said right now there's more evidence showing elephants are extraordinarily cognitively complex with advanced analytical abilities.

Lower courts have ruled against the NRP. And the group has failed to prevail in similar cases, including those involving a chimpanzee in upstate New York named Tommy.

But last October, at the urging of a different animal rights group, a [federal judge ruled](#) that Colombian drug kingpin Pablo Escobar's infamous "cocaine hippos" could be recognised as people or "interested persons" with legal rights in the US. The decision had no real ramifications for the hippos themselves, given that they reside in Colombia.

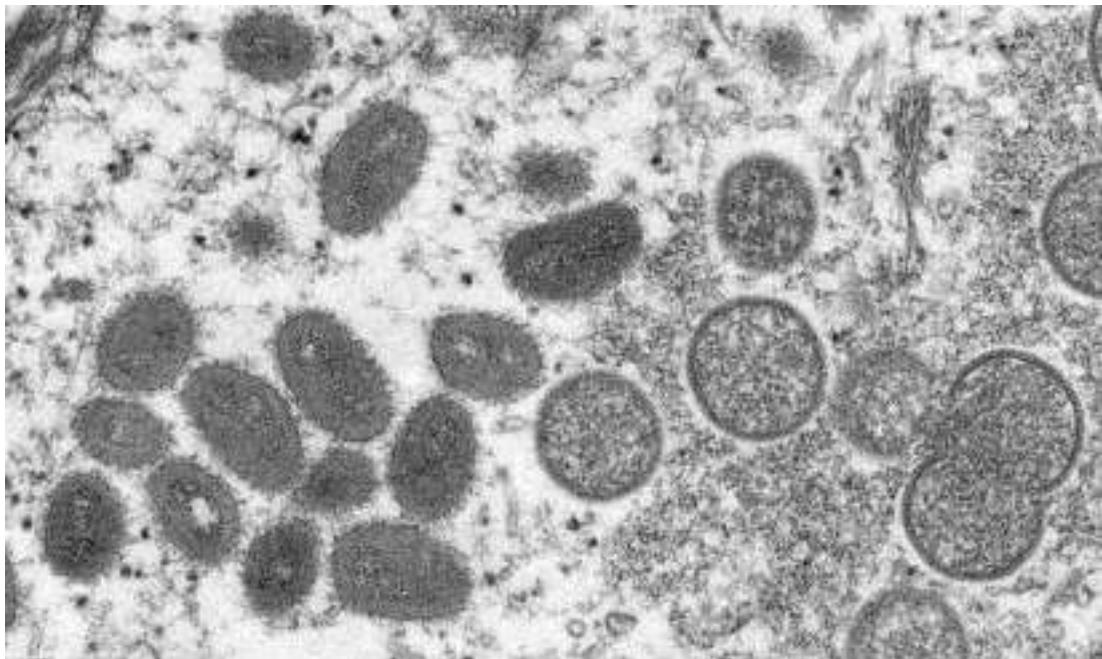
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Massachusetts

US reports rare case of monkeypox amid small outbreaks in Europe

Man who recently traveled to Canada has first case in US this year, but officials are preparing for more



Monkeypox virus particles. The disease, which usually does not spread easily among people, typically begins with a flu-like illness, followed by a rash. Photograph: Cynthia S Goldsmith, Russell Regnery/CDC/Reuters

Guardian staff and agencies

Wed 18 May 2022 21.19 EDT Last modified on Fri 20 May 2022 05.52 EDT

Massachusetts officials on Wednesday reported a rare case of monkeypox in a man who recently traveled to Canada, and health officials are looking into whether it is connected to small outbreaks in Europe.

Monkeypox is typically limited to Africa, and rare cases in the US and elsewhere are usually linked to travel there. A small number of confirmed or

suspected cases have been reported this month in the [United Kingdom](#), Portugal and [Spain](#).

Health officials in the US said they are in contact with officials in the UK and Canada as part of the investigation. But “at this point in time, we don’t have any information that links the Massachusetts case to cases in the UK,” said Jennifer McQuiston of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Though it is the only US case the CDC is aware of, “I do think we are preparing for the possibility of more cases,” she said.

The US case poses no risk to the public, and the Massachusetts resident is hospitalized but in good condition, officials said.

The man traveled to Canada at the end of April to meet friends and returned in early May, McQuiston said. A CDC statement said he used private transportation.

The case is the first in the US this year. Last year, Texas and Maryland each reported a case in people who traveled to Nigeria.

Monkeypox typically begins with a flu-like illness and swelling of the lymph nodes, followed by a rash on the face and body. In Africa, people have been infected through bites from rodents or small animals, and it does not usually spread easily among people.

However, investigators in Europe say most of the cases have been in gay or bisexual men, and officials are looking into the possibility that some infections were spread through close contact during sex.

Monkeypox comes from the same family of viruses as smallpox.

It is usually mild, although there are two main strains: the Congo strain, which is more severe – with up to 10% mortality – and the West African strain, which has a fatality rate of more like 1% of cases.

The Associated Press and Reuters contributed reporting

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This live blog is now closed, you can find [our full report on](#) the PM’s NI protocol plan here

- [Johnson claims planned NI protocol law just ‘insurance’ in case talks fail](#)
- [Sinn Féin accuses Johnson of wanting to ‘placate the DUP’](#)
- [Summary of Boris Johnson’s Belfast Telegraph article on NI protocol](#)
- [DUP says it wants ‘action’ from PM on NI protocol, not just ‘words’](#)
- [Summary of Jeffrey Donaldson’s BBC Radio Ulster interview](#)

Updated 6d ago

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

Mon 16 May 2022 14.10 EDTFirst published on Mon 16 May 2022 04.40 EDT



Boris Johnson meets Sinn Féin in Northern Ireland. Photograph: Andrew Parsons/No10 Downing Street

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

Mon 16 May 2022 14.10 EDTFirst published on Mon 16 May 2022 04.40 EDT

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From 6d ago

[12.56](#)

Johnson claims planned law allowing UK to ignore parts of NI protocol just 'insurance' in case talks fail



Andrew Sparrow

Boris Johnson has recorded a clip for broadcasters about his meeting with the political parties in [Northern Ireland](#). Here are the key points.

- **Johnson said all five of the parties he spoke to today (Sinn Féin, the DUP, the Alliance party, the UUP and the SDLP) agreed the Northern [Ireland](#) protocol needed to be reformed.**

- **He said that the proposed legislation that would give the UK the right to ignore parts of the protocol was just an “insurance” option. He explained:**

None of the parties – I spoke to all five parties just now – not one of them likes the way [the protocol] operating, they all think it can be reformed and improved – from Sinn Féin to SDLP, DUP, all of them.

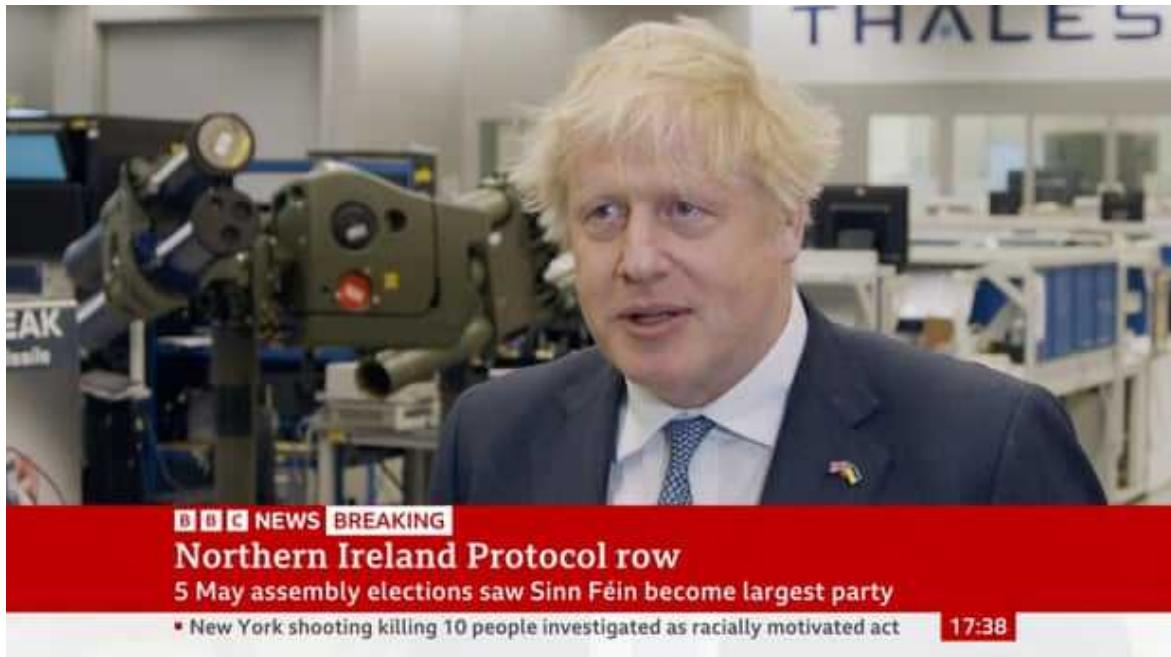
The question is how do you do that? We would love this to be done in a consensual way with our friends and partners, ironing out the problems, stopping some of these barriers east-west.

But to get that done, to have the insurance, we need to proceed with a legislative solution as well.

- **He insisted that he did appeal personally to the DUP to reform the power-sharing executive.** He said: “I think everybody should be rolling up their sleeves and getting stuck into the government of Northern Ireland.”
- **He dismissed suggestions that the proposed legislation that would give the government the right to ignore parts of the protocol might start a trade war with the EU.** When this was put to him, Johnson replied:

What we’re doing is sticking up for the Belfast/Good Friday agreement, and what we are doing it trying to protect and preserve the government of Northern Ireland.

That is all from me for today. My colleague **Harry Taylor** is taking over now.



Boris Johnson Photograph: BBC News

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Updated at 12.58 EDT

[6d ago](#) [14.08](#)

Evening summary

After today's meeting in Belfast between Boris Johnson and politicians in Northern Ireland

- [Boris Johnson claims planned law allowing UK to ignore parts of NI protocol just 'insurance' in case talks fail](#)
- [Irish PM Micheál Martin urges UK to resume substantive talks with EU over Northern Ireland protocol](#)
- [DUP leader Jeffrey Donaldson says it's 'puerile nonsense' for Sinn Féin to claim UK government siding with his party](#)
- [Sinn Féin says it got 'no straight answers' from Johnson](#)

Away from Northern Ireland, [Bank of England](#) governor Andrew Bailey spoke to MPs amid rising living costs.

- [Bank of England governor Andrew Bailey repeats his call for people to ‘reflect’ before asking for big pay rises – but says message aimed at high earners](#)
- [Unite say workers don’t need ‘lectures’ on wage restraint](#)
- [‘Apocalyptic’ food prices will be disastrous for world’s poor, says Bank governor](#)
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Updated at 14.10 EDT

[6d ago](#)[13.29](#)

Unite criticise Bailey for comments on wage restraint

The head of the UK’s biggest trade unions, **Unite**, has said that the governor of the [Bank of England](#) should not “lecture” workers about holding off asking for a pay rise.

Earlier on Monday, **Andrew Bailey** had repeated his assertion that workers should “think and reflect” about asking for wage increases ([see 4:54](#)). His comments have already been criticised by the TUC.

Unite’s general secretary, **Sharon Graham**, said: “Yet again workers are being asked to pay the price, this time for inflation and the energy crisis. [Inflation](#) has not been caused by workers. Why should they be expected to pay for the failures of the energy market and the total shambles of government policy?

“Workers don’t need lectures from the governor of the Bank of England on exercising pay restraint. Why is it that every time there is a crisis, rich men ask ordinary people to pay for it?

“Enough is enough, we will be demanding that employers who can pay, do pay. Let’s be clear, pay restraint is nothing more than a call for a national pay cut.”

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[6d ago](#)[13.13](#)

The foreign secretary, **Liz Truss**, has discussed the situation in Stormont with the speaker of the US House of Representatives, **Nancy Pelosi**.

Washington has expressed concern at the prospect of the UK getting rid of parts of the [Northern Ireland](#) protocol, and the UK government has been attempting to reassure US politicians and officials.

In a tweet, Truss said: “I reiterated the UK’s commitment to protecting the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement, and the importance of getting the NI Executive up and running.”

Good to speak [@SpeakerPelosi](#) ☺ ☺ ☺ ☺ . I reiterated the UK’s commitment to protecting the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement, and the importance of getting the NI Executive up and running.
[pic.twitter.com/Q0xoy1Z8zM](#)

— Liz Truss (@trussliz) [May 16, 2022](#)

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Updated at 13.17 EDT

[6d ago](#)[13.07](#)

The Ulster Unionist party's leader, **Doug Beattie**, said that if parts of the problems with the protocol were fixed, then a speaker for the assembly needed to be nominated as soon as possible.

If the UK government takes steps tomorrow or this week to fix some of the issues that we see with the protocol, it is important that we then nominate a speaker and we get back to government and start doing the work.

And if we do not get back into government, then we need to identify who is blocking it and we need to bypass them.

Meanwhile the leader of the **SDLP**, **Colum Eastwood**, said:

If the British government tomorrow signal their intent to break international law by legislating to rip up the protocol at Westminster, he [Johnson] will not have the support of the vast majority of people in Northern Ireland.

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Updated at 13.08 EDT

[6d ago](#)[13.04](#)

More reaction coming in from the **Alliance party**, who won the third-largest number of seats in the elections earlier this month.

Alliance's deputy leader, **Stephen Farry**, said the meeting with Johnson was "robust and very frustrating".

We were giving him a very clear warning that if he plays fast and loose with the protocol and the indeed Good Friday Agreement, then he is going to be adding more and more instability to Northern Ireland.

On the one hand, he is coming here with a certain set of stated outcomes, but all his actions belie what he is notionally trying to achieve.

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Updated at 13.05 EDT

[6d ago](#) [12.56](#)

Johnson claims planned law allowing UK to ignore parts of NI protocol just 'insurance' in case talks fail



Andrew Sparrow

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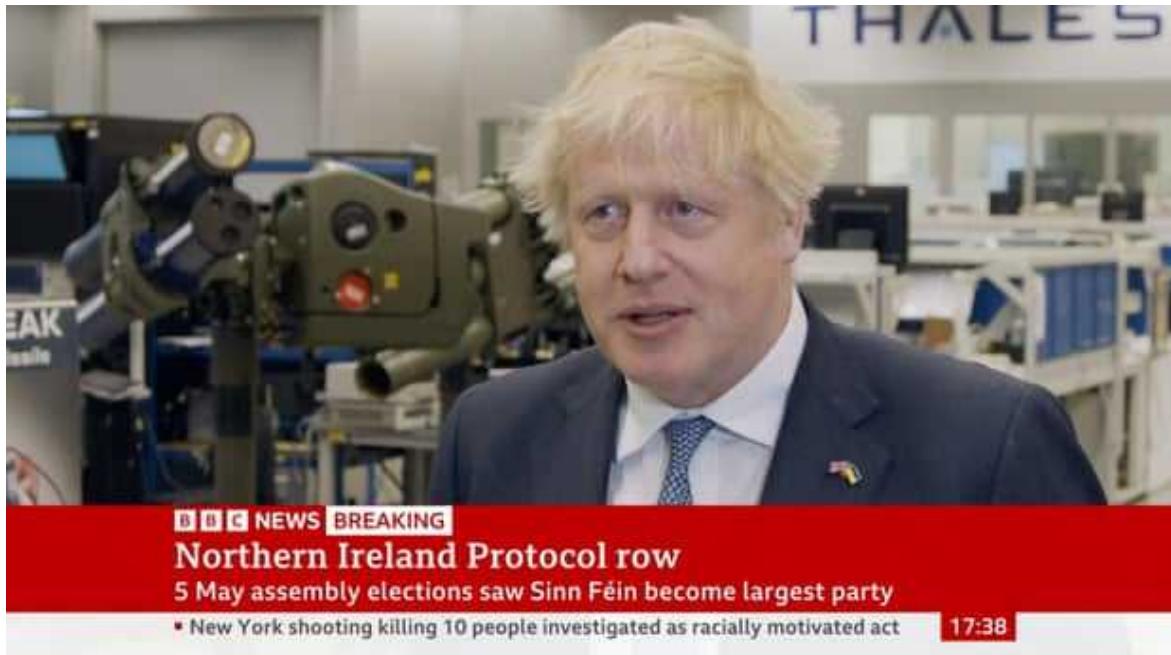
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- He insisted that he did appeal personally to the DUP to reform the power-sharing executive. He said: “I think everybody should be rolling up their sleeves and getting stuck into the government of Northern Ireland.”
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That is all from me for today. My colleague **Harry Taylor** is taking over now.



Boris Johnson Photograph: BBC News

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Updated at 12.58 EDT

[6d ago](#)[12.40](#)

TUC says it is 'unbelievable' that Bank of England governor has restated his call for wage restraint

The TUC has criticised Andrew Bailey, the governor of the Bank of England, for restating his call for wage restraint. (See [4.54pm](#).) Paul Nowak, the TUC's deputy general secretary, said:

It is unbelievable that the Bank of England has repeated its calls for workers to take a wage hit – while saying virtually nothing about soaring profits at the likes of BP and Shell.

The last thing working people need right now – in the middle of the worst living standards crisis in generations – is to have their wages held

down.

Let's be crystal clear. Global energy prices are driving up inflation – not pay claims.

Suppressing pay will suck demand out of our economy and cause widespread hardship.

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Updated at 12.41 EDT

[6d ago](#) [12.33](#)

Michael Gove, the levelling up secretary, has written to the Speaker in the House of Lords (the Lord Speaker), saying that, as the minister in charge of the Queen Elizabeth II Centre in Westminster, he will stop the Lords using it when they move out of parliament for the refurbishment of the building, [it was reported yesterday](#). Gove wants the Lords to move out of London, which he says will be good for levelling up.

As PA Media reports, peers dismissed his proposal angrily during an urgent question on it this afternoon. PA says:

Raising an urgent question in parliament, Tory former cabinet minister **Lord Forsyth of Drumlean** pressed for the publication of Gove's analysis on "how he thought this would enable parliament to function if one House was sent to Stoke or somewhere else".

Pressing the minister, Lord Forsyth said: "Would he just remind the secretary of state ... that the matter for the location of this House is a matter for this house and not for the executive."

Lord True, the Cabinet Office minister, said: "The secretary of state is always inventive. These are matters for parliament."

He also pointed out he had been in York last week on a ministerial visit and "did not look at any alternative site".

Questioning on whose authority Gove had contacted the Lord Speaker, Tory peer **Lord Cormack** said: “Was he speaking for the government and if so does he not realise this is not a matter for the government or was this just another freelance exercise by an intellectual flibbertigibbet?”

Amid laughter, **Lord True** said: “I couldn’t possibly comment on that.”

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Updated at 12.43 EDT

[6d ago](#) [12.20](#)

Irish PM urges UK to resume substantive talks with EU over Northern Ireland protocol

Micheál Martin, the taoiseach (Irish PM), has urged the UK to resume substantive negotiations with the EU over the [Northern Ireland](#) protocol. Addressing the media in Dublin, he said:

The only way to flesh that out is really to re-engage and have substantive talks between the European Union and the United Kingdom.

The UK government has issues but I can’t see any other way to resolve those issues other than through negotiations and substantive talks.

He also said he had made this point in a conversation with **Charles Michel**, the president of the European Council, who agreed. Michel posted a message on Twitter just a few minutes ago saying the same thing.

Discussed with [@MichealMartinTD](#), the only way forward on Protocol is engagement between EU and UK.

Any unilateral action by □□ on Protocol - which would undermine its

international legal obligations - clearly not welcome all the more so in these difficult geopolitical times.

— Charles Michel (@eucopresident) [May 16, 2022](#)

Martin also said he found it hard to see why the DUP were obstructing the resumption of the Northern [Ireland](#) assembly. He said:

It seems to me to be very, very difficult to comprehend that in any jurisdiction in the modern world, where we have had an election, particularly in the European context, the idea that a parliament is prevented from convening is hard to comprehend.

The people have spoken, the people have elected their representatives. At a minimum it seems, without any delay, the assembly should be established, of course followed by the formation of the executive.



Micheál Martin speaking to the media outside the Government Buildings in Dublin today. Photograph: Niall Carson/PA

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[6d ago](#)[12.06](#)



Boris Johnson leaving Hillsborough Castle after his talks with party leaders. He now has a visit scheduled. Photograph: Peter Nicholls/Reuters

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[6d ago](#)[12.01](#)

Bank of England still thinks Brexit will cut GDP by 3.25% in long term, MPs told

At the Treasury committee **Sir Dave Ramsden**, the Bank of England's deputy governor for markets and banking, said the main impact of Brexit would be on trade intensity. He said the Bank thought it would cut GDP by about 3.25% in the long term (over the next 15 or 20 years). That estimate had not changed, he said.

Because it was a long-term impact, it was hard to track, he said. He said the impact of shocks such as Covid and the Ukraine war were more visible because they were more immediate.



Dave Ramsden Photograph: HoC

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Updated at 12.05 EDT

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[UK news](#)

Boris Johnson poised to give green light to bill on Northern Ireland protocol

Prime minister gambling move will restart stalled talks as he flies to Belfast for crunch meetings



Boris Johnson will emphasise the need for restrained language to his foreign secretary, Liz Truss, amid frayed relations. Photograph: Frank Augstein/AP

[Jessica Elgot](#) and [Lisa O'Carroll](#)

Sun 15 May 2022 16.57 EDTFirst published on Sun 15 May 2022 14.59 EDT

Boris Johnson is poised to give the green light to controversial legislation on the [Northern Ireland](#) protocol this week as he flies to Belfast for crunch meetings, gambling that the move will restart stalled talks.

The prime minister warned that it was a “necessity to act” if negotiations with the EU did not resume and said new measures would be put to

parliament in the coming days.

It comes as it emerged that business leaders in Northern [Ireland](#) have urged Johnson not to take any unilateral action in a private letter to Downing Street.

A source confirmed that the letter from the Northern Ireland business [Brexit](#) working group, an umbrella organisation of 14 business bodies, told the prime minister there was the prospect of a deal with the EU.

“It was being suggested that action was needed because business groups asked for it and trade was suffering because of the protocol. We asked them specifically not to launch unilateral action. We do not need the nuclear option when we believe there is still a prospect of a deal,” said the source.

They said that it was astonishing that Johnson was flying to Northern Ireland threatening unilateral action and not meeting the group, despite their pleas, adding that the government had shown scant interest in business – with one 15-minute Zoom call with [Liz Truss](#) in January and no engagement since.

The business working group – which includes the Confederation of British Industry, the NI Food and Drink Association, the Ulster Farmers Union, Manufacturing NI, Hospitality Ulster, the Institute of Directors NI, Logistics UK and the Northern Ireland Retail Consortium – is reportedly perplexed by statements from government listing issues that have already been resolved or which are close to being resolved.

Why has the Northern Ireland protocol paralysed Stormont? – video

Amid frayed relations between the prime minister and Truss, Johnson will emphasise the need for restrained language to his foreign secretary. However, he is still set to sign off her preferred tactic for new legislation which would override parts of the protocol to [remove checks on goods crossing the Irish Sea](#).

Truss has prepared a bill giving the government the right to suspend elements of the Brexit deal relating to Northern Ireland, a move which the EU has warned could spark a trade war.

Measures in the bill are expected to include a new “green lane” for goods for sale only in Northern Ireland and stronger penalties for those smuggling into the EU via the Republic.

Ahead of crunch talks with parties at Stormont, Johnson said the circumstances had fundamentally changed since the deal was signed. “It was designed in the absence of a trade and cooperation agreement and when it was unclear one would be agreed. It has not been adapted to reflect the realities of the TCA.

“It was designed before a global pandemic and a European war which has created a cost of living crisis on a scale not seen for half a century.”

Johnson said in the op-ed for the Belfast Telegraph that there could not “even be a question” about the fast availability of medicines in Northern Ireland nor was it fair that the chancellor could not grant people in Northern Ireland the same tax and VAT benefits.”

He said negotiations remained at an impasse while the EU claimed it was “impossible to make the changes to the protocol text to actually solve these problems in negotiations – because there is no mandate to do so.”

One official said they expected the time frame for the new legislation to be decelerated to allow diplomatic efforts to resume. Another Whitehall official acknowledged the legislation was “several weeks away” from being formally put to MPs. Dozens of Conservative MPs have suggested they would vote against a bill in its later stages.

A Whitehall source said they acknowledged the internal briefing war of the past week, which included cabinet splits and threw the internal choreography in crisis, had been unhelpful with a decades-old peace process at stake.

“The priority tomorrow is to calm things down,” they said. The source suggested Johnson would tell Truss to handle things more delicately.

Sources close to Truss have denied her team leaked details of the planned legislation and say they have not been responsible for some of the more inflammatory rhetoric – which they claim has irritated the foreign secretary.

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“The ideal solution is that we work through the problems with the protocol with the EU and through a negotiated solution and get the executive back up and running,” a government source said.

“If they are not willing to show flexibility it’s our responsibility as a government to look at other options. [Truss] does favour looking at legislation as a way of doing that. But there is a difference between giving ourselves the powers to do something and then actually doing something.”

No 10 said it was Johnson’s priority to restore the conditions for negotiations – claiming he had a “conciliatory” call with Ireland’s taoiseach last week. However, the Irish Times on Saturday reported sources describing it as “the single worst call he [Martin] has ever had with anyone”.

Johnson is expected to meet the Democratic Unionists and Sinn Féin in Belfast on Monday. The DUP blocked the election of a speaker at Stormont on Friday, meaning the assembly is unable to function after the elections where Sinn Féin became the largest party.

Sinn Féin deputy leader Michelle O’Neill who is first minister designate, said she would warn Johnson that any unilateral action to walk away from the protocol would be “reckless” and “deepen political instability”.

“Any threat of unilateral action by the British government to denounce the withdrawal agreement, or disapply the protocol would be reckless. Walking away from international obligations would also represent an appalling attack on the international rule of law,” she said.

“Only through joint agreement with the EU can solutions to problems or concerns be resolved. I will be telling [Boris Johnson](#) that unilateral action deepens political instability and economic uncertainty and must not happen.”

On Sunday the business secretary, Kwasi Kwarteng, said the UK had “the right to act in a sovereign way” and to “reopen or re-examine the protocol” but he denied the actions would constitute a breach of international law.

Johnson has previously vowed not to scrap the protocol and said he is only seeking reform that has “the broadest possible cross-community support”.

Simon Coveney, Ireland’s foreign minister, “criticised sabre-rattling and grandstanding” from ministers over the past week. Johnson has already been told that dozens of Conservative MPs would attempt to stop the bill from becoming law if it reaches the later stages – though many see it as a negotiating tactic.

Coveney said the behaviour of UK ministers was “creating a lot of tension in my country, your closest neighbour, and also potentially being on the verge of making a decision that could fundamentally undermine the functioning of the institutions of the peace process in Northern Ireland”.

He told Sophy Ridge on Sunday on Sky News that the relations between Britain and Ireland were being fundamentally damaged because of “unhelpful briefings that we’re getting from very, very senior levels within the British government this week”.

Coveney said the EU had not threatened any specific retaliation – though several European parliamentarians have said there will be consequences, including the potential suspension of the trade deal, should the UK government act unilaterally.

“There’s no way the EU can compromise if the UK is threatening unilateral action to pass domestic legislation to set aside international obligations under an international treaty that, don’t forget, the UK was the primary designer of along with the EU,” he said.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/may/15/boris-johnson-poised-to-agree-controversial-bill-to-suspend-parts-of-ni-protocol>

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Rwanda

Rwanda president suggests UK extradite genocide suspects after asylum deal

Exclusive: Comments raise concerns UK will find it difficult to refuse requests from Kigali on sensitive issues



Paul Kagame told diplomats in Kigali he hoped the UK would ‘send us some people they have accommodated for over 15 years who committed crimes’. Photograph: Yves Herman/AFP/Getty Images

[Jason Burke](#) Africa correspondent

Mon 16 May 2022 09.32 EDTFirst published on Mon 16 May 2022 05.15 EDT

Paul Kagame, the president of Rwanda, has suggested the UK extradite suspects wanted in the east African country for alleged roles in the 1994

genocide, after a controversial deal with the [Home Office](#) to process asylum seekers there.

Speaking less than two weeks after the [deal was announced](#), Kagame told an audience of diplomats in Kigali that included the British high commissioner he hoped “that when the UK is sending us these migrants, they should send us some people they have accommodated for over 15 years who committed crimes [in Rwanda]”.

“We sent case files [to the UK] and … investigated. These are clear case files. Instead of being accommodated there in that beautiful place of [the] UK, they should be in jail, either in the UK or here,” [Kagame said](#).

The presence in the UK of five men alleged to have played an active and important role in the killing of more than 800,000 ethnic Tutsis and some moderate Hutus over three months in [Rwanda](#) in 1994 has been an irritant in relations with Kigali for many years.

British judges have blocked extradition on the grounds the suspects would not receive a fair trial in Rwanda. Officials in Kigali have called for a trial in the UK instead.

All five, aged between 61 and 69, came to the UK in the immediate aftermath of the genocide where they applied for asylum. They deny the allegations against them.

The Home Office denied any link between the deal and the issue of extraditions.

“Any matters on extradition with Rwanda are not part of our migration and economic development partnership and to suggest otherwise would be completely wrong. This is an independent Metropolitan police inquiry and it would be inappropriate for us to comment further,” a spokesperson said.

However, the comments will raise concerns that the British government has made undisclosed promises to Kagame, or will find it more difficult to refuse pressure from Kigali on sensitive issues.

Under the deal, Rwanda will be paid an initial £120m to receive refugees who arrive illegally in the UK. The full details of the agreement have not been made publicly available.

Weeks before the deal was announced, the government confirmed the appointment of Rwanda's new ambassador to the UK, after a [delay of eight months](#). Johnston Busingye, Rwanda's long-serving justice minister, was named as the new envoy amid international scrutiny over the alleged "rendition" and [trial of Paul Rusesabagina](#), the hotelier credited with saving many lives during the genocide – portrayed in the film Hotel Rwanda.

On 29 April, Busingye was [received by the Queen](#) at Buckingham Palace in a virtual audience.

In his speech, Kagame denied the deal with the UK meant Rwanda was "buying and selling people". He said: "No, we don't do that kind of thing. We can't do that because of our core values ... "When the UK approached us and because of a problem they have ... we are happy to deal with that problem," [Kagame told the diplomats](#). "There is nothing bad about this ... There is nothing we cannot be transparent about."

Kagame's reference to the five alleged genocide suspects may be embarrassing for the UK government and fuel criticism of the asylum deal.

In 2019, ministers told parliament the government was "not shielding any war criminals" and had spent £3m "trying to get the right outcome" on an investigation launched after the court rulings on extradition and requests from the Rwandan government.

Last year, MPs formed an [all-party parliamentary group \(APPG\) on war crimes](#) to "look into matters relating to the presence of alleged Rwandan war criminals in the UK and the prosecution of those who participated in the Rwandan genocide".

In April last year, Busingye, as minister of justice, pledged that "[Rwanda does not seek revenge](#)" and that though extradition was denied, Rwanda had agreed to a trial by the UK courts.

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“We are still watching and waiting, waiting for the one signal that will show the genocide victims, in their lifetime, that finally there is commitment to bring these fugitives to justice,” [he said](#).

Rusesabagina was tricked into returning to Rwanda in August 2020, in what amounted to an enforced disappearance, a serious violation of international law, the New York-based Human Rights Watch said at the time. He was later convicted of involvement in a rebel group blamed for deadly attacks in Rwanda. A 25-year jail sentence was upheld by Rwanda’s court of appeal, a ruling his family says is in effect a [death sentence for the ailing 67-year-old](#).

In his speech to the diplomats, Kagame criticised those whose understanding of Rwanda’s history was based on “a movie”, a reference to Hotel Rwanda. “He’s a hero, people say … But what about the families of the victims, people who were lost [at] the hands of this person and the group he led?” the president said.

Kagame became head of state in 2000 after he and his rebel forces halted the genocide in 1994 after 100 days of killing resulted in about 800,000 deaths. He brought stability, security and economic growth to a shattered country but has also been accused of running a repressive, authoritarian state.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/16/rwanda-president-suggests-uk-extradite-genocide-suspect-asylum-deal-paul-kagame>

Energy industry

Martin Lewis apologises for swearing at Ofgem over energy price cap

MoneySavingExpert founder sorry for ‘emotional rant’ as regulator says it will update cap four times a year



Martin Lewis accused Ofgem of selling consumers ‘down the river’ on energy bills. Photograph: Kirsty O'Connor/PA

[Jasper Jolly](#) and [Alex Lawson](#)

Mon 16 May 2022 04.32 EDT Last modified on Tue 17 May 2022 00.12 EDT

The consumer champion Martin Lewis has apologised for swearing at Great Britain’s energy regulator after it announced changes to its price cap on bills.

Ofgem has confirmed it is planning to [update the energy price cap four times a year](#) from October to allow it and consumers to adjust more quickly to volatile markets.

The regulator on Monday published a consultation on proposals to introduce new reviews of the price cap in January and July, adding to existing changes in April and October.

Lewis, the founder of the consumer advice site MoneySavingExpert, apologised after swearing on a press call with the regulator regarding its approach. He accused [Ofgem](#) of selling consumers “down the river” and wants it to do more to tackle the energy crisis.

Lewis said had had “good meetings” with Ofgem and apologised again for the “emotional rant”.

I'd like to formally apologise to the [@ofgem](#) staff for losing my rag in a background briefing just now and saying its changes are a "fucking disgrace that sells consumers down the river".

I should've behaved better. My ire's institutional not individual, its was inappropriate...

— Martin Lewis (@MartinSLewis) [May 16, 2022](#)

Lewis later clarified that he had not been angry about the plan to switch to updating the cap four times a year but had been concerned over Ofgem proposals to bring in a “market stabilisation” charge on companies that introduce cheap deals, which he was concerned could be bad for consumers.

Under the proposals, suppliers who win customers with cheaper deals would have to pay the old supplier 85% of the difference in tariffs. The regulator argues that it would protect companies from being destabilised but Lewis said it would deter competition.

He had also tried to persuade the regulator to consider cutting fixed charges to consumers regardless of their energy usage.

Ofgem’s proposals came after a period of turmoil on global energy markets pushed up gas prices in the UK and across the world – becoming a driving force in [global inflationary pressure](#). The price increases were prompted by the snap-back in global energy demand after coronavirus lockdowns

followed by the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, [Europe's biggest gas supplier](#).

In response, in April average prices in Great Britain rose by a record 54% to £1,971. A further increase is expected to as much as £2,600 for the winter.

The scale of the price rise – and the collapse since September 2021 of 29 British energy suppliers that failed to hedge appropriately against rising wholesale energy costs – has [prompted scrutiny of Ofgem's role](#), and the ways it could help consumers further.

Jonathan Brearley, Ofgem's chief executive, said: “Today's proposed change would mean the price cap is more reflective of current market prices and any price falls would be delivered more quickly to consumers.

“It would also help energy suppliers better predict how much energy they need to purchase for their customers, reducing the risk of further supplier failures, which ultimately pushes up costs for consumers.

“The last year has shown that we need to make changes to the price cap so that suppliers are better able to manage risks in these unprecedented market conditions.”

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The proposals announced on Monday also included tweaks to the methodology of working out the price cap, which the regulator hopes will result in energy suppliers being able to recover costs during unusual market conditions. Ofgem argued that without these changes fewer energy suppliers would remain in the market, meaning it would be “unlikely that there will be the investment needed for the net zero transition”.

Matthew Cole, the chair of trustees at the Fuel Bank Foundation, said: “We welcome that Ofgem is pulling the levers that it can pull to address the energy crisis. But there is a risk that by switching to quarterly you give people a bigger shock. If you know bills are going up a certain amount in six months' time then that gives you time to plan.

“There needs to be a coordinated package of measures to help people with their energy bills.”

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‘Everyone forgets about you’: Erin Jackson on returning home after Olympics gold

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Grace Dent: ‘I eat like a wild animal’



Spice of life: Grace Dent. Composite: Suki Dhanda/The Guardian/Oli Fraps

The restaurant critic on being a part-time vegan, giving up drinking, and the simple joy of a bag of chips on a blustery British beach

*As told to [Mina Holland](#)
[@minaholland](#)*

Mon 16 May 2022 02.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 16 May 2022 09.28 EDT

I have a job which often requires me to eat more than a human being probably should; 2,000 calories in one meal is quite normal – lots of butter, sugar, fat, cream – all the things that make things taste delicious. I realised early on in this game that I could only do it if I ate quite sparsely the rest of the time.

I really watch what I put into my body now. I've realised that, from your mid-40s, everything you eat and drink shows in your face. You become hammered on a G&T and feel awful after a late-night Burger King.

I went teetotal about nine months ago. I had been drinking in a very British way since I was 14. I wouldn't have said I had an alcohol problem– I didn't binge or drink secretly – but I began as a teenager in a field, then moved on to student bars, dinner parties, the media industry, and then to reviewing restaurants where endless drinks are on offer. I grew sick of losing bits of life to feeling shit. So I just stopped completely. My skin looked radically different right away. When I go out now, I usually have a shrub or booze-free aperitif.

I skip breakfast a lot – often, it's just a litre of coffee with oat milk – and I eat lots of protein at lunch, eggs in any form, a block of tofu I'll have marinated and baked, lots of nuts and dried fruit. And I roast loads of vegetables: broccoli is a favourite. I eat like a wild animal – apart from the meat. I drive my man mad. His idea of joy is cooking half a cow three different ways. I'm more of an ape; I love vegan food.

Whenever I talk about loving vegan food, it starts a backlash. The vegans aren't happy with me because I'm not fully vegan and the meat eaters say I'm trying to destroy the farming industry. Any nuance seems to get lost. It does seem to fascinate people, though, that I'm a food critic who doesn't love foie gras. Stereotypically, those guys love a kidney, bone marrow, sweetbreads. Not me.

One of the reasons I have trouble with meat is I'm a massive animal lover. My dream is to go full [Celia Hammond](#) and have a little animal sanctuary, at which point I will stop wearing a bra and ditch the false eyelashes. I am uncomfortable with killing animals.

My freezer always has veggie burgers in it. I don't think you should eat them every day, but they're really handy. I don't get the anger about Linda McCartney-style foods – there are far worse things. People ask: "Why do you want a burger if it's not a burger?" But what don't they understand? When you have a beef burger, you don't just want the patty – you want the lovely bun and the butter and the sauce and the chips and the salad. Who cares what the patty is, as long as it tastes peppery and herby and has that mouthfeel?

There are a few go-to cookbooks on my shelves. I love [Nigel Slater](#) because his recipes are more like suggestions: he ruminates rather than prescribes. And I bloody love Nigella; [How to Be a Domestic Goddess](#) is my most destroyed book. Also [Ottolenghi Simple](#), Emma Spitzer's Fress, which is full of bright, bold Jewish flavours, and [Cooking Like Mummyji](#) by Vicky Bhogal. This book taught me how to make Indian food with everyday British ingredients.

When I eat out or get takeaway, I usually go for spice. I order loads from Wanstead Kitchen, an Indian cafe near where I live, which I hope I don't regret telling you about (one Christmas Day, when I was working on Radio 2, I had a massive Hyderabadi biryani and iftari kala chana, a black chickpea curry, from them – heaven). You'll often see me in the Wagamama in Westfield Stratford during the day, eating bang bang cauliflower, which is one of the hottest things on a mainstream British menu. And Tonkotsu: I love their ramen, and I really love Eat the Bits, their chilli sauce, which I've taken to eating simply with bread and butter.

The British palate has veered towards chilli sauce en masse. It's become bog-standard to crave a blast of it. Ten years ago, ketchup was the condiment in every shopping trolley, but I think the likes of Blue Dragon sweet chilli sauce and sriracha are up there now. British communities come together in unity through some foods.

I grew up eating very simply. I lived in Currock, a suburb of Carlisle, in a little terraced house. Food was whatever came from the tiny supermarket down the road. My mum did cook – hotpots, stews, fairy cakes – but my most exciting meals were tinned. I still feel the love from a tin of macaroni cheese, ravioli, baked beans. I have strong memories of coming home from school and watching Pipkins with half a tin of Heinz tomato soup and some white bread toast spread with [Dairylea](#). Absolute happiness.

When I moved to London, I lived in Bounds Green. I was surrounded by Greek and Turkish restaurants along Myddleton Road, proper Irish pubs, Korean and Vietnamese food, neither of which I'd known existed. It was like I'd only seen the world in black and white until that point. It was the food that kept me in London. The house prices are good in Carlisle but you can't get very good sushi.

I used to read Winner's Dinners in the Sunday Times and think: "I could do that." People like me didn't really review restaurants, though, and I didn't have an in. But from my early days in London, I loved the different scenes in restaurants and when people asked me what a place was like, I'd tell them to pull up a chair. They'd know exactly what I was talking about from my explanation. I can't say I learned my love of food from childhood holidays in Tuscany, but I know people liked hearing from me on the matter.

I've spent the last few months eating my way around the British coastline with [Ainsley Harriott](#). In each place we visited, we sampled the whole spectrum of the food on offer. One moment I was eating in an Agatha Christie-style hotel, the next Ainsley and I were loading sugar into a giant machine to make rhubarb and custard sweets. It reminded me how much I love Great Britain, blustery beaches and seaside food. Because what's better than being on an isolated beach and eating chips cooked in beef dripping from a kiosk?

Best of Britain By the Sea begins on More4 at 9pm on 16 May.

The third season of Grace's Guardian podcast [Comfort Eating](#) begins on Tuesday 17th May with new episodes out every Tuesday. Listen at [itunes](#), [Spotify](#) or wherever you get your podcasts.

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Political, provocative and preposterous: why Cannes is a ‘cathedral of cinema’



Meet Côte ... the red carpet at the Cannes film festival. Photograph: Andreas Rentz/Getty

The French cultural institution, which turns 75 this year, has always been a battle between radicalism and elitism – but that's what makes it so essential



Xan Brooks

@XanBrooks

Mon 16 May 2022 04.00 EDT

The Truman Show is a 1990s Hollywood movie about a man who lives in a bubble, cut off from the world. As played by Jim Carrey, Truman Burbank – surrounded by actors, his every move dogged by cameras – stares at a stage set and believes that it's real. In the film's final scene he climbs the stairs, finds a door and prepares to escape his gilded cage.

That keynote image – Truman's ascent against a painted sky – is now the official poster for the forthcoming Cannes film festival, soon to be plastered on programmes, Blu-Tacked in shop windows and rigged like a godhead across the concrete Palais. And while we should be wary of judging an event by its cover, the choice of image feels apt. The organisers picked it, they say, because it “represents a poetic celebration of the quest for expression and freedom”. Others may read it as a self-owning comment on the festival as a whole.

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That's the perennial question about Cannes, that millionaire's playground on the Côte d'Azur. Is it the bubble or the door, the sickness or the cure? A creative response to the woes of the world or a means of laundering its worst excesses? Nobody is certain. The jury's always out. Cannes thrives on frictions, contradictions; that's part of its appeal. But pull the elastic too hard and sooner or later it snaps.

This year marks the festival's 75th edition, a birthday of sorts. It provides the perfect excuse to rewind through the event's past, celebrating its history as a home for provocation, a seedbed for the Nouvelle Vague, New Hollywood, the *buena onda* of Latin American cinema. But it's also a chance to reset the compass, to map out the future. Judged on face value, this year's lineup is terrific. There are new films from [David Cronenberg](#), [Claire Denis](#), [George Miller](#), [Kelly Reichardt](#); a shrewd balance of arthouse delicacies with tasty cinematic junk food ([Top Gun: Maverick](#); Baz Luhrmann's Elvis biopic). It's almost enough to distract from the troubles piling up all around. Industry upheaval. The pandemic. Ukraine.



Yes he Cannes ... Tom Cruise in *Top Gun: Maverick*. Photograph: Paramount/Paramount Pictures/Scott Garfield/Allstar

It is a good year already for the British producer Mike Goodridge, who has two films in the main competition. *Triangle of Sadness* is the new comedy

from Ruben Östlund, who won the 2017 Palme d'Or for his art-world satire [The Square](#). Tchaikovsky's Wife is a period drama by the dissident Russian director Kirill Serebrennikov. Cannes has banned official Russian delegations this year, but individual artists (most of whom are at odds with the Putin regime anyway) are always welcome. The producer thinks that's fair enough. Serebrennikov, he explains, has just spent several years under house arrest: "He's the last person who should be receiving a cultural boycott."

In France, Cannes has never been seen as frivolous. For us it's very serious, it's our university of geopolitics

Goodridge first came to Cannes back in 1991. He has been a journalist, a sales agent and a festival director himself. So he's come at the event from pretty much every angle and largely made peace with its manifest contradictions. Cannes, he argues, is still the world's most exciting film festival. Moreover, it may be the last great champion of cinema itself, doggedly wedded to the old theatrical business model and forcing made-for-TV Netflix content to screen in Venice instead. "Cannes is dedicated to protecting the sacred art of cinema," he says. "And the Cannes Palais, as well as being a place of discovery, is cinema's ultimate cathedral. It changes your life. It changes the way you see the world."

Inevitably, there's a downside, too. "The worst thing about Cannes, I suppose, is the rarefied nature of it. It is elitist. It is snobby. And yes, it is slow to change. The selection process isn't flawless. There needs to be more fresh blood, just to mix it up. You do get sick of seeing the same old faces in the main competition."

We're back to those Cannes frictions again. For every action, a reaction. For every high, a crushing low. I have been coming to the festival for years and still can't pin it down. It is at once radical and hidebound, serious and silly, horribly hierarchical and airily democratic.



Ruben Östlund's *Triangle of Sadness*. Photograph: ©Plattform-Produktion

Or to put it another way, Cannes is the Walt Whitman of film festivals. It contains multitudes. It contradicts itself. Outside the Palais, the impenetrable arthouse puzzle is accorded the same red carpet treatment as the A-list Hollywood blockbuster. Inside, the highbrow main competition is offset by [a lowbrow film market](#), selling Asian erotic thrillers with garbled English blurbs (“In a small apartment, she was almost like an old goddess to him”). At night, on the harbour, the oligarch yachts double as film party venues. The revellers raise their champagne flutes en masse to toast the latest social-realist *cri de cœur* from Bucharest or Timbuktu.

Undeniably, it used to be more riotous, more of an obvious circus. I miss the human traffic that used to surge along the Croisette before the security was tightened. The upstart student film-makers bellowing into loud-hailers; the newspaper vendor shouting “*Libération!*” on the steps. In recent years, Cannes has become safety-conscious, almost cloistered. But does that make it more of a bubble than before?

The film-maker [Mark Cousins](#) vehemently disagrees. “I have no time for this argument,” he says. Firstly, Cousins explains, Cannes’s natural affinity has always been for the innovator, the underdog, the sort of artists who would normally be left outside in the cold. Secondly, crucially, it remains a

physical festival, “a moment in the moshpit”, a vital connection with the offline world. “What used to be called life,” he says.

Goodridge compares Cannes to a cathedral. Cousins, for his part, reaches for nautical similes. The festival, he tells me, is like a sea wall against erosion, or a lighthouse in the storm, “battered but sentinel”, directing its beam into the globe’s four corners. That’s a bold claim to make about an event that once staged a stunt involving Jerry Seinfeld in a bee costume on a zip-wire, but he may be right. Because if there is a comedy Cannes and a celebrity Cannes, it follows that there might be a core-principles Cannes, something to cling to when everything else blows away. Also, it’s comforting to think of Cannes as the lighthouse, honest and unyielding. Better that than seeing it as the storm itself.



Austin Butler in *Elvis*, directed by Baz Luhrmann. Photograph: Warner Bros/Allstar

When people speak of Cannes’s radical heyday, they invariably cite the insurrectionist fireworks of May 1968, when [Godard](#) and [Truffaut](#) stormed the main hall and brought the event to a juddering halt. But Cannes’s political roots go much deeper than that. This is the 75th festival, although by rights it should be older. It was explicitly conceived as a carnival of resistance, a riposte to the fascist event in Venice, which made Joseph

Goebbels its guest of honour and awarded the “Mussolini Cup” to a [Leni Riefenstahl](#) picture. The inaugural Cannes festival was due to get under way on 1 September 1939. When Hitler’s tanks rolled into Poland, the festival was cancelled a few hours in.

I sometimes think Cannes’s champions could make more of this genesis. It’s like a superhero origin tale: a call to arms, a rising up. Politics is in Cannes’s DNA. The French writer [Agnès Poirier](#) argues that its history is fundamental. “More than any other festival, it has never been afraid to take a stance on the world,” she says.

Cannes was built in a spirit of inclusion, tolerance and empathy with other cultures. That’s why it likes provocative artists who rattle our cages ([Hitchcock](#), [Gaspar Noé](#), [Lars von Trier](#)). It’s why it loves dissident artists who shed a light on injustice. Sergei Loznitsa’s film [Donbass](#) sounded the alarm of a burgeoning crisis in eastern Ukraine. Andrey Zvyagintsev’s [Loveless](#) warned of creeping moral rot among the Moscow middle class. Cannes plays both sides, but it engages with the world. The photocalls and fashion disasters ensure that the festival is noticed. But those stage-managed frivolities sell its produce far and wide.

“Well, it’s interesting that you would say it’s frivolous,” says Poirier. “That’s probably a British perspective. In France, Cannes has never been seen as frivolous. For us it’s very serious. It’s our political class. It’s our university of geopolitics. It’s where we come for knowledge of the parts of the world we’ve never visited.”

For 12 days this month the Cannes faithful will gather outside the Palais. They’ll kick their heels beneath the giant image of Truman Burbank climbing against the painted sky, forever hunting for his exit route. Once through the gates, those guests have free run of the programme; the only limit is time. They may see a masterpiece. They may see a turkey. They may be whisked off to São Paulo, Harare or Muscat. They may witness something that changes the way they see the world. Sure, Cannes is a bubble. But the movies: those are doors.

The 75th Cannes film festival runs from 17 to 28 May.

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Interview

‘We have to fight – and I’ll do my part’: John Legend on Roe v Wade, Kanye West and his mother’s addiction

[Ammar Kalia](#)



‘I got told “no” by a lot of people in the music industry’ ... John Legend.
Photograph: Rebecca Cabage/Invision/AP

What does a man want when he’s already got 12 Grammys, two Emmys, an Oscar and a Tony? An America where fewer people go to jail and abortion rights are not under attack

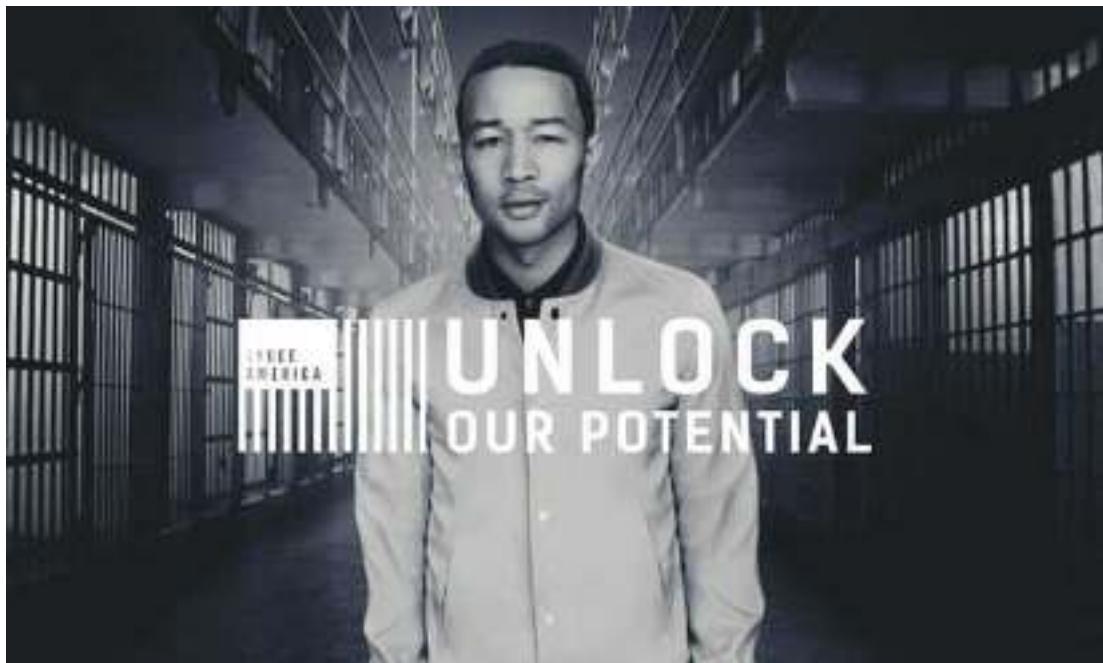


Mon 16 May 2022 01.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 16 May 2022 10.59 EDT

When he was 15, John Stephens of Springfield, Ohio, entered an essay competition run by McDonald’s for Black History Month. Asked “How do you intend to make Black history?” he wrote about his vision of becoming a successful musician and using his platform to fight for racial justice and social equality. He won the contest.

Rather than a flight of adolescent fancy, that 1994 essay was something of a prophecy. Under his stage name of [John Legend](#), he has sold more than 10m albums in the US alone since his 2004 debut, Get Lifted. His 2013 single All of Me – written for his wife, model and author Chrissy Teigen – is one of the bestselling digital singles of all time, with 1.7bn streams on Spotify. He has won all four leading American entertainment awards – two Emmys, 12

Grammys, one Oscar and one Tony – becoming the first African American man to do so, and the second-youngest of any race or gender.



Legend founded the non-profit organisation FreeAmerica in 2014.
Photograph: Free America

In the realm of social justice, too, the 43-year-old has lived up to his words, founding the non-profit organisation FreeAmerica in 2014 to tackle the fact that the US has the [highest incarceration rate in the world](#), as well as campaigning for more humane drug policies.

When we speak by video call, he has just dropped his two children, Luna and Miles, off at school and is ensconced in his white-walled home office in LA. Leaning into the camera and talking in that instantly recognisable baritone, he is wearing a hoodie emblazoned with the words Love in Las Vegas, the name of his 24-night Las Vegas residency. He is readying himself for the third week of shows, which kicks off the following evening.

“It’s a milestone,” he says of the residency – an honour usually bestowed on superstars later in their careers, like Elton John and Anita Baker. “It’s an interesting time because I have enough of a career to look back on. But I also have so much music in me and so much new music coming – I don’t in any way feel like this is the beginning of my retirement.”



The opening night of John Legend's Love in Las Vegas residency.
Photograph: Denise Truscello/Getty Images for Caesars Entertainment

Indeed, Legend is preparing for the release of his eighth album later this year. Its first single, Dope, plays like peak Pharrell-production funk, expounding on Legend's addiction to love over a syncopated, hip-shaking rhythm. Yet not every track is so celebratory and frivolous; some were inspired by darker moments in Legend's life, such as the miscarriage of his son Jack in 2020.

"There's music dealing with grief and what it feels like to mourn, and to try to pick up the pieces after you've lost something," he says. "When you lose a pregnancy and you have to go through that grief together, it can be really difficult for a family. Hopefully creating music out of it can be healing for me and for other people too."

This isn't the first time Legend has made his family's grief public. In September 2020, Teigen shared a series of candid black-and-white photos of her and Legend in hospital together immediately after the miscarriage. On Instagram, the images provoked messages of support, as well as a backlash deeming them "inappropriate", or even questioning if they were staged for sympathy. A month later, Teigen wrote in an online essay, "These photos are

only for the people who need them. The thoughts of others do not matter to me.”



Legend performing in Los Angeles in 2016. Photograph: Christopher Polk/Getty Images for NARAS

“It was raw, sharing our experience,” Legend says now. “I was worried but our instinct was to do it because people knew we were pregnant and Chrissy felt like she needed to tell the story completely about what happened.” What about the aftermath? “I was amazed by the outpouring of love and support we felt,” he says. “Also, we found out how many other families have gone through this. It was a powerful and brave thing that Chrissy did to share that because it made so many people feel like they were seen and that they weren’t alone.

“We were tested,” he says. “It was a tragedy. But I think it strengthened our resolve and our resilience because we were there for each other. We came out even more sure of who we were as a couple and as a family.”

Resilience is something that Legend has needed before. That 15-year-old who wrote about making history was in the middle of what would turn out to be a 10-year estrangement from his mother.

One of four children, Legend grew up in a musical household – his mother, Phyllis, was the choir director, his grandmother the organist, and his father the drummer. “Every setting that I spent time in was filled with music,” he says, “and by seven I had begged my mother to let me into the choir.” But there were distractions, starting with his mother and father’s decision to become foster parents. “It was difficult for us,” he recalls. “Whenever you introduce new energy into a house, it can be disruptive, and we had varying levels of success, especially with teenagers who were carrying a lot of trauma and loss.”



Legend with his wife, Chrissy Teigen, and their children, Miles and Luna, in Los Angeles. Photograph: Matt Winkelmeyer/Getty Images for Netflix

When Legend was 10, things really began to fall apart. His maternal grandmother died and the family splintered. “It was a massive trauma for my mother,” he says quietly. “She started to withdraw, she became depressed, she fell out of love with my father and they got divorced. She ended up turning to drugs to self-medicate what she had gone through and we were estranged from her, even though we were living in the same city.”

Between the ages of 10 and 20, Legend barely spoke to his mother, who spent several stints in jail. “She was lost to us for a decade,” he says. “She

went from being such a hands-on mother and even home schooling us, to disappearing. It forced me to be independent, to look after myself.”

He threw himself into his work and music, skipping two grades in school. At 17, he had the choice of studying at Harvard, Georgetown University or the University of Pennsylvania. He ended up studying English at Pennsylvania. “I was compartmentalising,” he says. “I thought, if I just focus on school and music – these two things that I love – that will distract me. But as I got older, this personal tragedy we were going through as a family started to have different resonances – I realised that crimes, drug addictions or misbehaviour aren’t just personal responsibility, they are also the products of systemic issues.”

“What my mother needed was help; she didn’t need to be in jail,” he says. “She needed treatment and counselling to help her get through the loss of her mother and to figure out healthy ways to cope.”

By the time he graduated in 1999, Legend had begun to reconcile with his mother. “It’s an amazing story because she came back and now she is healthy and not addicted to drugs any more,” he says with a broad smile. “She’s a good grandmother and is in such a good place.”

His music career was also beginning to blossom. Legend had been introduced by a mutual friend to the singer [Lauryn Hill](#) and was hired to play piano on her 1998 single *Everything Is Everything*. It was his first taste of public recognition as a musician and when he moved to New York in 2000 to work for Boston Consulting Group, it became his calling card. Of the corporate world, he says: “I had no desire to make it a permanent thing. That day job was better than being a waiter and my original thought was I would do it for a year, and then I would get a record deal.”

This time, things didn’t quite go to plan. Legend was playing live shows on weekends and spending his evenings recording demos and mixtapes. “But I would get told ‘no’ by a lot of people in the industry,” he says. “I’d get really lowball offers for record deals or people would tell me to work more on my demo.” Then, in 2001, his roommate introduced him to [Kanye West](#). “Kanye had just moved to New York from Chicago and we were both these hungry young artists, trying to make it in the business,” he says. West was

already making a name for himself as a producer, after working on Jay-Z's Blueprint album, but he was intent on being taken seriously as a rapper and began enlisting Legend on the sessions for his own music.

"Me and Kanye were working on each other's demos – mine, which would become [Get Lifted](#), and his, which would be The College Dropout," Legend says. "Finally, The College Dropout came out in 2004 and it just took off. That's when the music from Get Lifted started to sound a lot better to all the record execs."



Legend and Kanye West at the 2015 MTV Video Music Awards.
Photograph: Jeff Kravitz/MTV1415/FilmMagic

Legend speaks warmly of West, [now known as Ye](#), despite their political differences. In 2018, West published texts Legend had sent to him, urging him not to use his platform to promote Donald Trump, but the [rapper doubled down](#), tweeting in support of Trump and regularly being photographed in a Maga hat. Although Legend won't comment on the current state of their friendship, he is keen to emphasise the crucial part West played at the start of his career. "Being with Kanye and witnessing him blow up in the early days helped prepare me for what would happen," he says. "When success finally happened for me, I felt like I was able to not be overwhelmed by it."

Like West, Legend finds it hard to keep his politics to himself. The evening before we talk, news leaks of the supreme court's draft decision to overturn Roe v Wade, which could lead to abortion being outlawed in swathes of the US. "I can't watch this shit happen and not say something," Legend says. "We're teetering on the brink of not being a full democracy. We're about to implement *The Handmaid's Tale* into law."

Legend is a longtime supporter of the Democrats, and played at Joe Biden's inauguration, but it seems his faith in the president's powers is waning. "As someone who thought it was an immense tragedy that we allowed Donald Trump to be president for four years, I felt a strong sense of relief at a new regime with someone who actually cared about the country," he says. "I was happy that we were turning the page from what I thought was a dark era in American history. But now I still feel incredibly concerned."

He has [spoken before](#) about the radical power of love and its capacity to allow us to value other people's lives – but as political discourse becomes increasingly polarised, is he becoming conscious of its limits? "It feels hard to enact change right now," he says. "I do believe human beings generally want to do the right thing but the conservative movement is not interested in concessions or compromise. They're interested in full power and full authoritarianism."

Like that embattled 15-year-old, he's not prepared to just sit back and hope for the best. "I'm sceptical of the ability to 'kumbaya' our way to a solution," he says. "We have to fight at this point, and I'm going to do my part." A few hours later, Legend [tweets](#) to his 13.8m followers that he and Teigen are donating to independent abortion providers across the US. "We will do what we can to fight for our fellow citizens and democracy," he writes. "I hope you will too."

Dope is released on 20 May.

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Scraping ‘no fault evictions’ doesn’t address the problem of spiralling rents

Francisco Garcia

Ending section 21 is a welcome step. But with the cost of living crisis, renting needs further reform



‘By 2024, the number of people living with homelessness is expected to climb by a third.’ Photograph: Nick Ansell/PA

Mon 16 May 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 16 May 2022 12.47 EDT

If it felt like a long time coming, that’s because it has been. Amid the gaudy pomp and ceremony, the Queen’s speech contained a series of pledges that could substantially improve life for millions of renters across England. Sitting against an almost comically gilded backdrop, Prince Charles [spoke of](#) a government ready to “improve the regulation of social housing, strengthen the rights of tenants and ensure better quality safer homes”.

The proposed [renters' reform bill](#) contains one particularly eye-catching commitment. For years, housing activists and charities have fought for the abolition of [section 21](#) of the Housing Act (1988), an insidious piece of Thatcherite legislation that became better known as “no-fault evictions”. The premise is simple enough. Under the terms of section 21, private landlords have been able to evict tenants without a reason, and giving just two months notice.

This isn’t the first time such a promise has been made. In the spring of 2019, Theresa May’s government sounded its intention to scrap no-fault evictions, after the then housing minister, James Brokenshire, apparently experienced a Damascene moment of clarity during a visit to a [homeless people's shelter](#) in Bristol. But the following three years have only seen the practice intensify, despite the brief lull occasioned by the temporary [pandemic eviction ban](#). According to research by Shelter, the UK’s largest housing charity, an extra [200,000 private renters](#) in England were served with no-fault evictions since the first commitment to scrap them was issued, at a rate of [one every seven minutes](#). Change was supposed to arrive finally in 2021, before being shelved until last week.

Though the latest pledge has been broadly welcomed by campaigners and housing charities, most have struck a note of caution. Promises are easily made. Guiding them through into law is another matter entirely. “The quicker we put no-fault evictions on the scrapheap, the better”, said Polly Neate, Shelter’s chief executive. “This unfair practice has no place in our society and the government agrees – but its promises are just words on a page until they become law. The government needs to finish the job and get rid of section 21, because every minute wasted leaves renters at risk.”

The idea of a “no-fault eviction” always carried an air of phoney moral neutrality. Perhaps the intention was to provide some crumbs of comfort, in knowing at least that you weren’t expected to shoulder any blame for being turfed out of your home at minimal statutory notice. It’s an issue that has cut across demographics and regions. A form of legally built-in precarity that has hit north and south, young and old alike. The [young family in Bedfordshire](#) who had to scrabble for a new place, only to find themselves [paying £350 more](#) a month and with their savings obliterated. The woman

and her and daughter in Manchester, [turfed out](#) after 15 years for daring to request repairs to their home. Many have spoken of a [perpetual stress](#) that amounts to physical illness.

Though doubtlessly a positive step, scrapping section 21 doesn't do much to address the problem of spiralling rents. After all, much has recently been written about the cost-of-living crisis, a catastrophe of steeply rising prices seemingly spread across every essential need of daily life, where food, fuel and shelter are increasingly sources of anxiety for millions. Over the past year, private rents have risen at record rates across the UK, with demand greatly outstripping supply (on some property websites, prospective tenants now outnumber available properties by [three to one](#)). By 2024, the number of people living with homelessness is expected to climb by a third. An approaching "[tidal wave](#)" of need and misery, as local authorities and charities have warned. About 66,000 people are expected to be forced into the hidden precarity of sofa-surfing, or into desperately unsuitable temporary accommodation. Others will be out on the streets, trying to fend for themselves as best they can. More than [1,200 people in the UK died](#) while homeless in 2021 – a 32% rise in the course of a year.

The landlord trade press has, predictably enough, not reacted kindly to the proposed changes. In an [open letter](#) to Shelter, the chief executive of the National Residential Landlords Association accused the charity of presenting "a disappointingly one-sided picture" and "sensationalising" the issue. Some have even thundered about the great unfairness visited on the overwhelming majority of hard-working, benevolent landlords who will now find it tougher to eject problem tenants. One buy-to-let landlord (with seven properties spread across Norfolk) [explained](#) to the Telegraph that she'd been so spooked by the abolition of section 21 that she felt she had no choice other than to evict one long-term tenant of six years, who had never missed a rent payment. After refurbishing the house, she'd raised the rent by £130 a month, while the ex-tenant was forced into sofa-surfing.

The UK's absurdly overheated "housing market" has long needed urgent reform. Decades of under-regulation and structural neglect have led to a terribly unbalanced present, where rising homelessness and chronic anxiety have somehow become entrenched facts of daily life. This wasn't an

inevitability, and change is always possible. The abolition of section 21 will be a welcome step, whenever it finally occurs. But there is much more to be done.

- Francisco Garcia is a London-based writer and journalist

The headline and text of this article were amended on 16 May 2022 to remove references to no-fault evictions in “the UK”. The position regarding these evictions varies across the four nations of the United Kingdom.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/may/16/no-fault-evictions-uk-rents-section-21-cost-of-living-renting>

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OpinionHealth

I'm one of the 28m in Britain who live with chronic pain – where is the plan to help us?

[Lucy Pasha-Robinson](#)

We are now being told painkillers can do more harm than good, but the NHS alternatives need more research and funding



‘Chronic pain casts a shadow across everyday life.’ Photograph: EllenaZ/Getty Images/iStockphoto

Mon 16 May 2022 05.24 EDT Last modified on Mon 16 May 2022 14.15 EDT

It's rush hour and I'm gripped by a searing hot pain in my pelvis as I take my seat on the bus. It's the kind of pain that takes my breath away, that leaves me pale and shaky. This is not the first time this has happened to me, so I know how to keep my expression neutral, but if any fellow commuter

was being observant they may notice a bead of sweat running down my temple, or that my breathing is coming out in shaky staccato exhales. I had overslept that morning and my fatal error had been running to catch the bus. The 30-second sprint was enough to trigger my pain for two weeks.

Unless you've experienced [chronic pain](#), it's difficult to grasp just how it casts a shadow across everyday life. I've struggled with pelvic pain since my teens, and to some extent have learned to live alongside it. The cause was found, in my mid-20s, to be [endometriosis](#), and the path to wellness has been a faltering, gruelling one.

For some chronic pain conditions, including endometriosis, there is no magic cure. In my case, an extensive surgery in 2020 greatly improved my quality of life. But "chronic" means it will probably always be with me, to a greater or lesser degree, which is hard to accept as a patient. Everything we learn about medicine from childhood is that pain or injury is acute and temporary. Something hurts and then it heals, and taking painkillers is part of that process. But now, [a new study](#) has found using drugs such as ibuprofen and steroids to relieve short-term health problems could increase the chances of developing chronic pain in the long term.

This new research joins a growing body of evidence that painkillers could be doing more harm than good. Recent years have seen an increasingly urgent effort among the medical community to manage pain in a different way, by prescribing less and relying on more holistic measures such as physiotherapy and mindfulness. In 2020, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (Nice) suggested that [patients with chronic primary pain](#) – where the cause for the underlying pain is unclear – should be offered “supervised group exercise programmes, some types of psychological therapy, or acupuncture”.

That's how I found myself in 2018 attending an NHS [pain management course](#). Every Monday for seven weeks, I went back to school alongside 10 other women in a bid to reframe our thinking about our conditions. We were a motley crew from all over the country: a 25-year-old nurse, a retired teacher, a fortysomething mother of two, all of us suffering from chronic pelvic pain in different but equally appalling ways. The common thread

between us was that we had exhausted all other options and most of us felt our doctors didn't really know what else to do with us.

We sat on hard plastic chairs in a bare clinic room illuminated with strip lighting, while healthcare professionals ran different sessions. A psychologist asked us how we feel in our bodies when we are in pain: do we feel anxiety in our stomach or in our chest? A physiotherapist got us to play with hula hoops and rackets and balls to show us that exercise can be fun! And we're more capable than we think! Even if that meant taking a slow and steady approach to activity. An anaesthetist explained that chronic pain isn't necessarily indicative of injury or illness but rather indicates nerves "misfiring", even if it feels very real indeed.

Our medication was also reviewed and fine tuned. And while there was no pressure to stop taking pain medication, emphasis was placed on broadening the scope of our coping strategies. Our progress was measured in questionnaires and an awkward test in which a physio counted how many times we could stand up and sit down on a chair in one minute.

The course was well meaning and, in many ways, radical. It offered the kind of joined-up care that so many suffering from chronic conditions are desperate for, and it was the first time anyone had considered how my pain was affecting my mental health, which it was, greatly. I don't know how my peers have fared since, but even with the best of intentions, after it ended I struggled to keep up with the relentless positivity towards my condition without the regular check-ins from a team of cheerleading experts.

At first, I felt as if I'd made an uneasy truce with my pain. It hadn't gone away, but we'd reached a common understanding. But as time passed I settled back into old thinking habits and, if anything, I felt where previously there was a fight in me to improve my pain by seeking answers, there was now a new apathy towards my prognosis. It would be foolish to underestimate the herculean effort it takes on the part of the patient to see their pain in a new light.

For me, success hinges on regular community support, something that seems idealistic when the [NHS backlog in secondary care](#) in England could take years to clear. It also naively ignores the socioeconomic circumstances that

impact a patient's ability to engage with the treatment. Attending this course would have been impossible for me if I didn't have an understanding employer who let me take sick leave on full pay, or if I had caring responsibilities at home.

Just under 28 million adults suffer with chronic pain in the UK, and the economic impact of pain is greater than almost all other health conditions, due to its far-reaching consequences. Behind these figures are hard lives and wasted potential. If the NHS is serious about tackling a growing dependence on opiates, then we must first address the dearth of funding that goes into pain research.

Studies about painkillers such as this latest one provoke a collective sigh from chronic-pain patients. It's important we evaluate the effect of current pain-management options, especially when they carry their own risks. However, as our population ages the need to know what does work becomes vital, made all the more complex by the fact that what works for one patient may not be effective for others.

Pain is as complex as the people whose lives it affects; our responses will have to be multifaceted too if they're to meet the challenge.

- Lucy Pasha-Robinson is a writer and commissioning editor
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Project Syndicate economistsBusiness

Beware a global economy with little fires everywhere

Mohamed El-Erian

Developed nations need to thwart the economic fallout from the Ukraine war from destroying the lives of the world's most vulnerable



Urban poverty in India is now over 25%, with 81m city dwellers living below the poverty line. Photograph: Pradeep Gaur/SOPA Images/REX/Shutterstock

Mon 16 May 2022 01.00 EDT

Big shocks to the global economy, such as Russia's invasion of [Ukraine](#), understandably capture the most attention. But a new worldwide pattern of "little fires everywhere" may be equally consequential for longer-term economic wellbeing. Over time, these small fires can coalesce into one that is just as threatening as the initial large fire that acted as the catalyst.

In addition to causing widespread death and destruction, and displacing millions of people, the Ukraine war continues to stoke [strong stagflationary winds](#) throughout the global economy. The resulting damage – whether in the form of higher food and energy prices or new supply-chain disruptions – cannot be easily or rapidly countered by domestic policy adjustments.

For most countries, the war's immediate economic consequences include higher inflation (which erodes purchasing power), lower growth, increased inequality, and greater financial instability. The multilateral system, meanwhile, now faces greater obstacles to the type of cross-border policy coordination needed to deal with pressing global problems such as climate change, pandemics, and life-threatening migration.

The challenges are particularly acute for fragile commodity importers in the developing world, especially when compared with the problems facing advanced economies. It is the difference between legitimate worries about the cost-of-living crisis in the UK, for example, and fear of famine in some African countries. The United States' higher trade and budget deficits appear considerably less problematic than potential defaults by heavily indebted low-income countries. And while the [recent decline in the yen's value](#) may be attention-grabbing in a Japanese context, a disorderly collapse of poorer countries' exchange rates could fuel widespread financial instability.

As [Michael Spence](#), the Nobel laureate economist and an expert on growth and development dynamics, pointed out to me recently, the probability of simultaneous growth, energy, food, and debt crises is worryingly high for too many developing countries. If that nightmare scenario materialises, the effects will be felt far beyond individual developing countries – and will extend well beyond economics and finance.

It is therefore in advanced economies' interest to help poorer countries reduce the mounting risk of little economic fires everywhere. Fortunately, there is a rich historical record, especially from the 1970s and 1980s, to draw on in this regard. Effective action today will require policymakers to refine proven solutions and support their sustained implementation with strong leadership, coordination, and perseverance.

For starters, a preemptive multilateral debt-restructuring and relief initiative is needed to provide essential space for overly indebted countries and overstretched creditors to achieve orderly outcomes on a case-by-case basis. A multilaterally-coordinated approach is also crucial in order to reduce the disruptive – and sometimes paralysing – risk of free riders, and to ensure fair burden-sharing among official creditors, as well as with private lenders.

Reinvigorating emergency commodity buffers and financing facilities is critical in order to reduce the risk of food riots and famines. Such measures can also play a useful role in countering some countries' understandable but shortsighted inclination to ban agricultural exports and/or engage in inefficient self-insurance through excessive stockpiling.

Finally, rich-country governments will need to provide more official development assistance to support individual countries' reform efforts. This aid should be extended under highly concessional terms through long-maturity, low-interest loans or outright grants.

Absent more rapid progress in these areas, the little-fires-everywhere phenomenon will damage global economic wellbeing by further weakening growth, increasing the risk of a recession, and fuelling additional financial instability. This would add to current migration challenges, impede efforts to tackle the climate crisis, and delay the worldwide vaccination drive that is key to living more safely with Covid-19. Moreover, all these problems would promote geopolitical instability at a time when the global system is already subject to growing fragmentation pressures.

The rich world has shown impressive unity in helping Ukraine counter the Russian invasion. It now needs to demonstrate the same level of resolve to protect the wellbeing of its own citizens and of the world in the face of mounting economic and financial challenges. Policymakers must aim to ensure that the many economic fires fuelled elsewhere by the Ukraine conflict do not end up causing a second devastating inferno that destroys the lives or livelihoods of many of the world's most vulnerable people.

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OpinionGardens

You can be a great gardener without lifting a finger! Just ask my friends on Twitter

Jenny Eclair

Hard graft? Research? Why bother with all that when you can just sit back and watch miracles rise from the earth?



‘Decades of being unable to procreate has manifested itself in the desire to produce flowers.’ Photograph: cjp/Getty Images/iStockphoto. Posed by model

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One of the side-effects of ageing is the urge to garden, which, unfortunately, tends to rear its head just when your knees have turned into agonising

swollen purple turnips.

For me, decades of being unable to procreate has manifested itself in the desire to produce flowers. Preferably, I'd like to do this without ever reading a single instruction, either in a manual or on the back of a packet of seeds. I don't want to do the homework; I just want to watch the miracles rise from the earth, thank you.

This spring, I had such raging success with a tub of tulips – blooms of such beauty! – I was quite tempted to transport them up and down the street in a pram. But, inevitably, the flowers blew themselves inside out and dropped their petals. Such is nature.

Rather than do some actual research, I turned to Twitter, asking: what should I do with my dead potted tulips? The answers came thick and fast and, in true Twitter style, the advice was split straight down the middle.

Half my garden gurus instructed the removal of the bulbs from the pot. These [bulbs](#) (not to be confused with corms or tubers) should be dried, then kept somewhere dry and dark, preferably in a brown paper bag, until repotting season in September. The other 50% suggested doing bugger all. “Just leave them!” they cried. “If they’re going to come back next year, they’ll come back next year.” Gardeners, it seems, fall into two camps: those who really enjoy grunt work, and those who would rather do absolutely nothing, leaving it entirely to fate.

Despite being very new to this game, I already know which group I fall into.

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2022.05.16 - Around the world

- 'Everything here is racist' Buffalo shooting neighbourhood ponders reasons for the violence
- Republicans Scrutiny of those who embrace 'great replacement theory' after Buffalo massacre
- 'It was by design' Black residents try to come to terms with horror of Buffalo shooting
- Joe Biden Racist killing of 10 people 'abhorrent to fabric of nation'

Buffalo shooting

‘Everything here is racist’: Buffalo shooting neighborhood ponders reasons for the violence

Some see attack’s roots in deep-rooted prejudice against Black community which still echoes through everyday life

Buffalo shooting: vigil held after ‘racially motivated’ massacre leaves 10 dead – video report

[Edward Helmore](#) in Buffalo

Mon 16 May 2022 04.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 17 May 2022 00.10 EDT

Under sunny blue skies and as a cool breeze blew off Lake Erie, the Buffalo East Side district of Kingsley was both transformed by a determined resilience from a day earlier, when 10 people were shot dead by an 18-year-old white supremacist, and still full of anger as people continued to mourn.

There was an outpouring of grief, coupled with fear, from residents gathered on one side of Tops Friendly, the grocery store where the killings happened, and which was now roped off as a crime scene. But on the other side those emotions were matched by prayer vigils, gospel songs and strength derived from faith.

Between the two, residents of the neighborhood came together as, for now, a community that was still only beginning to negotiate what had happened to it when the white gunman had so brutally attacked them.

Some saw the roots of the violence against the Black community in a profound mis-telling of history in America and a deep-rooted prejudice against it that was still echoing on through everyday existence. After all, one

analysis from the University of Michigan found the Buffalo-Niagara Falls metro region was America's [sixth most segregated](#). Meanwhile, a 2021 [University at Buffalo](#) report found measures of health, housing, income and education had improved little for Black residents in the city and in some cases had declined over the past three decades.

"We want *deep history* to be taught, for the truth be told, and all of this racism to stop," said jazz promoter Denise McMichael-Houston. Her cousin, Ellen Lucas, an educator in the city, said: "The problem is that they will not teach accurate history in schools. I have lived in this city 72 years and everything here is racist. We have this one supermarket."

I want people to see what really happens in our community

Tone Arrington

Lucas said that 24 hours after the assault, her mother was still vomiting at home from being so upset and unable to leave the house.

Asked how a tragic event like this – one of a series of racist mass killings in America in recent times – could be turned toward hope, Lucas said: "History taught correctly, tell history the way it happened. We were brought here as slaves, white people enslaved us because we are Black and nothing else. We need to know our contributions, and that would change how we look at ourselves.

"If I go in a restaurant, the first thing I have to do is make white people feel comfortable, grinning and smiling, and be who I'm not."

On this side of the supermarket, anger was palpable. On the other, where the religious and spiritual leaders had set up, less so.

Rev Rita Anderson-Bailey, who runs the counseling service Renovated Soul Marriage and Family Therapy, offered a parallel approach to the understandable rage. "There's a place for anger, and for peace and calm. When we don't have answers, we have to rely on faith to help us cope. That's been for generations," she said. "The anger part of it is when we start to hold our leaders accountable."

But others said they would simply prefer to leave the area. At a nearby Family Dollar, 18-year-old clerk Nonni Walker, a community college student, said she'd been due to work a shift but her intuition told her not to come. "There's so much crazy. So it's wait for the next crazy and pray that you're safe during it." For her generation, she said, the solution was "not to be anywhere near here".

And then there's the question of the supermarket, the only Black-run grocery of its kind in that Buffalo neighborhood. Without it, the neighborhood would again be deprived of groceries. Some said it should be turned into a memorial. Then there is the issue of gentrification, which has been nibbling at the edge of neighborhood with the displacement and disruption that the process involves.

"If you raise up the property values, you create fear for people who don't want to come back to their own community and they leave," said local activist Shango Oya. "What would improve the neighborhood is real economic redistribution and holding political power accountable for the money they're spending."

Hours earlier, [New York](#) state governor Kathy Hochul had visited the area and urged social media platforms to crack down on content concerning white supremacy. She said she found it inexcusable that the assailant's graphic live stream wasn't taken down "within a second".

The attack, said 27-year-old Tone Arrington, would forever teach her to speak up. "I personally will never sit back and hold my mouth shut. I want people to see what really happens in our world and our community."

Nearby, an eight-year-girl had just stilled onlookers by singing a complete gospel song.

"That shows you what she's being taught at home," Arrington said. "And then we have this 18-year-old coming in here and shooting all these people, and that goes to show what he was taught at home, and what he was taught to believe, and what his parents instilled in him. Hear what I'm saying? It doesn't add up."

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/may/16/everything-here-is-racist-buffalo-shooting-neighborhood-ponders-reasons-for-the-violence>

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Buffalo shooting

Scrutiny of Republicans who embrace 'great replacement theory' after Buffalo massacre

Extremist ideology has found favor with media figures like Tucker Carlson and also with elected politicians and others seeking office



The Republican congresswoman Elise Stefanik claims Democrats are operating an open-door immigration policy to 'replace' Republican voters with people of color. Photograph: Jim Watson/AFP/Getty Images

*[Richard Luscombe](#)
[@richlusc](#)*

Mon 16 May 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 17 May 2022 00.10 EDT

The massacre by a [white supremacist gunman](#) of Black shoppers at a Buffalo grocery store has drawn renewed scrutiny of Republican figures in the US

who have embraced the racist “great replacement theory” he is alleged to have used as justification for the murders.

Born from far-right nationalism, the extremist ideology expounding the view that immigration will ultimately destroy white values and western civilization has found favor not only with media figures, such as the conservative Fox News host Tucker Carlson, but a host of elected politicians and others seeking office.

Those who have convinced themselves Democrats are operating an open-door immigration policy to “replace” Republican voters with people of color and keep themselves in power permanently include Congresswoman Elise Stefanik, chair of her party’s House conference, and JD Vance, the Donald Trump-approved Republican nominee to represent Ohio in the US Senate.

After the [Buffalo shooting](#), the pair are among those receiving blowback for embracing the conspiracy theory that the killer referred to repeatedly in an online manifesto authorities believe he posted to justify the attack.

Citing “despicable” Facebook advertisements promoting great replacement theory [Stefanik utilized in 2021](#), in which she said “radical Democrats are planning their most aggressive move yet: a permanent election insurrection”, the Republican congressman Adam Kinzinger blasted his House colleague.

“Did you know: [@EliseStefanik](#) pushes white replacement theory? The #3 in the house GOP [@Liz_Cheney](#) got removed for demanding truth. [@GOPLeader](#) should be asked about this,” he said in a tweet, referring to Wyoming Republican Cheney’s [ousting](#) by the House minority leader, Kevin McCarthy, over her place on the 6 January panel.

Kinzinger, of Illinois, is the only other Republican on the House committee looking into Donald Trump’s efforts to overturn his election defeat to Joe Biden. He also attacked Stefanik this week for a tweet in which she [accused Democrats of being “pedo grifters”](#) – meaning pedophiles – for providing baby formula for immigrant babies at the southern border during a national shortage.



The Republican Senate candidate JD Vance is another vocal exponent of the discredited theory. Photograph: Joe Maiorana/AP

Meanwhile Vance, who credits the former president's endorsement for [helping him to victory](#) in last week's Ohio primary, is another vocal exponent of the discredited theory.

“You’re talking about a shift in the democratic makeup of this country that would mean we never win, meaning [Republicans](#) would never win a national election in this country ever again,” he claimed at a campaign event in Portsmouth last month.

Josh Mandel, who was defeated by Vance, went even further in an [interview on Breitbart](#) in October.

“This is about changing the face of America, figuratively and literally. They are trying to change our culture, change our demographics and change our electorate. This is all about power,” he said, without acknowledging that only US citizens can vote, and the path to citizenship can take legal immigrants many years.

In a study of the history of great replacement theory [in Republican circles](#), Vice notes that it “isn’t new to American politicians”. In 2017, the Iowa

congressman [Steve King](#), a fierce Trump loyalist, said in a tweet: “We can’t restore our civilization with somebody else’s babies.”

Arguably the biggest rightwing apologist for great replacement theory, however, is Carlson, the Fox News host.

On his show last year, [he stated](#): “Demographic change is the key to the Democratic party’s political ambitions. In order to win and maintain power, Democrats plan to change the population of the country.”

His “nefarious” stance, the Washington Post columnist Greg Sargent wrote: “exposes the ideological underbelly of the broader right-wing populist nationalist movement that he and his defenders champion”.

Buffalo was not the first time a mass shooter with white supremacist motivations had cited great replacement theory. It also featured in the manifesto of a gunman who [slaughtered 51 Muslims at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand](#), in March 2019.

After the Christchurch murders, the UK-based Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD), a counter-extremist organization, issued a report that found the once-obscure ideology was promoted so effectively by the far right that it became ingrained in political discourse, and that social media references doubled in four years to more than 1.5m Twitter mentions alone.

“It’s shocking to see the extent to which extreme-right concepts such as the great replacement theory and calls for ‘remigration’ have entered mainstream political discourse and are now referenced by politicians who head states and sit in parliaments,” Julia Ebner, the report’s co-author, said at the time.

The effect of the backlash against US politicians promoting the theory following the Buffalo attack remains to be seen. The pugilistic Stefanik, for example, was not backing down on Sunday, making no mention of the massacre in her home state as she retweeted criticism of Democrats over the baby formula shortage.

Her only social media comment to date, [a single tweet](#) on Saturday, failed to acknowledge the race of most of the victims, or the circumstances or motivation for the shooting.

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Buffalo shooting

‘It was by design’: Black residents try to come to terms with horror of shooting

‘Who pushed this into his head?’ a Buffalo resident asks, while another asks, ‘What made you drive all this way and hit this?’



People embrace outside the scene of a shooting at a supermarket, in Buffalo, New York, on Sunday. Photograph: Matt Rourke/AP

[Edward Helmore](#) in Buffalo

Sun 15 May 2022 11.47 EDT Last modified on Mon 16 May 2022 09.22 EDT

Vigils were held across Buffalo, [New York](#), for the victims of the Tops Friendly shooting on Sunday, as Black residents on the city’s East Side mourned and attempted to come to terms with the brief, brutal event that had been visited on the neighborhood hours earlier.

The square where the shooting took place, surrounded by vacant lots that residents said were the result of decades of segregation and systemic racism, is the community's center, with Tops Friendly functioning as the only grocery store for the immediate area.



Karen Davis-Butler: ‘You’re not born hating Black people.’ Photograph: The Guardian

In striking Tops Friendly, the shooter – an 18-year-old self-confessed white supremacist – was not just hitting at a supermarket, but also a place where locals gathered as a community.

“No weapons formed against me shall prosper,” said Karen Davis-Butler, a nurse and mother of three, who had tears streaming down her face. “It means that’s formed against us God is going to make sure it doesn’t hurt us. But we weren’t covered yesterday and the guy wasn’t covered. And I feel bad for him too.”

Despite the horrors wrought on the neighborhood by the 18-year-old white shooter, Davis-Butler said others were to blame too for filling him with hate.

“He’s only 18. Damn nearly grown. Where did he learn all of this stuff from? Who pushed this into his head? Where was his parents when he was looking at this stuff on the internet? This is like a gang thing with them, but

it's white supremacy and racism, and it's taught. You're not born hating Black people."

Davis-Butler said she was in Family Dollar next to the supermarket when the shooting began. "We saw everybody running, and they told us to stay in the store. It was crazy.

"This is where Juneteenth started, where our community used to thrive. We have a food desert here, and that's racism, too. If you go on the other side of the city you see grocery store after grocery store. The racism here is all day every day."



Maurice Burse: 'It was by design, he knew what he was doing and that's so sad. We've got sick people here.' Photograph: The Guardian

To Maurice Burse, another resident, the journey that the shooter allegedly made from his home in Conklin, near Binghamton 200 miles south, meant that he passed other upstate New York cities, like Rochester and Syracuse.

"It was by design, he knew what he was doing and that's so sad. We've got sick people here, and some people would like nothing more than to have a race war and they'll do anything to try to cause it. People really need to wake up," Burse said.

The neighborhood, Burse said, had begun to come back from the blight of previous decades. “But to get up in the morning and see all of this ... hmm, it’s bad,” he said waving to the encampments of police and media trucks that had suddenly sprouted in the strong May sun. “It’s bad enough what goes on in the area already.”

Twins Shameka and Tasheka Walker were standing on the corner of Riley and Jefferson, surveying the scene.

“He was telling them on live stream what he was going to do. But they probably took it as joke,” said Tasheka. But a joke it was not – the shooter had reportedly posted missives about the great replacement theory, the ideological underpinning of many racist mass shootings, including in Norway and New Zealand.

“They’re probably saying we’re having too many Black children but the community here is made up of all different races. The community here is like family, and Tops is always helpful, so how he had the audacity to come here and do this,” said Shameka. “What made you drive all this way and hit this. Why?”



Shameka and Tasheka Walker. ‘He was telling them on live stream what he was going to do. But they probably took it as joke,’ said Tasheka.

Photograph: The Guardian

An analysis from the University of Michigan, based on data from the 2010 census, found that the Buffalo-Niagara Falls metro area is the sixth most Black-White segregated in the nation. A University of Buffalo report in 2021 found that living conditions for Black residents in Buffalo had improved little and in some cases had declined over the preceding 30 years.

Local activist and chef Brandon Moses-Bonner, 26, said the problem is “everybody who is not addressing racism white supremacy” – an issue he believed had shaped his generation.

“These young guys get radicalized by the internet, by Q-Anon, by white supremacists, who seek out them because they feel like victims. Nobody wants to address the problem because they’re afraid of hurting their feelings because they think saying racism is bad is indoctrination. But it’s not – it’s basic human decency.”

Speaking to Face the Nation on Sunday morning, Buffalo’s mayor, Byron Brown, said the community had been experiencing fresh development and vowed that the awful event would not stop that happening.

“People have been hoping and waiting for investment and growth and opportunity. We are beginning to see that in this community, in all parts of the city, and we won’t let that progress stop. We won’t let hateful ideology stop the progress that we are seeing and experiencing in the city of Buffalo.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/may/15/buffalo-shooting-black-residents-react>

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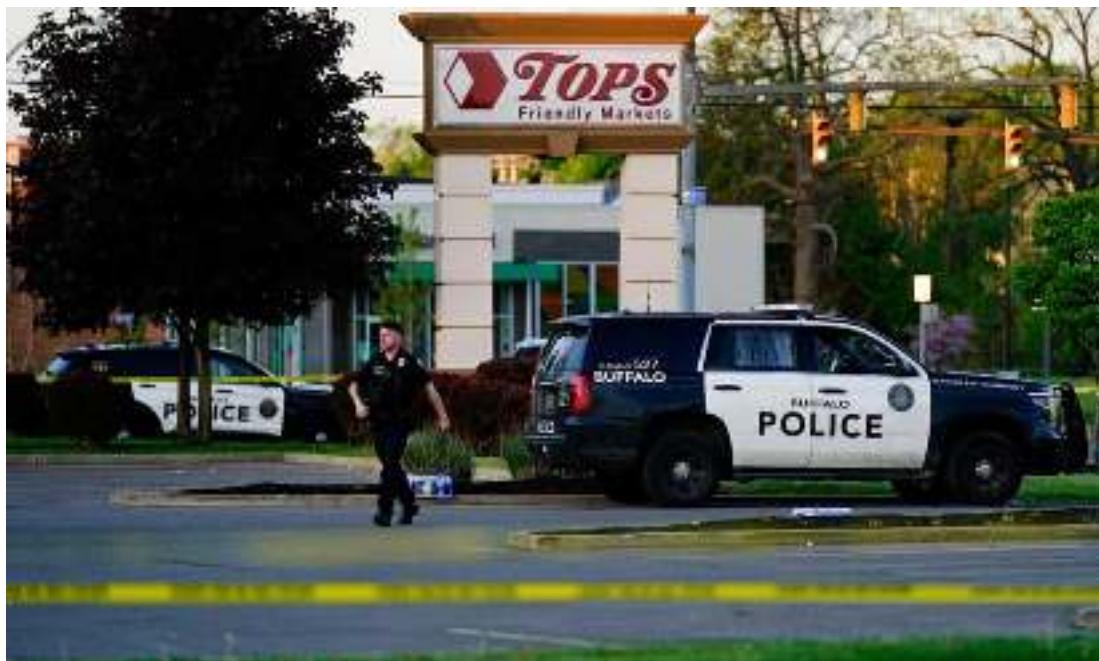
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[Buffalo shooting](#)

Buffalo shooting: Biden says racist killing of 10 people ‘abhorrent to fabric of nation’



A police officer walks near the scene of a shooting at a supermarket that left 10 people dead, in Buffalo, New York, on Sunday. Photograph: Matt Rourke/AP

Gunman shot 11 Black and two white victims at a supermarket that he broadcast on streaming platform Twitch before surrendering

[Edward Helmore](#) in Buffalo, and [Victoria Bekiempis](#)

Sun 15 May 2022 16.01 EDTFirst published on Sun 15 May 2022 08.33 EDT

US president [Joe Biden](#) said racially motivated hate crime was “abhorrent to the very fabric of this nation”, after a white 18-year-old wearing military gear and live-streaming with a helmet camera opened fire with a rifle at a supermarket in Buffalo, killing 10 people and wounding three others.

Police said the attacker shot 11 Black and two white victims before surrendering to authorities in an assault he broadcast on the streaming platform Twitch. Later, he appeared before a judge in a paper medical gown and was arraigned on a first-degree murder charge. He pleaded not guilty.

In a statement, Biden said: “We still need to learn more about the motivation for [the] shooting as law enforcement does its work, but we don’t need anything else to state a clear moral truth: A racially motivated hate crime is abhorrent to the very fabric of this nation.”

Biden added: “Any act of domestic terrorism, including an act perpetrated in the name of a repugnant white nationalist ideology, is antithetical to everything we stand for in America. Hate must have no safe harbor. We must do everything in our power to end hate-fueled domestic terrorism.”



People march to the scene of a shooting at a supermarket in Buffalo, on Sunday. Photograph: Matt Rourke/AP

Vice-President Kamala Harris said she was heartbroken by events. “What is clear is that we are seeing an epidemic of hate across our country that has been evidenced by acts of violence and intolerance. We must call it out and condemn it,” she said.

The suspected gunman in Saturday’s attack on Tops Friendly Market was identified as Payton Gendron, of Conklin, [New York](#), about 200 miles (320km) south-east of Buffalo.

It wasn’t immediately clear why Gendron had traveled to Buffalo and that particular grocery store. A clip apparently from his Twitch feed, posted on social media, showed Gendron arriving at the supermarket in his car.

The gunman shot four people outside the store, three fatally, said Buffalo police commissioner Joseph Gramaglia. Inside the store, security guard Aaron Salter, a retired Buffalo police officer, fired multiple shots. A bullet hit the gunman’s bulletproof armor but had no effect, Gramaglia said.

The gunman then killed the guard, the commissioner said, then stalked through the store shooting other victims.

Police entered the store and confronted the gunman in the vestibule. He put his rifle to his own neck, but two officers talked him into dropping the gun, Gramaglia said.

As Buffalo and the rest of the US began to mourn, details about the shooter and hours preceding the attack have started to emerge. The shooter had been under “medical” supervision for something he wrote in high school, authorities said. He arrived in Buffalo at least one day prior to the mass shooting, to conduct reconnaissance, police said.

Gramaglia said on This Week With George Stephanopoulos that the shooter “was in the Buffalo area at least the day before”.

“It seems that he had come here to scope out the area, to do a little reconnaissance work on the area before he carried out his just evil, sickening act.”



People gather outside of Tops market on Sunday in Buffalo, New York, after a gunman opened fire at the store, killing 10 people and wounding another three on Saturday. Photograph: Scott Olson/Getty Images

“This is the worst nightmare that any community can face, and we are hurting and we are seething right now,” Buffalo mayor Byron Brown said at the news conference.

“The depth of pain that families are feeling and that all of us are feeling right now cannot even be explained.”

Twitch said in a statement that it ended Gendron’s transmission “less than two minutes after the violence started”.

A law enforcement official told the Associated Press that investigators were looking into whether he had posted a manifesto online. Buffalo police declined to comment on the document, circulated widely online, that purports to outline the attacker’s racist, anti-immigrant and antisemitic beliefs, including a desire to drive all people not of European descent from the US. It said he drew inspiration the man who killed 51 people at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, in 2019 and also called for the killing of London mayor Sadiq Khan.

The video posted online also seemed to show a racial slur written on the weapon used.

During an interview on This Week, New York governor Kathy Hochul was asked: “Had he been on the radar of law enforcement at all?”

“Just as a high school student with respect to something he wrote in high school and was under the surveillance at the time with medical authorities,” Hochul said.

Brown told CNN that “from reports that I’ve been hearing and that he did surveil this community, was scouting the supermarket, actually talked to some people in the area”.

Hochul said authorities believe that he “targeted the busiest place at one of the busiest times”. CNN noted that this mirrored a line from the shooter’s seeming manifesto; the writer, claiming to be the shooter, allegedly wrote: “Zip code 14208 in Buffalo has the highest black percentage that is close enough to where I live.”

Federal agents were also interviewing the shooters’ parents and had served multiple search warrants. The parents were reportedly cooperating with investigators. It also emerged that he had last year threatened a shooting at

his high school and been sent for mental health treatment and an evaluation at hospital.



Children walk hand in hand near the scene of a shooting at a supermarket in Buffalo, New York, on Sunday. Photograph: Matt Rourke/AP

An official with knowledge of the investigation told CNN that the suspect made comments following his arrest that showed clear hatred against the Black community. “The alleged shooter made it known he was targeting the Black community during the statements,” the network paraphrased this official as saying.

“Tonight, the country mourns the victims of a senseless, horrific shooting in Buffalo, New York. The FBI and ATF are working closely with the Buffalo police department and federal, state, and local law enforcement partners,” US Attorney General Merrick B Garland [said](#) in a statement. “The justice department is investigating this matter as a hate crime and an act of racially-motivated violent extremism.”

Among the dead was Ruth Whitfield, the 86-year-old mother of a retired Buffalo fire commissioner.

“My mother was a mother to the motherless. She was a blessing to all of us,” former Fire Commissioner Garnell Whitfield told the Buffalo News.

Community members [gathered](#) outside the Tops on Sunday morning for a prayer vigil. “This was domestic terrorism, plain and simple,” New York’s attorney general, Letitia James, [said](#) at the True Bethel church in Buffalo. “He was fed, each and each day, a steady diet of hate,” James also [added](#).

At the same church service, Hochul reportedly said: “I will say one thing... Lord forgive the anger in my heart.”

Hochul said that the shooter’s gun, an AR-15, was purchased legally in the state. “The gun was purchased in a gun store in New York state legally, an AR-15. But what has made this so lethal, and so devastating for this community, was the high-capacity magazine that would have had to have been purchased elsewhere, that’s not legal in the state of New York,” Hochul [told CNN](#).

NAACP President Derrick Johnson issued a statement in which he called the Buffalo shooting “absolutely devastating”.

“Hate and racism have no place in America,” he said.

The Rev Al Sharpton called on the White House to convene a meeting with Black, Jewish and Asian leaders to demonstrate a federal commitment to combating hate crimes.

In 2019, another white man, Patrick Crusius, drove across Texas to kill Hispanic people at a Walmart in the border city of El Paso and carried out a gun attack that [left 23 people dead](#).

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/may/15/buffalo-shooting-supermarket-new-york-joe-biden>

Headlines

- [Live Liz Truss to announce plan to unilaterally abandon parts of Northern Ireland protocol](#)
- [Northern Ireland UK will not ‘shy away’ from unilateral protocol change, says Brandon Lewis](#)
- [Boris Johnson Plan to scrap parts of protocol only an ‘insurance policy’, says PM](#)
- [Brexit protocol row What are the issues dividing UK and EU?](#)

[Skip to key events](#)

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

EU to use ‘all measures at its disposal’ if UK abandons parts of Northern Ireland protocol – as it happened

This live blog is now closed. You can see our latest stories on the Northern Ireland protocol below:

- [EU says it will respond ‘with all measures at its disposal’ to bill](#)
- [PM says NI plan about getting rid of ‘relatively minor barriers to trade’](#)
- [What polling says on attitudes to the protocol in Northern Ireland](#)
- [DUP says it will respond with ‘graduated approach’ as bill progresses](#)
- [Miliband accuses Sunak of failing in his duty on cost of living](#)
- [Sunak says he should not just borrow and spend his way out of crisis](#)
- [Hague says PM’s junk food ban U-turn “morally reprehensible”](#)

Updated 5d ago

[Nadeem Badshah](#) (now) and [Andrew Sparrow](#) (earlier)

Tue 17 May 2022 13.16 EDTFirst published on Tue 17 May 2022 04.29 EDT

UK wants to fix Northern Ireland trade treaty, says Johnson – video

[Nadeem Badshah](#) (now) and [Andrew Sparrow](#) (earlier)

Tue 17 May 2022 13.16 EDTFirst published on Tue 17 May 2022 04.29 EDT

Key events

- [5d agoA summary of today's developments](#)

- [5d ago Sunak says government should not just borrow and spend its way out of cost of living crisis](#)
- [5d ago What polling says on attitudes to the protocol in Northern Ireland](#)
- [5d ago Miliband accuses Sunak of failing in his duty to people struggling with cost of living](#)
- [5d ago Irish PM criticises UK plan for new legislation to address legacy issues from killings during Troubles](#)
- [5d ago Johnson says NI protocol plan about getting rid of 'some relatively minor barriers to trade'](#)
- [5d ago EU says it will respond 'with all measures at its disposal' if UK goes ahead with plan to abandon parts of NI protocol](#)

Show key events only

Live feed

Show key events only

From 5d ago

[08.54](#)

EU says it will respond 'with all measures at its disposal' if UK goes ahead with plan to abandon parts of NI protocol

Maroš Šefčovič, the European Commission vice-president in charge of Brexit negotiations for the EU, has issued [a response](#) to the Truss statement. In it he stresses the EU's desire to reach a negotiated settlement with the UK on changes to the Northern Ireland protocol, and says “the potential of the flexibilities” proposed by the EU have “yet to be fully explored”.

(My colleague Lisa O’Carroll explains those “flexibilities” in more detail [here](#).)

But Šefčovič says the UK plan to ignore parts of the protocol “raises significant concerns”. If the UK goes ahead with this, Brussels will respond “with all measures at its disposal”, he says.

That could mean trade measures, including tariffs and other measures that involve shelving the post-Brexit free trade deal.

He says:

The announcement by the UK government, however, to table legislation that would disapply constitutive elements of the protocol, raises significant concerns. First, because the protocol is the solution agreed between the EU and the UK to address the challenges posed by the UK’s withdrawal from the EU for the island of Ireland, and to protect the hard-earned gains of the peace process. Second, because the protocol is an international agreement signed by the EU and the UK. Unilateral actions contradicting an international agreement are not acceptable. Third, because the withdrawal agreement and its protocol are the necessary foundation for the trade and cooperation agreement, which the EU and the UK have agreed upon to organise their overall relationship after the UK’s withdrawal.

Should the UK decide to move ahead with a bill disapplying constitutive elements of the protocol as announced today by the UK government, the EU will need to respond with all measures at its disposal. Our overarching objective is to find joint solutions within the framework of the protocol. That is the way to ensure legal certainty and predictability for people and businesses in Northern Ireland.

□□□ Statement by [@MarosSefcovic](#) following today's announcement by [@trussliz](#): <https://t.co/CDtwGpsreJ> pic.twitter.com/zCipKVm7CF

— Daniel Ferrie □□ (@DanielFerrie) [May 17, 2022](#)

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Updated at 09.03 EDT

[5d ago](#)[13.13](#)

A summary of today's developments

- Micheál Martin, Ireland's taoiseach, has criticised the UK government for introducing measures to deal with unsolved crimes committed during the Troubles without Dublin's support. Martin said any changes to the mechanisms agreed in the 2014 Stormont House agreement should be made in conjunction with the Irish government and the Stormont parties and involve "serious and credible engagement" with victims. He was speaking as the UK government announced plans introduce a form of statute of limitations for people involved in killings during the Troubles who cooperate with a Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery. The Stormont House agreement said unsolved crimes from the Troubles should be investigated by a historical investigations unit.
- Liz Truss has claimed the east-west relationship between Great Britain and [Northern Ireland](#) has been "undermined" by the Northern Ireland protocol as she confirmed plans to table legislation that would scrap parts of the agreement. The foreign secretary told MPs during her statement that 78% of people in Northern Ireland thought the protocol needed to change, according to a poll from December. Truss seems to have been referring to polling from Lord Ashcroft published in December. The figure 78% only appears once in that report in relation to the protocol, in a passage saying 78% of unionists thought the protocol had been a major cause of food shortages. The same poll found, amongst the Northern Ireland population as a whole, only 42% of people said the protocol should be scrapped (33%) or needed serious reform (9%).

- Maroš Šefčovič, the European Commission vice-president in charge of [Brexit](#) negotiations for the EU, issued a statement to the Truss government. In it he stresses the EU's desire to reach a negotiated settlement with the UK on changes to the Northern Ireland protocol, and says “the potential of the flexibilities” proposed by the EU have “yet to be fully explored”. But Šefčovič says the UK plan to ignore parts of the protocol “raises significant concerns”. If the UK goes ahead with this, Brussels will respond “with all measures at its disposal”, he added.
- Ed Miliband, the shadow secretary of state for climate change and net zero, accused [Rishi Sunak](#), the chancellor, of missing three chances to act on energy bills in the last seven months. The chancellor told MPs in the Queen’s speech debate that it would be a mistake for the government to try using unrestrained borrowing and spending to address the cost of living crisis. Sunak said that history showed that an “unconstrained fiscal stimulus” at such a time risked “making the problem worse”.
- Two by-elections in Wakefield and in Tiverton and Honiton will take place on 23 June with the [Conservatives](#) fighting to keep the seats from Labour and the Liberal Democrats. Both seats will be fought after the Tory MPs resigned following scandals. The former Wakefield MP Imran Ahmad Khan resigned after being found guilty of child sexual assault against a 15-year-old boy. In the Devon seat, Neil Parish resigned as MP after admitting watching pornography twice in the House of Commons chamber.

That’s it for today. Thanks for following along.

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Updated at 13.16 EDT

5d ago 12.55

Labour peer Lord Foulkes of Cumnock took aim at former chief Brexit negotiator and minister Lord Frost, who was sat on the backbenches in the upper chamber for the government statement on the [Northern Ireland Protocol](#).

He said: “We are just a wee bit fed up with those people who were responsible for it and got their peerages as a result of supporting that campaign get up now and criticise what they advocated.”

Having “pushed this on us”, Lord Foulkes said the Tory peer now “snipes from the sidelines”.

“We should blame those whose responsibility it really is,” he added.

Referring to the protocol, former Ulster Unionist leader Lord Empey said: “All of the consequences were foreseeable and indeed were foreseen.”

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5d ago 12.44

The Home Office intends to move 60 asylum seekers into a disused North Yorkshire RAF base by the end of the month, the local council has said. Hambleton District Council says it has asked the Government to pause the controversial proposal “immediately” amid opposition from residents in the village of Linton-on-Ouse. Ministers announced plans for the new accommodation and processing centre last month. The Home Office says the asylum reception centre will provide “safe and cost-effective” accommodation for single adult males who are claiming asylum in the UK and meet the relevant suitability criteria. A Home Office spokesperson said: “The asylum reception centre at Linton-on-Ouse will help end our reliance on expensive hotels which are costing the taxpayer almost 5 million a day. We are engaging with local stakeholders about the use of the site.

“The New Plan for Immigration will fix this broken asylum system, allowing us to support those in genuine need while preventing abuse of the system and deterring illegal entry to the UK.”

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[5d ago](#) [12.36](#)

Sunak says government should not just borrow and spend its way out of cost of living crisis



Andrew Sparrow

Rishi Sunak, the chancellor, told MPs in the Queen’s speech debate that it would be a mistake for the government to try using unrestrained borrowing and spending to address the cost of living crisis. He said that history showed that an “unconstrained fiscal stimulus” at such a time risked “making the problem worse”. He explained:

Prices pushed up still further, expectations of higher inflation becoming ingrained, a vicious cycle leading inexorably to even higher interests

and more pain for tens of millions of mortgage holders and small businesses.

Make no mistake, simply trying to borrow and spend our way out of this situation is the wrong approach and those paying the highest price would be the poorest in our society.

Instead, on this side of the house we're taking a careful, deliberate approach. We will act to cut costs for those people without making the situation worse, we will continue to back people who work hard - as we always have - and we will do more to support the most vulnerable.

Sunak also repeated his claim that “no option is off the table” in relation to a windfall tax. He said:

We are pragmatic and what we want to see are energy companies who have made extraordinary profits at a time of acutely elevated prices investing those profits back into British jobs, growth and energy security.

But as I have been clear, and as I have said repeatedly, if that doesn't happen soon and at significant scale then no option is off the table.

That is all from me for today. My colleague **Nadeem Badshah** is now taking over.

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[5d ago](#) [12.19](#)



Right to left: Boris Johnson, transport secretary Grant Shapps and London mayor Sadiq Khan on an Elizabeth line train at Paddington station today to mark the completion of London's Crossrail project. Photograph: Andrew Matthews/PA

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Updated at 12.34 EDT

[5d ago](#)[12.13](#)

What polling says on attitudes to the protocol in Northern Ireland

Liz Truss, the foreign secretary, told MPs during her statement that 78% of people in Northern Ireland thought the protocol needed to change, according to a poll from December. (See [1.17pm](#).)

Truss seems to have been referring to [polling from Lord Ashcroft](#) published in December. The figure 78% only appears once in that report in relation to

the protocol, in a passage saying 78% of unionists thought the protocol had been a major cause of food shortages.

The same poll found, amongst the [Northern Ireland](#) population as a whole, only 42% of people said the protocol should be scrapped (33%) or needed serious reform (9%).

More than half of people said either it was acceptable with some adjustments (36%), or that it did not need to change at all (21%).

Ashcroft's report said:

In our poll, one third (33%) of voters said they thought the protocol was wrong in principle and should be scrapped – including 83% of 2017 DUP voters and 66% of unionists as a whole. A further 9% – including 32% of UUP voters – said the protocol as it stands is too much of a burden and needs serious reform.

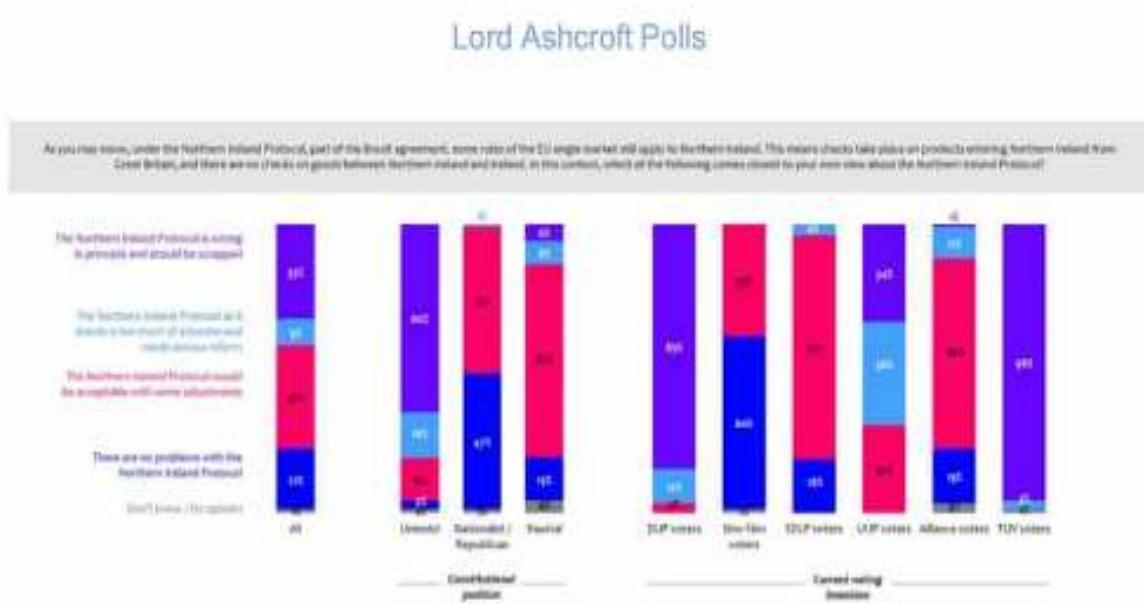
Another 36% of all voters – including 81% of 2017 SDLP voters, two thirds (67%) of Alliance voters and neutrals, and 26% of 2017 UUP voters – said they thought the protocol would be acceptable with some adjustments. Only 4% of 2017 DUP voters said this.

Just over one in five voters overall (21%) – including a majority (56%) of those who voted Sinn Féin in 2017 – said they thought there were no problems with the protocol.

Those currently leaning towards voting UUP at the next assembly elections were much more inclined to accept the protocol with some adjustments than those inclined to support the DUP and (especially) the TUV – 96% of the latter said they thought the protocol was wrong in principle and should be scrapped.

If you add 33% and 9% and 36%, you reach 78%, and so Truss may have been referencing this calculation - and not misremembering the figure used in the report that only applied to unionists. It would be fair to say that 78% of people, according to this polling, favoured some sort of changes to the protocol.

But Truss implied that the majority of people in Northern [Ireland](#) favoured change along the lines she is proposing. But the polling shows that, of those people who do want change (or did in December), almost half wanted more modest adjustments (which is in line with what the EU is offering).



Polling on NI protocol. Photograph: Lord Ashcroft Polling

I am grateful to bats2in2the2belfry in the comments below for flagging up these figures.

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Updated at 12.33 EDT

[5d ago](#)[11.13](#)

Miliband accuses Sunak of failing in his duty to people struggling with cost of living

Ed Miliband, the shadow secretary of state for climate change and net zero, accused [Rishi Sunak](#), the chancellor, of missing three chances to act on

energy bills in the last seven months. Speaking in the Queen's speech debate, he said:

The chancellor wants us to believe that his measures in response are the best we can do. But they are not. Not by a long shot. The cost-of-living crisis is driven most of all by what is happening to energy bills. Let's look at the three chances he has had in the last seven months to act on energy bills.

It was last August, last August, nine months ago, when the first energy price rise was announced. A £139 increase in the price cap. So, way back then he knew what was happening. And then in October, he delivered his budget. Wholesale energy prices were rocketing, the warning signals were flashing, but the chancellor did nothing.

In February another chance he had as the largest energy price rise in our history, 52%, was announced. He could have responded, commensurate with the crisis. He says he did, let's look at it. What was his grand offer to the country - a £150 council tax discount based on outdated property values, which misses out hundreds of thousands of the poorest families. And of course, his £200 buy now, pay later loan scheme. A loan scheme, which he reasonably claims isn't a loan, although it has to be paid back, and a scheme that doesn't even come in til October.

His recent spring statement was his most recent chance for the Chancellor to redeem himself. Days before the April energy price rise came into effect. It was apparent to everyone across this House and the country that what he had offered was woefully inadequate.

Miliband also said he and other MPs would have no idea how to manage on the sums available to benefit claimants. He explained:

The basic level of universal credit this year for a single person over 25 is £334 a month. [Sunak's] measures this April are so feeble that someone on that benefit will be expected to find as much as £50 more a month or more to simply cover the increase in their energy bills. That's leaving aside the soaring costs of food and other goods. It's about 15% of their income. So, what are they going to do? They won't be able to

afford to pay their bills. They will get deeply into debt and they will go without food. It's already happening to millions.

I met someone in the CAB [Citizens Advice Bureau] in my constituency on Friday in similar circumstances, and let me be honest, I would have no idea how I would cope in these circumstances. Would any member of this house? Maybe the chancellor can tell us what somebody in these circumstances is supposed to do?

And if you are the chancellor of the exchequer and you can't answer that question, it should tell you something. That you are failing in your duty to the people of this country who most need your help. And of course, what makes him even more culpable is that there is something that could help staring him right in the face, where the case has become unanswerable, where the government has run out of excuses, where oil and gas producers are making billions: a windfall tax.



Ed Miliband in the Commons this afternoon. Photograph: HoC

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Irish PM criticises UK plan for new legislation to address legacy issues from killings during Troubles

Micheál Martin, Ireland's taoiseach, has criticised the UK government for introducing measures to deal with unsolved crimes committed during the Troubles without Dublin's support.

As PA Media reports, Martin said any changes to the mechanisms agreed in the 2014 Stormont House agreement should be made in conjunction with the Irish government and the Stormont parties and involve “serious and credible engagement” with victims.

He was speaking as the UK government announced [plans introduce a form of statute of limitations](#) for people involved in killings during the Troubles who cooperate with a Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery

Speaking at a commemoration to mark the 48th anniversary of the 1974 Dublin and Monaghan bombings, which killed 33 people, Martin said:

It has been our consistent position that the basis for progress on legacy is the Stormont House agreement that was reached between the two governments and political parties back in 2014.

Any attempt to depart from that agreement would need to be discussed by both governments and with all of the parties in an inclusive process.

And there would need to be serious and credible engagement with victims and families.

The Stormont House agreement said unsolved crimes from the Troubles should be investigated by a historical investigations unit. But the British government has been under pressure to adopt a different approach after complaints about army veterans being prosecuted under this process over events that took place decades ago and over which they were cleared at the time.



Micheál Martin laying a wreath in Talbot Street, Dublin, during a ceremony marking the 48th anniversary of the Dublin and Monaghan bombings.
Photograph: Niall Carson/PA

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Updated at 11.30 EDT

[5d ago](#) [10.26](#)

These are from **Robert Peston**, ITV's political editor, on the [Liz Truss](#) statement.

The most important part of [@trussliz](#) statement today is that the UK is now categoric the NI Protocol has to be amended if it is to be acceptable. Imaginative interpretation of it is not sufficient, she said. By contrast [@MarosSefcovic](#) says the Protocol cannot...

— Robert Peston (@Peston) [May 17, 2022](#)

be changed - and he gave a clear signal that the EU would retaliate with a trade war if the UK government resorts to domestic legislation to dis-

apply parts of the protocol. This looks like a massive car crash in very slow motion.

— Robert Peston (@Peston) [May 17, 2022](#)

In a Twitter thread starting here, **Anton Spisak**, the [Brexit](#) expert at the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change thinktank, highlights aspects of the statement pointing to a similar conclusion.

A couple of thoughts on Liz Truss's statement on the N Ireland Protocol:

— Anton Spisak (@AntonSpisak) [May 17, 2022](#)

Here are two of his conclusions.

4. Truss says that the govt is "very clear" that the changes are "consistent with our obligations in international law".

However, unilateral action through domestic legislation is unambiguously at odds with Article 4 of the withdrawal treaty - the UK's international obligation. [pic.twitter.com/j9X1RTYJ3x](#)

— Anton Spisak (@AntonSpisak) [May 17, 2022](#)

7. Truss says that there is "a necessity to act" with primary legislation.

However, she doesn't say why the govt isn't using Article 16, which is an entirely legal (even if constrained) mechanism within the Protocol to address exceptional circumstances.

— Anton Spisak (@AntonSpisak) [May 17, 2022](#)

And the **Electoral Psychology Observatory**, an academic project, has posted a thread on Twitter arguing it could all end very badly. It starts here.

1/8 Warning - long thread. The UK Government's risk assessment on unilaterally breaching the NI Protocol is that the EU's answer will be somewhere between nothing and tariff retaliation. The truth of the matter is that this is a very optimistic assessment.
<https://t.co/XIteYr0kZs>

— Electoral Psychology Observatory (@EPO_lse) [May 17, 2022](#)

And here are its conclusions.

7/8 - major misreading. The UK has always favoured "tough" rhetoric hoping it would signal determination but wants to negotiate; conversely, the EU has always favoured a warm tone but stuck to its red lines without giving an inch. This hasn't changed.

— Electoral Psychology Observatory (@EPO_lse) [May 17, 2022](#)

8/8 The UK believes it knows what is good for the EU and can thus guess pragmatic reactions, but they consistently guess them wrong. Anyone who thinks the EU will sacrifice principles to pragmatism may be in for a nasty shock, and a nasty shock is not out of the question here.

— Electoral Psychology Observatory (@EPO_lse) [May 17, 2022](#)

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[5d ago](#) [10.11](#)

In the Commons **Ed Miliband**, the shadow secretary of state for climate change and net zero, and **Rishi Sunak**, the chancellor, have been speaking at the opening of today's Queen's speech debate.

As the Scotsman's Alexander Brown points out, **Miliband** ridiculed Sunak's response to the cost of living crisis.

Ed Miliband compares Rishi Sunak to crypto saying they both "came out of nowhere, the value surged, looked like the future... but it's all turned out to be one giant ponzi scheme" pic.twitter.com/4Laa2U7740

— Alexander Brown (@AlexofBrown) [May 17, 2022](#)

And **Sunak** said he would be "pragmatic" when deciding whether or not to implement a windfall tax, as the FT's George Parker points out.

Now [@RishiSunak](#) says he will be "pragmatic" on a windfall tax. Wants oil and gas companies to increase investment: "If that doesn't happen soon - and at a significant scale - then no option is off the table."

— George Parker (@GeorgeWParker) [May 17, 2022](#)

I will post extracts from both speeches soon.

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[5d ago](#)[10.02](#)



Lisa O'Carroll

The UK's announcement about the plan to change the [Northern Ireland](#) protocol is straining relations once again with Ireland. The Irish foreign secretary, **Simon Coveney**, said:

I deeply regret the decision of the British government to introduce legislation in the coming weeks that will unilaterally dis-apply elements of the protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland.

Coveney said such action was “damaging to trust and will serve only to make it more challenging to find solutions to the genuine concerns that people in Northern [Ireland](#) have about how the protocol is being implemented”.

Here is the Coveney statement in full.

Statement by Minister Coveney on Foreign Secretary Liz Truss's statement of intention to table legislation to dis-apply parts of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland [#Brexit](#) pic.twitter.com/r4xh3RgNXv

— Antonello Guerrera (@antoguerrera) [May 17, 2022](#)

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Updated at 10.04 EDT

[5d ago](#)[09.24](#)

This is from **Matthew O'Toole**, an SDLP member of the [Northern Ireland](#) assembly, on the line used by Boris Johnson yesterday, and Liz Truss today, about all parties in the Northern Ireland assembly wanting changes to the protocol.

Cynical line now being pushed by Johnson & Truss: 'all NI parties say Protocol not working'.

WRONG.

Our party believes the Protocol is delivering vital protections and benefits to the NI economy.

Yes, we want smoothest implementation possible.

But we'd much rather no Brexit.

— Matthew O'Toole (@MatthewOToole2) [May 17, 2022](#)

It is true that parties like the SDLP, the Alliance party and Sinn Féin think aspects of the protocol regime could be improved. But the EU itself has also accepted that implementation of the protocol should be reformed, and it has proposed changes. There is a significant difference between the Northern [Ireland](#) parties wanting adjustments in line with that the EU would accept, and the DUP, which wants changes that are unacceptable to the EU and that would be tantamount to the abolition of the protocol.

The UK government's position is much closer to the DUP's than to Sinn Féin's, the Alliance's or the SDLP's.

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Updated at 09.57 EDT

[5d ago09.12](#)

Back in the Commons, **Claire Hanna** from the SDLP says it is telling that Truss quoted opinion polling on the Northern Ireland protocol in Northern Ireland. (See [1.17pm.](#)) Truss should instead consider the recent election results, Hanna suggests, which showed a substantial majority of people backing parties that support the protocol.

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Updated at 09.19 EDT

[5d ago09.09](#)

Johnson says NI protocol plan about getting rid of 'some relatively minor barriers to trade'

Boris Johnson has said the UK's plans involve getting rid of "relatively minor barriers to trade". Speaking on his visit to Paddington station, he said:

We need to address the problems with the [Northern Ireland] protocol. What that actually involves is getting rid of some relatively minor barriers to trade.

I think there are good, common sense, pragmatic solutions. We need to work with our EU friends to achieve that.

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[5d ago09.06](#)

This is from **David McAllister**, the German MEP who chairs the European parliament's foreign affairs committee.

Unilateral action would only make our work on possible landing zones more difficult. The EU takes a unified stance: we want sustainable solutions in the framework of the Protocol. Renegotiations won't serve the purpose. The Protocol is part of the solution, it is not the problem.

— davidmcallister (@davidmcallister) [May 17, 2022](#)

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Updated at 09.18 EDT

[5d ago](#)[09.05](#)

Sir Robert Buckland, the former Tory justice secretary, told Truss earlier that wording contained in article 1 of the [Northern Ireland](#) protocol meant “surely” that the Good Friday agreement “takes primacy over the protocol”. He said:

Article 1 of the protocol makes it very clear that that agreement is to be without prejudice to the Good Friday/Belfast agreement regarding the constitutional status of Northern Ireland. That means, surely, that the Good Friday agreement takes primacy over the protocol.

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[5d ago](#)[09.01](#)

Caroline Lucas, the Green MP, asks Truss why she won't agree a veterinary agreement with the EU.

Truss says her plan would reduce bureaucracy generally.

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Northern Ireland

UK will not ‘shy away’ from unilateral protocol change, says Brandon Lewis

Northern Ireland secretary reiterates stance as Liz Truss prepares to tell MPs of plans to lift checks



Brandon Lewis arriving for talks at Hillsborough Castle in Northern Ireland on Monday. Photograph: Peter Nicholls/Reuters

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

Tue 17 May 2022 04.18 EDT Last modified on Tue 17 May 2022 05.06 EDT

The UK will not “shy away” from legislating to change the [Northern Ireland protocol](#) without agreement from the EU, the Northern Ireland secretary has said, as Liz Truss prepares to tell the Commons about plans to unilaterally lift checks.

The foreign secretary will tell MPs of plans to bring forward the draft legislation after a cabinet discussion on [Northern Ireland](#). However, the timetable for the draft laws has slipped, with the text now only promised before the summer break, according to Whitehall sources.

Brandon Lewis denied plans had been delayed after an alarmed response from Dublin and Washington, saying there had been no intention to put the full legislation before parliament this week.

“Something like that this week was never on the cards. We’re still debating the Queen’s speech and won’t finish debating the Queen’s speech and voting on that until later this week, later tomorrow, so in that sense it was never on the cards,” Lewis told Sky News.

“But what we have always said is that we will not take anything off the table. We will do what we need to do to ensure that products can move to Northern Ireland in the way that they should be able to move to Northern Ireland from Great Britain as part of the United Kingdom internal market, something the protocol itself says it will respect but at the moment is not working properly.

The plans to take unilateral action were causing a “wobble” in Westminster on Monday night after the DUP leader, Sir Jeffrey Donaldson, went further than before in a press interview and warned he would not go back into the Stormont executive until new laws were “enacted” .

Truss is expected to tell MPs of plans to legislate before the summer should renewed negotiations fail. Lewis said legislation remained the fallback option and the government hoped to return to talks.

“We would like to do that by agreement with the EU but we reserve the right to do what we need to do to do the right thing for the people of Northern Ireland and the wider United Kingdom,” he said.

Lewis said there were companies unable to operate under the current rules. “There are too many companies, including major supermarkets, at the moment who have no stores in the Republic of Ireland, who are moving their

products from their depots in Great Britain into Northern Ireland for sale and consumption in Northern Ireland, but going through checks as if they were going into the EU,” he said.

“That just doesn’t work and there are products that can’t travel that way.”

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He said there was an urgency to find a new solution because the EU proposals would increase the bureaucratic burden. The UK has already acted unilaterally to increase grace periods.

“What sometimes gets missed in this is that what the EU is proposing now is that some of the checks we’ve had grace periods for – we are at a standstill at the moment where we are not fully applying some of the checks the EU wants – they actually want to bring those in, so they want to make matters materially worse for the people of Northern Ireland, and that’s just not viable,” Lewis said.

Johnson said on a visit to Belfast that the UK did not want to scrap the Northern Ireland protocol, but believed it could be “fixed”.

He told broadcasters: “We don’t want to scrap it. But we think it can be fixed. And actually five of the five parties I talked to today also think it needs reform.”

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Northern Ireland

Plan to scrap parts of Northern Ireland protocol is only an ‘insurance policy’, says Boris Johnson

Plans for unilateral action caused a ‘wobble’ in Westminster after the DUP refused to return to Stormont until major changes were made to the protocol



Boris Johnson during a visit to Thales weapons manufacturer in Belfast.
Photograph: Liam Mcburney/AFP/Getty Images

[Rowena Mason](#), [Lisa O'Carroll](#) and [Rory Carroll](#)

Mon 16 May 2022 14.09 EDT Last modified on Tue 17 May 2022 00.13 EDT

Boris Johnson has said a legal move to ditch parts of the [Northern Ireland](#) protocol is only an “insurance” policy, as it emerged that the controversial legislation has been delayed for some weeks.

Liz Truss, the foreign secretary, is expected to give a combative statement on Tuesday threatening to bring forward the draft legislation, after a cabinet discussion on Northern Ireland.

However, the timetable for the draft laws has now slipped, with the text now only promised before the summer break, according to Whitehall sources.

The plans to take unilateral action was causing a “wobble” in Westminster on Monday night after the DUP leader Sir Jeffrey Donaldson went further than before in a press interview and warned he would not go back not go back into the Stormont executive until new laws was “enacted” .

“We’ve come all this way to get them back into the assembly; commit to legislation, risk a trade war and that’s not enough for the DUP.

There is now real concern as to whether this strategy will work at all,” said a senior source.

The prime minister came under sharp criticism from all sides on Monday when he flew into Belfast in an effort to revive the devolved government at Stormont, amid the continuing row over the protocol.

One of the major sticking points is the protocol aligning Northern Ireland’s trade with the EU rather than the rest of the UK, with the DUP refusing to return to power-sharing without major changes.

Quick Guide

What is the Northern Ireland protocol?

Show

Within the UK’s Brexit withdrawal agreement with the EU, the Northern Ireland protocol lays out arrangements that effectively keep Northern Ireland in the single market, drawing a customs border between it and the rest of the UK, with checks on goods passing from Great Britain to Northern Ireland.

That means there is no requirement for checks across the UK's land border with Ireland. The 1998 Northern Ireland peace deal requires keeping the land border open and that there be no new infrastructure such as cameras and border posts.

However, both the British government and the European Union recognise that the implementation of this deal has triggered the disruption of supply chains, increased costs and reduced choice for consumers in Northern Ireland.

The rules mean that goods such as milk and eggs have to be inspected when they arrive in Northern Ireland from mainland Britain, while some produce, such as chilled meats, cannot be imported at all. This is because the EU does not want to risk them entering the single market over the land border and then being transported on.

What is article 16?

Article 16 is an emergency brake in the Irish protocol, that allows either side to take unilateral action if the protocol is causing “serious economic, societal or environmental difficulties that are liable to persist”, or diversion of trade. Serious difficulties are not defined, giving both sides leeway for interpretation.

This would launch a process defined in the treaty as “consultations … with a view to finding a commonly acceptable solution”. Article 16 is meant to be a temporary timeout, not an escape hatch.

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.

During his visit, Johnson said he was committed to negotiations with the EU on the protocol but that he would not be dragging his heels on potential legislation if talks did not result in a solution.

He said: “We would love this to be done in a consensual way with our friends and partners, ironing out the problems, stopping some of these barriers east-west.

“But to get that done, to have the insurance, we need to proceed with a legislative solution as well.”

Johnson said the UK does not want to “scrap” the Northern Ireland protocol, but believes it can be “fixed”.

He told broadcasters during a trip to Belfast: “We don’t want to scrap it. But we think it can be fixed. And actually five of the five parties I talked to today also think it needs reform.”

No 10 has not appeared to be as keen as Truss on the option of legislation to undermine the protocol in recent days.

One diplomatic source said one of the prime minister’s top aides had been privately telling people that the government was very committed to negotiations and no decision had been taken on pressing ahead with the legislation.

Delegations from the five main political parties questioned Downing Street’s credibility and post-Brexit strategy after meeting Johnson in separate back-to-back talks at Hillsborough Castle in County Down. Several hundred protesters outside the castle set the mood by jeering the prime minister’s cavalcade and holding placards saying “Back off Boris!”

Downing Street had expressed hope of calming tensions heightened by the DUP blocking an assembly and executive at Stormont in protest at the Irish Sea border. Instead rhetoric escalated, with Sinn Féin, the Social Democratic and Labour party (SDLP) and Alliance accusing Johnson of not acting in the interests of Northern Ireland. Several delegations questioned the point of the visit.

Downing Street had signalled hope that a move towards potentially overriding parts of the protocol would encourage the DUP to make a swift return to Stormont but the party leader, Sir Jeffrey Donaldson, insisted only actions, not words, would revive the Good Friday agreement institutions. “The DUP has a mandate to see the protocol replaced with arrangements that restore our place within the UK internal market. Our mandate will be respected.”

The tone reinforced signals from DUP sources who said the party will need more than an announcement of legislation to override the protocol – it will need legislation to clear hurdles at Westminster and appear on track to become law.

While the DUP publicly doubted the value of Johnson's word, Sinn Féin accused him of complicity with the DUP in obstructing devolved government. "The British government is in a game of brinkmanship with the European institutions, indulging a section of political unionism which believes it can frustrate and hold society to ransom," said the party leader, Mary Lou McDonald, after meeting the prime minister. She said he gave "no straight answers" during a "very tough meeting".

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Most of the protesters outside Hillsborough were nationalists who demanded that Johnson protect the protocol. Others were campaigners for an Irish language act and for justice for relatives of people killed during the Troubles, two additional controversies confronting Downing Street.

Johnson put on a brave face after the meetings. "Everybody should be rolling up their sleeves and getting stuck into the government of Northern Ireland," he told reporters during a visit to Thales, an air defence manufacturer in east Belfast.

Naomi Long, leader of Alliance, the third biggest party, said most people and businesses in Northern Ireland favoured pragmatic solutions to the protocol. "Despite this, the foreign secretary will make a statement tomorrow to set the scene on unilaterally making changes to the protocol. That is not the way to business. Trust is the key ingredient and that involves keeping agreements, not breaking them. There is talk about safe landing zones on this matter. But as the pilot, [Boris Johnson](#) and the UK government is poised to crash the plane tomorrow."

Colum Eastwood, the MP and SDLP leader, said he had a "robust" meeting with the prime minister. "Boris Johnson's actions over the last two years and his words today is so great that it makes it impossible to trust the prime

minister. He has recklessly used this place to serve his own narrow political interests and once again he is on the verge of overriding the interests of the majority of people here for his own ends.”

Another UK source suggested that there was an “a priori” issue with the protocol as it needed to be re-opened for issues such as governance but this was not the same as scrapping it.

The UK’s proposal to soften the role of the European court of justice and make an EU-UK arbitration board the first port of call in disputes would require a section of the protocol to be re-opened with new wording approved by each.

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[Brexit](#)

Brexit protocol row: what are the issues dividing UK and EU?

British government is threatening to override Northern Ireland rules if bloc does not show ‘requisite flexibility’



Customs and border officials watch as lorries disembark at Larne, Northern Ireland. Photograph: Charles McQuillan/Getty Images

Lisa O'Carroll Brexit correspondent

[@lisaocarroll](#)

Mon 16 May 2022 10.10 EDT Last modified on Tue 17 May 2022 00.09 EDT

The UK is saying it will have to take unilateral action to override part of the Northern Ireland Brexit protocol [unless the EU shows the “requisite flexibility”](#). The EU has said it believes a deal can be done but only through negotiation.

So what are the differences between the two sides and is the latest row more about politics than substance?

What is the status of the negotiations?

Talks between officials have been ongoing since March 2021 when David Frost took the unilateral decision to [extend the grace period](#) for checks on goods including supermarket food. They came close to collapse [in June](#) and again in November when Lord Frost repeatedly threatened to invoke article 16 and walk away from the negotiating table.

He quit in December with the baton handed to Liz Truss, and talks continued with optimism that a new and less combative approach by the foreign secretary would yield results after an initial “constructive” meeting at Chevening, the foreign secretary’s grace and favour home.

Wasn’t there hope of a deal after Frost’s departure?

Yes, the UK took a new approach [in December](#), conceding a phased deal was more practical separating trade barrier issues from the trickier problem of the role of the European court of justice (ECJ). It envisaged an interim deal easing checks on the Irish Sea in March, before the pre-election period in Northern Ireland kicked in.

But Russia invaded Ukraine and talks, other than exchanges between civil servants, went into cold storage.

They were about to restart but are now mired in a row over unilateral action. As one source said: “It’s like the UK has turned back the clock.”

What does the UK want?

Last week Truss published a list of demands:

- Removal of checks on British sausages and other chilled meats. She also cited barriers to the supply of “Thai green curry ready meals, New Zealand lamb and Brazilian pork”.
- Removal of customs declarations for parcel post, which would mean the restoration of online shopping for some of the big high street chains that have stopped delivering to Northern Ireland.
- Removal of veterinary certificates for pets travelling from Northern Ireland to the rest of the UK.
- Ability to control the VAT rate in Northern Ireland. Truss complained that the protocol means some VAT cuts, including the relief on energy bills, which apply in the rest of the UK cannot be applied in Northern Ireland because of the protocol.
- Removal of the European court of justice as the arbiter in disputes.
- A green lane and red lane at ports to distinguish between goods destined for Northern Ireland and those travelling onward into the Republic of Ireland and the single market.

What is the EU proposing?

Last October the EU unveiled four papers covering what it described as “far-reaching” proposals to address the UK’s concerns.

- It offered to do away with the sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) checks on chilled meats with a new “national identity” exemption for British sausages and other goods destined for Northern Irish supermarkets. It offered a “bespoke solution” it claimed would get rid of 80% of the SPS checks on food. In exchange the UK would have to complete the construction of border controls and ensure a new “for Northern Ireland” labelling system.
- It offered to reduce customs declarations by 50%.
- It offered an “express lane” out of ports for goods destined for Northern Ireland only.
- It offered an “enhanced” role for Stormont, business and civic stakeholders in the implementation of the protocol including attendance at meetings of specialised committees charged with overseeing the operation of the protocol.
- An uninterrupted supply of medicines was offered.

Have any of these issues been agreed already?

Yes. In December the EU announced changes, agreed with member states, allowing medicines, including new cancer treatments, to be authorised under national UK procedures. In June it announced changes to the protocol to ensure live animals for breeding would be able to move freely from GB to NI.

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What are the chances of a deal? Is there a landing zone for both sides?

Sausages and chilled meats

Chances appear strong for a deal on some SPS checks, ending controls on British sausages and chilled meats.

There is little chance of a deal on composite foods such as the “Thai green curry ready meals” that do not meet the rules of origin standard that require mostly EU sources ingredients. And meat from outside the EU will be considered a disease control risk. However, as the UK has long agreed the island of Ireland is one epidemiological unit, the latter demand may be dropped in a compromise scenario.

Wider SPS checks

Compromise is needed here. The EU has said if the UK agreed to alignment on EU rules on animal and plant products, the checks could be eliminated. However, London had in the past ruled this “Swiss style” agreement out as it would mean the UK having to follow EU rules. It has also said it would pose a barrier to future trade deals where the UK may want to deviate on pesticide and antibiotic or hormone standards. The EU has even suggested a temporary deal, reviewable if a big trade deal emerged.

Green and red lanes

A deal here is highly likely, with the UK seeking green and red lanes at ports and the EU offering “express” lanes.

Customs declarations and parcels

The EU has offered to slash paperwork by 50% but there appears to be a disagreement on what that looks like, making a deal less likely. Before quitting, Frost said it was misleading as it was merely a reduction in 50% of the boxes on customs forms.

Governance and the ECJ

The EU will not budge on the role of the ECJ. However, the UK softened its position in December that the court should be eliminated from dispute resolution entirely. Instead it believes an arbitration proposal in the wider withdrawal agreement – which allows disputes to be settled in the political arena in the first instance – could work in the Northern Ireland context. There is room for manoeuvre here.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/may/16/brexit-protocol-row-what-issues-dividing-uk-eu-northern-ireland>

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- How to eat healthily Number crunching: why ultra-processed foods have a calorie problem
- 'Like seeing your house burn down' Kasabian on sacking their frontman

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Hot desking, tea rounds and surviving meetings IRL: the new rules of the office



Is it time to relax the office dress code? Illustration: Vincent Kilbride/The Guardian

Many of us have forgotten how it feels to be sharing a space with colleagues – and hybrid working has only added to the problems. Here's how to

navigate your post-pandemic workplace



[Nell Frizzell](#)

Tue 17 May 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 17 May 2022 06.11 EDT

After two years of lockdowns, offices are almost unrecognisable. In many of them, staff are returning under a hybrid model, working from home a few days a week and coming in for the others. Some organisations slashed their floor space during the pandemic, making what is left feel distinctly cramped, while others have removed desks, and look a lot like departure lounges. A lot of us are hot-desking for the first time in our working lives, without a desk, chair, computer or pot plant to call our own.

And people have changed, too. Much to the disgust of Jacob Rees-Mogg and Boris Johnson, after two years of WFH we have got used to wearing jogging pants, talking to our pets, cooking our own lunches, picking children up from school and doing mid-morning naked yoga while also getting our work done. So, as the commuter trains start to fill once more and the mug cupboard gets its first proper action since early 2020, what are the rules of this new office life?

How do I survive all these meetings? At least when I was Zooming I could pretend the wifi had gone down.

“When it comes to meetings, we should be having less of them,” argues Cary Cooper, professor of organisational psychology and health at the Alliance Manchester Business School, and co-author of *Remote Workplace Culture*. “If you have them, have them quick and have them late. Instead of having it at 9 o’clock where it can go on until 12, have it at 11.30, because everyone gets hungry at 12.30. Three-hour meetings are useless. Reach your goddamn decision and don’t have game-playing.”

You can also set an alarm on your phone to go off 10 minutes into one of those scheduled informal “chats” that can fill the soul with dread. Once your phone starts vibrating, you can claim it’s an urgent call to do something – anything – else.

And if someone corners you when you’re trying to wrap up for the day? “If someone was hovering around my desk, I’d just explain that I want to go home and see my kids,” says Cooper. “But I’d add that I’ll give them a call and talk properly another time.”

Everyone in my office stinks – perfume, gym, feet, cigarette smoke, aftershave, fruity vape clouds, breath. How do I cope? Should I tell them? Might they not realise?

The onion armpits, the stagnant gym bag, the Hoover-bag breath: it is sort of amazing anyone ever sleeps with their colleagues. “If you’re in a position of responsibility and they are in your team and it was becoming a problem for business – say they were stinking out meeting rooms or clients were saying something – then I think it would be worth saying something, as long as they are your junior,” suggests etiquette expert Jo Bryant. “I don’t think you can start telling your boss they smell – it’s not going to go well.”

But how exactly do you tell a colleague that they hum? “I think it would be worth saying: ‘Somebody noticed a smell the other day in a meeting, so I’m just asking everybody to double-check that jackets and shirts are clean.’” In other words, make it vague and make it anonymous. “Explain that you’re just doing a team-wide thing – everybody’s checking, because something has been said; you can’t say by who.””

And if it's your boss? My primary schoolteacher mum always swore by a dab of tiger balm under your nostrils, Olbas oil on your collar or mentholated chewing gum to block out the stench of other people's bodies. Or maybe you should invest in a really heavy-duty face mask.



'Telling your boss they smell is not going to go well.' Illustration: Vincent Kilbride/The Guardian

The office chair is killing my back. Can I ask for a better one? And how do I stop colleagues from fiddling with the levers while I'm away?

Alison Green, author of [Ask a Manager](#), points out that you are well within your rights to ask for a better chair if the current one is causing you physical discomfort. "Frame it in terms of ergonomics, and ask for an ergonomic assessment, if that's a thing your workplace does. As for stopping colleagues from messing with it, that can be a losing battle. You can always try asking them to stop – but if they need to use that chair when you're not in, they need it to fit them just as much as you need it to fit you. The real problem may be that your office needs more chairs."

I miss my spouse, children, dogs etc. Is it OK to Zoom them from the office?

Modern etiquette, explains Bryant, is all about causing the least amount of friction. “Before the pandemic, we would have gone to a breakout area, waited until lunchtime or gone out of the building for a few minutes to make a phone call; exactly the same rules should apply to video calls. The exception to that rule might be if it was late in the evening, the office was quiet, you were having to work late and you want to say goodnight to the children. But in normal, busy office hours, it should be avoided.”

That's no fun. Is it at least OK to walk around the office while I'm on the phone? I want to hit my 10,000 steps.

“If you see people just walking around – as if they’re in their sitting room or walking down the street – that’s disturbing for other people,” Bryant says. “If you were that busy, you wouldn’t be wandering around. It’s the ‘busy’ people who are always doing miles around the office, calling it multitasking and telling everyone how busy they are. There’s no need to draw attention to yourself in that way.”

If your office has hot-desking, how do you reserve your favourite seat (by the spider plant, with the view of the train line, out of view of the colleague who harrumphs whenever you open a packet of crisps) without getting in at 7am?

“We’ve seen firms try to do hot-desking before, and one of the ways people tried to retain a little bit of ownership was almost like a dog cocking their leg – they’d keep it disgusting,” says Bruce Daisley, author of [The Joy of Work](#), presenter of the Eat Sleep Work Repeat podcast and former vice-president of Twitter in Europe. “I think that’s a classic performative bit of status. A low-status person definitely wouldn’t dare to leave their space looking dishevelled.”

Unless your workplace has a formal booking-in system then you have to accept that you’re not going to get your favourite desk, mouse, or chair, says Bryant. “If you’re hybrid working, in a team situation where you know you’re doing two or three days and know who you’re sharing your desk with, I think you could leave your notebook or pen neatly on the desk. But nobody wants to sit down in front of pictures of your children or novelty pencil sharpener. If you’re hot-desk sharing or hybrid sharing with someone

senior to you, then clean out every time. Also, don't leave anything around that could be personal or data-sensitive – be sensible about it.”

Is my “professional tracksuit” going to cut it at work? It is black and it does have a waistband – but it also has quite a lot of elastic and some fairly indelible porridge marks.

“A shirt or a suit makes some people feel more comfortable,” says Cooper. “Personally, I haven’t worn a suit for a year and a half and in that time I’ve written five books.” Cooper points towards the fact that the old model of hard shoes and shaved faces didn’t seem to make us more productive. “If we were so efficient pre-Covid, in the formal environment we had, why was productivity per capita bottom of the G7 and 17th out of the G20? I’d say our environments weren’t relaxed enough. If you’re customer-facing and you think your customers or clients want you to be formal, that’s one thing. But I think we need to lighten up.”

What do I do if someone on a nearby desk starts coughing? Is it rude to move seats? Should I offer them a sweet? A lateral flow test? A mask?

“I think I’d ignore it to start with,” advises Bryant. “If it didn’t go away, I’d ask if they were feeling OK, hint, hint. If it carried on, at the end of the day I might say: ‘Do you think you ought to stay at home tomorrow because it’s horrible for you to have to be in such a dry, air-conditioned environment with your cough.’” Put it as a concern for their comfort, rather than your own, and highlight the fact that, hopefully, many of us are now more able to work from home. As for sniffing, my personal advice would be to follow the lead of my old classmate during our GCSE exams and wear earplugs.

Is it ever appropriate to microwave fish in an office kitchen?

My first ever office – in Leeds – had a working kitchen with a hob in the basement and I thought nothing of cooking a full stir-fry down there during my lunch break. I even grated the carrots. Another colleague ate tinned mackerel at her desk. “To some extent, we forgot that being in an office meant the occasional smell of someone microwaving fish,” Daisley points out. “Or the challenge of dealing with the person next to you chewing gum all day. The mini-frustrations or hell that other people represent. We’re just

coming to terms with it again.” You could always, if really tortured, put an Out of Order sign on the microwave, turn it off at the plug and go back to your joyless cold sandwich feeling smug.



‘If really tortured by lunchtime smells, put an Out of Order sign on the microwave.’ Illustration: Vincent Kilbride/The Guardian

Can I ask someone who’s off sick to join our Zoom call? It’s not going to kill them, surely?

“If they’re off work because they’re sick, it’s an absolute no,” says Bryant. “If they’re off work because they’re doing something like childcare, or waiting in for a plumber, then I think the pandemic has opened up the concept that we can log in from anywhere and do our jobs more remotely than we thought. If people aren’t incapacitated themselves, and are able to join the call from home, then I think that’s fine. As long as you’re not encroaching on some private emergency or crisis. There are boundaries.”

What do I do if I need to burp, fart, scratch, yawn or sneeze during a meeting? I can’t turn off my mic and camera any more?

Bodies are such chaotic, animal things. Even when they are dressed up in a navy polyester blazer and put in a swivel chair. “We all need to relearn the techniques we used to use to handle these moments, before going remote,”

Green advises. “Sneezing is generally recognised as uncontrollable; it’s going to happen. But if you have to burp, fart, or scratch yourself somewhere indelicate, ideally you’d briefly excuse yourself from the meeting. Yawning is trickier. It can be just as uncontrollable as sneezing but can give the impression that you’re bored or disengaged. Drinking water can help but if you really can’t hold it in, try to be discreet about it. You want it to be as subtle and as far away as possible from a loud, back-stretching yawn.”

I don't wear a mask in the office but one of my colleagues does. Should I mask up when I approach them for a chat? If there's a group of us in a small room, should we all put masks on?

There are no longer any real rules about this, which means each organisation must create its own guidelines and each member of staff is responsible for how they act. But what are the medical implications?

“It very much depends on whether you work with anybody vulnerable, who might be at higher risk,” says Dr Sarah Jarvis, GP and clinical director of [Patient.info](#). “If it’s a relatively young, relatively healthy, all-vaccinated group of people and there are 10 of you, the chances of anybody being infected at any one time is probably one in five or so, which means there’s an 80% chance you’d be wearing face masks all day for ‘no reason’. Saying that, if you work with people who are older, more vulnerable and particularly if they have suppressed immune systems for any reason, then the risks are not remotely insignificant.” You can usually spot if someone in your office is older but whether someone has an underlying health condition can be impossible to judge. “I don’t think it’s fair to put the onus on that person to talk to everyone in the team,” Jarvis continues, “so perhaps have a chat with your line manager.” That is, after all, what bosses are for.

As for the type of mask you wear, Sarah’s answer is wry but pertinent: “It does need to have at least two layers. But frankly, a fairly cheap, two-layer cloth mask is a great deal more effective if worn over your nose and mouth than the best FFP mask in the world when it’s only worn beneath your chin.”

How do I tell my manager that I want to keep working flexitime? They don't have kids and only have a 15-minute commute, so I just don't

think they understand.

Ideally, you'd point to how well it has been working already, Green suggests. "Explain that it's been a major boon to your quality of life not to have to spend as much time commuting, and talk about what you've done to ensure it hasn't affected your work. If you haven't already been doing it and thus don't have that data to point to, another approach is to ask to do it as a limited-time experiment, such as for six weeks, and then revisit it after that so that your boss has a chance to see that it works."

Are tea rounds still allowed or do we all have to do the lonely caffeine walk to the kettle solo, now?

I once worked with a woman who remembered whose mug was whose by lining them up along the counter from who she thought was most leftwing to most rightwing, while she boiled the kettle. You could, alternatively, reduce the chances of cross-infection by asking for a washing-up sponge and some detergent. "The tea round was a wonderful, very gentle assertion of these mini bonds of connection between us," says Daisley, sounding wistful. "In the past few years we've got our work done tactically, and we've maybe detached ourselves from some of the office idiots, but one thing we've definitely done less in the past two years is laughed. The late chief rabbi Jonathan Sacks talked about 'simcha'. It's a Hebrew word that translates as joy, but it's also a participle of 'we'. Every time we have meaningful moments, they become part of who we are, they have simcha running through them. In a very small, British way, the tea round had that simcha to it."

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[Margaret Beckett](#)

Interview

‘I saw two Tory whips having tequila for breakfast’: Margaret Beckett on Blair, the Iraq war and half a century in politics

[Zoe Williams](#)



Margaret Beckett, at her office in Portcullis House: ‘Everybody in the world believed Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction.’ Photograph: Alicia Canter/The Guardian

She is Britain’s longest-serving female MP. As she approaches retirement, she remembers the thrill of Westminster in the 70s, the successes and failures of the Blair years, and nominating Corbyn for the Labour leadership



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Margaret Beckett’s office – a calm and ordered room off an ancient courtyard – must be some of the most prime real estate in the Palace of Westminster. We meet there and the division bell rings constantly. Even when she doesn’t have to dash off to vote, she stops talking immediately, because she knows I won’t be able to hear her when I play back the recording. It gives her a hypervigilant air, like a spy at a cocktail party, pretending to small-talk.

Periodically, she does have to leave to vote. There is typically a mic drop as she exits the room, for example: “I think [Brexiters] thought the EU would entrench social democracy and they’re agin it. Because they believe in them not paying any taxes at all and us not having any services.” Whenever she

returns, she has a piece of fun gossip. While we are talking, Vladimir Putin announces sanctions against 200 named British MPs. I ask what that means in practical terms and she says: “No idea, but everyone not on the list is terribly upset. Chris Bryant [the [Labour](#) MP for Rhondda] is fuming!”

She has just announced her intention to retire from parliament at the next election, after a career so long that sometimes even she is surprised. It tells in her manner that this is her last parliament. She is as astonished at Conservative callousness as she has ever been – and she lived through 1983, Margaret Thatcher’s bloodbath year, “when they cut every single benefit; maternity grant to death grant and everything in between. Partway through, they guillotined the bill because they needed to put another whole section in to cut widows’ benefits.” But in conversation, and hearing her later that week on the radio, she has total ease and authority. “Can I come back to you on that?” she said to Chris Mason on Any Questions. “I’m in the middle of a rant.” There is a woman, I thought, who has done her duty.



Beckett (then Margaret Jackson) before her swearing-in ceremony as a newly elected MP, October 1974. Photograph: Wesley/Getty Images

Beckett was Britain’s first female foreign secretary (Tony Blair appointed her in 2006) and is the longest-serving female MP, although Harriet Harman

has the longest continuous service. Beckett lost her seat in the Tory landslide of 1979, but before that – it is astonishing to think of it now – had been a minister, having been appointed less than a year after being elected in Harold Wilson’s snap vote at the end of 1974. It was a thrilling time to be in Westminster: “Desperately exciting. We never had a majority.” Wilson had, in fact, “scraped” a majority of three seats, after the February election had delivered a hung parliament (the first since 1929: think of the coalition government of 2010, then give the Lib Dems some spine, and you have an idea of the chaos).

Post-October, any given vote could be scuppered by one (and a half) rebel Labour MPs. “Every vote, you were watching to see who would win. There was a point when we won a vote by four. Ann Taylor [now Baroness Taylor] said to me: ‘Walter [Harrison, the deputy chief whip] would have called that overkill.’ We both fell about, because it was perfectly true. If you didn’t need four votes, you only went for two, because you’d save the others for another time.”

Whatever you think of Westminster now, nothing could match the late 70s for sheer delinquency. “We used to be here till 11.30 every night. There was one occasion when in the house it was still Tuesday, because we’d been sitting since Tuesday. In the real world, it was Thursday. I remember once being on the terrace, in 1977, and seeing two Tory whips come out for an early breakfast, about four or five in the morning. And they each had a glass of red wine and a glass of tequila on their breakfast tray.”

Wilson’s government has, of course, gone into the collective imagination as a disaster, possibly even the origin of the increasingly ridiculous cliche that Labour can’t manage the nation’s finances. Ted Heath had presided over a relatively prosperous Britain until the oil price shock of late 1973, whereupon the economy started to cascade. “Prices quadrupled; they even quintupled in places,” she says. This didn’t instantly multiply all other prices, but it did cause unemployment and dizzying inflation rises, from single digits under Heath to 24% by 1975; Labour, having won, “got the blame for all the fallout”. Has she no anxiety that we might be about to replay that very scenario? “No,” she says. “Don’t get me wrong. I’ll be very happy if Labour wins the next election.”



On her way to Labour's party conference in 1981. Photograph: Paul Fievez/Daily Mail/Shutterstock

Apart from four years as a journalist at Granada TV, Beckett has been representing a constituency since 1974, first Lincoln, then, after 1983, Derby South. Yet calling her a “career politician”, even though it is true, gives the impression of a silver-spooned insider, which is not the case. Her father, a carpenter, died when she was 12, leaving the family – her and two sisters, one who became a doctor, the other a nun – in poverty, despite her mother working as a teacher.

Beckett, nee Jackson, and her (doctor) sister tried to get involved in the local Labour party, but it was tough even finding out where the meetings were. She will not refer or even allude to sexism in the party in the 70s, or indeed ever: it is not important why the local party never returned the sisters’ calls; all that matters is that eventually they bust their way in and Beckett quickly established herself in the party’s research unit. “I said: ‘Surely you only want Oxbridge economists? I’m a metallurgist from Manchester.’ They said: ‘Well, as a matter of fact, our head of department is a metallurgist from Birmingham.’”

The final heave to becoming an MP came when she met Leo Beckett at the Labour party’s conference. He was an engineer by trade, after having served

in the RAF, but his passion was behind-the-scenes manoeuvring in the Labour party, which was putting together a shortlist for the Lincoln constituency and needed “either a woman or a trade unionist”. He was nearly 20 years older than her, which might help you to understand why such a forceful person might accept such a life-changing suggestion so lightly. ‘He said: ‘Why don’t you go for it? It would be good experience. But just so you know, you won’t win this time. And just warning you, when it comes to the next time, I want to be the candidate.’”

That was February 1974 – and she duly lost. What Leo didn’t know was that the next election would be nine months later, after a mad period of inflation and other crises, and that she would win.

They married in 1979. Leo never stood for parliament and instead ran her office for almost all of her career. Last year, “out of the blue – and this sounds like a silly thing to say about somebody who was 95 – he got an infection, then he got pneumonia and he died”. She has an absolute fear of self-pity.

Beckett was elected again in 1983. She says politics in opposition wasn’t as bad back then: she still got things done. She refers to an amendment she got away – a safety measure for child agricultural workers. Thanks to Beckett, there are probably 50-year-olds walking around today with two arms because they didn’t lose one in a thresher. While it is not a thing she would make a huge song and dance about, she has a precise and detailed mind – and she hasn’t forgotten it, either.



With Gordon Brown and John Smith in 1993. Photograph: Tim Rooke/Shutterstock

It was as John Smith's deputy, between 1992 and 1994, that she was most dominant in the party. "He thought the leader's job was to have the vision. But there was a whole lot of stuff that the leader always did that he didn't think the leader needed to do. And I did all of that. When I ceased to be the deputy leader, my jobs were distributed among five people." That sounds like quite a bit of, ahem, emotional labour, I float. She flashes me a look and doesn't need to say: "Don't be ridiculous," out loud.

The death of John Smith, in May 1994, and its impact on Labour and the UK, has passed into lore. He was as popular as anyone could remember a Labour leader being, an almost unimaginable figure of unity in the post-Kinnock years. His health had been an issue since his first heart attack in 1988, but privately. No one expected this deft, persuasive, confident, whip-smart 55-year-old to have a medical emergency, let alone a fatal one. It has spawned so many counterfactuals and alternative timelines (what would 21st-century British politics have looked like without Blair as PM?) that the human tragedy of it is often lost. "It had a huge effect on the whole of politics. The Scottish Tories adjourned their conference," Beckett says. She led the party for a short time, guiding it to victory in the European elections

in 1994 with the largest vote-share Labour had received for more than 20 years. “I don’t take credit for that. That was a sympathy vote.”

She stood against Blair as leader, which annoyed him (“They wanted a coronation”), simultaneously standing against John Prescott for deputy, a job she didn’t want (“Tony already had two best friends, Peter Mandelson and Gordon Brown. I would never have had any influence or relationship”). It is all a bit mysterious: why stand for either, let alone both? “I allowed my name to go forward, because I thought the party has got to have what it wants.” She is a Labour loyalist from a different era, before that was code for “expel your opponent”, back when it meant, above all, duty and, second, flexibility. A lot of her decisions don’t make sense unless you remember that.



With Brown and Tony Blair in April 1997. Photograph: Tom Stoddart Archive/Getty Images

She takes a huge amount of pride in 1997. “We were good. We were a strong team. Person for person, and as a team, we were better than they were. And we knew it.” She does have regrets about the Blair years, complex ones around the creation of a social atmosphere. “We did a lot of good things for people who are poor. But we shied away from making the case. If you stand for the poor, people might think that’s a good thing, but they don’t think

they're included, including the people who are poor. They don't think that means them. And they don't want it to be them."

They never took on the stigma of poverty, which allowed George Osborne to weaponise it later. "He was evilly clever about making people dislike people on benefits." And there were more material weaknesses – voices in cabinet wanted to build more council houses to replace Thatcher's sell-off, but there was "a fear of sounding old-fashioned and not relevant to the times. So we'd only talk about social housing." She stands by the war in Iraq. "What everybody's forgotten is that, at the time, everybody in the world believed Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction."

That plainly wasn't so: there were people in the cabinet who didn't believe it, such as Robin Cook (then the leader of the house) and Clare Short (international development secretary). "Robin and Clare had their own reasons for leaving," she says. "And Robin never said to cabinet: 'If we don't get a second resolution, I will feel I have to resign.' It might have had an effect on people. But he didn't say it til afterwards." (Beckett is referring to the second UN security council resolution, which was withdrawn before going before a vote. The lack of a second resolution means most legal scholars, as well as keepers of the international order right up to Kofi Annan, see the war in Iraq as illegal, a breach of the UN Charter.)

After the star of the war, which she accepts "went sour", she became foreign secretary in 2006 and pulled off something spectacular – or at least it would have been, and we would be glad of it now, had it realised its ambition. She made the UK the first nuclear power to commit to multilateral disarmament. "It was a sensation. I gather that's how Global Zero got off the ground." (Global Zero was an attempt to get all nuclear powers to pledge "no first use", which would have obviated nuclear arsenals before their 100th anniversary.) When she left the job, "I absolutely expected that David [Miliband] would pick up the baton [of nuclear disarmament] and run with it, and I would never get an ounce of credit for having had anything to do with it. But David didn't do anything about it."



With her husband, Leo, at a diplomatic corps dinner while foreign secretary, 2007. Photograph: Andrew Parsons/PA

The younger reader may have experienced their first Beckett controversy when she called herself “a moron” for nominating Jeremy Corbyn in the 2015 leadership election. It was a bit more complicated than that. A grandee had called the Corbyn-nominators “morons”. “I happened to be doing an interview the next morning, when this was quoted, so I said: ‘Full disclosure – I was one of them.’ The message was: ‘You called yourself a moron.’ But his argument was that the debate had to include austerity. I agreed with that very strongly. I also immediately said: ‘Oh, but don’t vote for him.’”

Beckett voted for Andy Burnham that time around, and is very supportive of Keir Starmer, defending even his war against the left of the party, of which she would once have considered herself a member. “I think the total figure is something like 80 people have been expelled. People talk as though there are hundreds or thousands.”

Beckett made the decision to retire with Leo. “I came to the conclusion that I could do another parliament, but he probably ought not to.” When he died, he was the only person she had discussed it with. “I thought, well, I suppose I could pick up the pieces and carry on. But the constituency ought to have a young, enthusiastic candidate who’s going to be asking lots of questions.”

The party, right or wrong, comes first. You hear so many politicians say that, much more forcefully than Beckett would, but you rarely see anyone live it.

This article was amended on 19 May 2022 to correct the spelling of Clare Short's first name.

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Number crunching: why ultra-processed foods have a calorie problem



Production line ... a biscuit factory. Photograph: Monty Rakusen/Getty Images/Image Source

How we process a calorie depends on genetics, hormones and the food it's in. The trouble is that 50% of our calories come from ultra-processed foods

– everything from biscuits to hummus



[Rebecca Seal](#)

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A calorie is a calorie, right? Fixed and unchanging, like a gram, or a mile? Well ... no, not necessarily. You see, what a straightforward calorie count on a restaurant menu or food packet can't tell you is how your individual body will use those calories. This comes down to multiple factors including genetics, sex, age, hormones, gut microbes, sleep patterns, the time of day we are eating, how active or sedentary we are, our body fat and muscle mass, and – crucially – what sort of food the calorie is in. Our bodies are much better at absorbing the energy from a calorie of low-fibre, processed food (like a potato chip) than they are at taking in calories from whole foods, like an apple.

Calories are a measure of the heat (energy) given off when a food is completely burned away in a pressurised bomb calorimeter. “But we don’t eat calories. We eat food,” says Dr Giles Yeo, an obesity researcher at Cambridge University and author of [Why Calories Don’t Count](#). That energy is used differently by different bodies.

“On average, in high-income countries, we get 50% of our calories from ultra-processed foods (UPFs),” says Yeo. There is no legally binding or agreed upon definition of UPFs, and according to [a 2019 review article](#) in the journal Current Developments in Nutrition, definitions used since 2012 vary hugely. For some food scientists, they are foods which are mainly made from additives of various types; for others, they are foods containing few or no wholefood ingredients, made with ingredients consumers can’t usually buy in shops (such as stabilisers), which are also often fortified and which take the place of freshly made meals or snacks. For still others, they are industrial formulations with five or more ingredients; or foods containing additives designed to mimic unprocessed foods or disguise any undesirable qualities in the finished product. Things can get very confusing: according to one definition, a tin of beans in tomato sauce is ultra-processed, but the same beans, canned in water, are merely moderately or minimally processed.

But they aren’t just fried chicken, crisps and ready meals: croissants, hummus, pesto, biscuits, breadsticks, gnocchi, cereal bars, ice-cream, fish fingers and curry paste are all UPFs. And in some UPFs, their original ingredients – whether they’re being processed to be longlife, cheap or just conveniently moreish – become a blank (or bland) canvas for what’s added after. “Ultra-processing strips out flavour in food – just because of the way it’s done – and flavour comes from the holy trinity of sugar, salt, and fat, which you have to add back in,” says Yeo. “So, on average, they are high in sugar, salt and fat, and low in protein and fibre, which makes the food very much more calorically available: you get a lot more out of a calorie in an ultra-processed food.”

The energy from 100 calories in a high-fibre food like chickpeas won’t behave in the same way in the body as 100 calories in a low-fibre food, such as an iced bun. The energy from the chickpeas will take longer to be digested, be slower to reach our bloodstream – and, unlike the energy from the ultra-processed iced bun, is far less likely to cause an unwelcome rush of glucose and insulin or be stored as fat.

Rather than overall calorie content of foods, the more useful thing to know would be the caloric availability of a food to our individual bodies. But you can’t easily turn that into [a neat number on a label or restaurant menu](#).



Choices ... calorie counts on food labels don't tell the full story. Photograph: Kathy deWitt/Alamy

Those neat numbers come from work by Wilbur Olin Atwater, a chemist born in 1844 in New York. His painstaking, years-long analysis involved vaporising a huge number of foods in ruthlessly efficient bomb calorimeters, which unwittingly resulted in our modern calorie-counting obsession. He calculated that fat gave us nine calories per gram, and carbohydrate and protein four calories each per gram. Once you know how much fat, carbohydrate and protein are in a food, using Atwater's data, you can figure out how many calories it contains – which is exactly what most food manufacturers – and [now many restaurant chefs](#) – have to do. It's maths, not lab work.

It's alluringly simple, but Atwater's methods weren't foolproof, and he probably never intended his data to be used as it is today. "Atwater rounded everything up and took averages – so errors were baked in," says Yeo. Atwater also lived in a very different food environment and based his averages on diets which were more likely to feature mutton than avocados, and lard rather than olive oil – and, crucially, diets in which UPFs didn't feature. "Which is where the margin of error begins." Atwater also misunderstood how many calories a body can gain from protein – for every 100 calories in protein, we can actually only take in 70. "Protein calories are

30% wrong everywhere,” says Yeo, because every time the Atwater data is used the error is repeated. “Carb calories are about 10% wrong for anything with fibre, and 5% wrong for white flour or sugar. Fat is the only one for which the Atwater factors are still accurate. [Food manufacturers] also don’t empirically determine how much protein is in something. It’s estimated. So on top of the baked-in errors, there’s that additional error, too.”

A [2021 meta-analysis](#) suggested that diets higher in UPFs weren’t just higher in calories (a diet made up of 75% UPFs contains around 200 more calories per day on average than a diet with 15% UPFs) but, more importantly, were also higher in sugar and lower in fibre and most other micronutrients. “The problem [with UPFs] is we eat too much of them rather than them being dangerous, per se,” says Yeo.

Does this mean calorie counts are pointless? Not entirely. Clare Thornton-Wood is registered dietitian and spokesperson for the British Dietetic Association. “In clinical practice, we use calorie calculators to work out how much somebody needs if you’ve got someone in ICU and you’re feeding them on a fluid feed,” she says. “We use calories as a starting point. You might say that the average man needs 2,500 calories and the average woman needs 2,000 – but who is this average man or woman?”

“The calculation for how many calories you should be eating a day depends on a billion different things,” says Yeo. Is there any way to work out what any one person needs? “We could, but that would mean sticking you in a chamber calorimeter.” Unfortunately, these are rare, very expensive and mean living in a sealed room for three days, with scientists measuring your every breath, movement, consumption and excretion.

Where calories are useless is they don’t tell you about the health of the item

There is some data from the Medical Research Council Epidemiology Unit in Cambridge that suggests showing calorie counts in places like coffee shops may reduce the calorie content of purchases [by about 8%](#). “But is that the goal?” asks Yeo. “Are we trying to get people to eat 8% less of everything? You can have a really unhealthy diet, but eat less of everything.

Or should we be trying to get people to eat less unhealthy stuff and more healthy stuff? That is where calories are useless. Because calories don't tell you about the health of the item.”

There are, for example, 678 calories in a Pret a Manger [hummus salad](#), 684 in three [Mars bars](#), and 708 in a portion of a Sainsbury's [fish and chips](#) ready meal. These very similar numbers don't tell us that the salad provides a third of our recommended daily fibre and half our daily fat; that the fish and chips contain almost [half our daily salt but also half our daily protein](#); or that the chocolate bars would bust our sugar allowance. By only looking at calories – as on restaurant menus – we lose other, much more helpful information.

“Thinking in calories trains us to view more caloric meals as bad and low-calorie meals as good,” says Virginia Sole-Smith, an anti fat-phobia campaigner, author of The Eating Instinct and Substack anti-diet newsletter [Burnt Toast](#). It reinforces the misunderstanding that food choices are moral choices. “There are so many reasons why a high-calorie meal can be the right choice for someone. Maybe you skipped breakfast and lunch is your first chance to put food in your body. Maybe you’re getting ready to do a long run. Maybe you’re out to dinner with friends, an experience that offers tremendous mental health benefits. Choosing the low-calorie salad in any of those scenarios won’t necessarily serve you. But we’re conditioned to believe it’s always the right choice.”



Reformulation tax idea ... Henry Dimbleby led the National Food Strategy.
Photograph: David Hartley/Rex/Shutterstock

[Henry Dimbleby](#) led the National Food Strategy, an independent review for the UK government. He thinks a more powerful policy than calorie labelling would be a reformulation tax, dealing with the least healthy of our ultra-processed foods. “We have to make it less attractive for companies to sell the stuff that makes us sick. It’s very politically difficult when you have a cost of living crisis, but I’m convinced it will happen – it’s either that or the NHS falls over.”

If you can make a plant-based burger bleed, I think you can add a bit more fibre to a chocolate bar

Yeo is sanguine about the chances of us giving up or even cutting down on UPFs, but would like manufacturers to reformulate them, with more fibre added. “If you can make a plant-based burger bleed, I think you can add a bit more fibre into a chocolate bar,” he says. “We need to work with the people who are making the food. Whenever I say this out loud, the ‘Real Food’ brigade pop up: I am not trying to compare a chocolate bar – however much protein or fibre is in it – to a banana. Clearly, a banana is a banana, but sometimes, I want a treat. If you feel the need for a chocolate bar, or a

lasagne, or a burger, rather than a banana, could there be a slightly healthier version of that burger or chocolate bar or frozen lasagne that you could buy?”

He would like to see healthier food subsidised, too – not just carrots, but healthier processed foods as well. “At the moment, the cheapest choice is typically the most unhealthy choice.”

This article was amended on 17 May 2022 to correctly refer to sex, rather than gender, in the list of factors that can affect how a person’s body will process calories.

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Interview

Kasabian on sacking their frontman: ‘It was like seeing your house burn down’

[Niall Doherty](#)



‘We couldn’t end the story like that’ ... from left, Ian Matthews, Chris Edwards, Serge Pizzorno and Tim Carter; their new album is called *The Alchemist’s Euphoria*. Photograph: Neil Bedford

The band are back – with their first record since sacking Tom Meighan for assaulting his fiancee. Serge Pizzorno talks about that ‘heartbreaking’ decision – and why he finally decided to step up as singer

Tue 17 May 2022 01.00 EDT

In the summer of 2020, a few weeks after firing their frontman Tom Meighan for assaulting his then-fiancee Vikki Ager, the two remaining founder members of [Kasabian](#) met up and asked themselves: “What now?” Radio stations had stopped playing their music. All the success of the past 17 years – during which the Leicester group became one of Britain’s biggest bands, with five No 1 albums, plus a debut that went three-times platinum – felt suddenly tainted. Winding things up seemed the next logical step, given they were now without their bolshie ringleader singer, whose ability to whip up a crowd had been crucial to their ascent. But Serge Pizzorno, Kasabian’s songwriter and leader, didn’t see it that way. “We can’t end the story like this,” he thought.

It’s a cold spring morning and, on a sleepy lane on the outskirts of Leicester, the gates to Pizzorno’s house creak open. He emerges from his front door, tall, wiry and smiling, much more gently mannered than the belligerent anthems he’s become famous for might suggest. Pizzorno, now 41, leads me down the side of his house, along the garden, past his kids’ climbing frames and through a gap in the hedge, where a jet-black two-storey building awaits. A Japanese-style lightbox sign sticking out from the side tells us where we are: The Sergery, Pizzorno’s home studio. “I love Japan so much,” he enthuses, pointing up at the sign. “There’s a mega bit in Tokyo called Omotesando. I wanted a sign that would look like it’s from a street there. Those little details are so important to me.”

Who in their right mind would sack a frontman if there wasn’t cause?

This is where Kasabian recorded the bulk of their excellent new album, *The Alchemist’s Euphoria*, their first record since sacking Meighan, with Pizzorno stepping up to become the quartet’s vocalist and frontman. It plays

up the adventurousness that has defined the band's music away from their big indie-rock anthems, where Pizzorno's love of hip-hop, electro, psychedelic off-roading and Italian film soundtracks comes to the fore.

Some songs burn with the urgency of a band desperate to map out a new future but there's also a feeling of loss: even the heaviest moments contain diversions into minor-chord majesty, as on the sweeping mini-prog epic TUVE, and the spiked grooves of recent single Scriptvre. Pizzorno's vocals sometimes resemble Meighan's aggro delivery when the music is full pelt, but in the more mellow moments his soft croon is starkly different.



Community service ... Tom Meighan leaves Leicester magistrates' court in July 2020. Photograph: Jacob King/PA

Pizzorno never wanted to be a frontman: initially, the band wondered if they should get a new singer. The more Pizzorno thought about it, though, the more he became convinced he was the man for the job. "I know these songs," he says, taking a seat by the mixing desk. "They're ingrained in my soul. I know exactly where I was when I wrote every word. It would be difficult for me to convey that to someone new."

After Meighan's exit, getting back into the studio was therapy for Pizzorno. "We were all set up to play stadiums and make another record," he says. "I

had these amazing pieces of music, so I came in here and started to write for fun.” He says he is still coming to terms with the events surrounding the departure of Meighan, who was sentenced to community service three months after the assault.

Domestic abuse charities criticised the 200-hour order as insufficient, given it was revealed in court that Meighan had repeatedly struck Ager, held her by the throat and dragged her by the ankles. The couple have since married.

“The summer when Tom left was absolutely heartbreakin,” Pizzorno says. “It felt like leaving home and coming back and seeing it burnt down, walking round the ashes, seeing old pictures and artefacts and picking things up and sifting through the destruction. It was an intense time.” He pauses then continues: “Over the years, we’ve dealt with a lot. When it all came out, you’d see things being said and written that were hard to take because you’ve lived it – you know the true story.”

A highlight of the new record is a seething Prodigy-style banger called Rocket Fuel, which addresses the flak Pizzorno feels has come his way from fans aggrieved the group didn’t give Meighan a second chance. “It always amazes me how strong people’s opinions are when they don’t know anything about the actual truth,” he says. “There’s way more to it. Who in their right mind would sack a frontman if there wasn’t cause?”

He goes on: “Over the years, there have been some tough moments. I don’t want to go into them because I feel like that’s the band’s business.”

After apologising Meighan announced he was suffering from alcohol addiction, and had been diagnosed with ADHD. “With Tom, all we ever tried was love and support. There were times when we needed professional help – that was all taken care of. But when we were finally made aware of the incident, he’d crossed the line at that point.” The most hurtful thing you could level at him or the band, Pizzorno says, is that they weren’t there for Meighan, or didn’t try everything they could over the years. He chews over a question about whether he misses the singer, eventually saying: “I miss who Tom used to be.”

A few days later, speaking by phone, bass-player Chris Edwards adds: “I think part of Tom wanted to go solo but he didn’t have the heart to tell us. A couple of weeks after the incident, Tom said he was going to go solo and the band had split up. As soon as we heard this, me and Serge sat down and said, ‘Do you want to keep doing this?’ It’s all we know, so if we can do it and the fans still want it, let’s go for it.”



‘I miss who Tom used to be’ ... the band perform in Austin, Texas, in 2005.
Photograph: Getty Images

Meighan has since launched his solo career with a UK tour and is currently preparing his debut record. “All we ever wanted was for him to be happy,” says Pizzorno, who hasn’t spoken to Meighan since their post-trial meeting. “So if he’s happy doing that, then great.” Edwards hasn’t talked to him for over a year either but says he still cares for him. “The last time we spoke, I said, ‘Mate, if you need help, if you fall off the wagon, if you have problems with anything at home, you can come and stay at mine.’ That’s how we left it – with a hug and we said we loved each other. There’s no malice in the separation. It’s heartbreaking but it’s happened.”

There were some people in the band’s wider circle who questioned their decision to carry on. “They didn’t think I could do it,” says Pizzorno. “And they’re maybe the people I don’t speak to so much any more.” He felt

vindicated when rehearsals began for the group's first post-Meighan tour towards the end of 2021, a feeling heightened by finally going out on stage: "The weight of standing there, front and centre – I was in this incredible state."

Way back at the beginning of lockdown, before all of this, Pizzorno took the time to look back over everything the band had achieved. "That's the first time I'd ever stopped in my life," he says. "I got a chance to sit in a deckchair and go, 'What the fuck was that about?'" He thought about their wild early days and the time they stayed up all night worrying before their first Glastonbury gig, because they didn't think anyone would turn up. "It was full – 20,000 people," he laughs. From that moment on, they believed they could be huge. "We were the perfect cocktail. The mid-90s had a massive impact on our attitude towards success and being in a band. I started with dance music. But once Britpop happened, we were told, 'Get as big as you can.' I had that drive."

That impulse remains, he says, although the ambitions are different. Size is no longer everything. "It's about wanting to make the music as perfect as it can be, thinking about how I can make a show something where people go, 'Did you see that?'" He studies his favourite artists— Tyler the Creator, Iggy Pop, Björk, PJ Harvey, plus Liams Howlett and Gallagher – and wants to incorporate a bit of each into who he is as a frontman.

One thing he loved about Kasabian's return to live performance last year was how young the crowds were. "It needs that mosh in the centre, that bounce from the youth," he says. "In the surrounding area were people who have been there from the start, but the core were just kids. Seeing them losing their minds, that's when you know it's worth carrying on. A whole new generation are getting into it."

The Alchemist's Euphoria is released on 5 August on Sony Music Entertainment.

In the UK, call the national [domestic abuse helpline](#) on 0808 2000 247, or visit [Women's Aid](#). In the US, the [domestic violence hotline](#) is 1-800-799-SAFE (7233). In Australia, the national [family violence counselling service](#)

is on 1800 737 732. Other international helplines may be found via www.befrienders.org.

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- Thanks for your leadership, Jake Daniels: a gay man and professional footballer

OpinionFood banks

When people use food banks, it's not because they've lost their copy of Nigella

[Frances Ryan](#)



The offensive suggestion from MP Lee Anderson that poor people can't cook is straight from a familiar Tory playbook



Conservative MP Lee Anderson. Photograph: Parliament TV

Tue 17 May 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 19 May 2022 10.51 EDT

Spare a thought for the Conservative MP Lee Anderson, who has spent the past few days single-handedly trying to solve Britain's cost of living crisis with very little thanks. It all started after he stated in the Commons that food banks are unnecessary in Britain because the main cause of food poverty is a lack of [cooking and budgetary skills](#). "I think you'll see first-hand that there's not this massive use for food banks in this country," the MP for Ashfield in Nottinghamshire proclaimed. "You've got generation after generation who cannot cook properly. They can't cook a meal from scratch. They cannot budget." Nutritious meals, he added, could be easily cooked for 30p a time.

Not one to see a hole and stop digging, Anderson has launched an ill-advised media round to defend himself after a backlash, including criticism from the anti-poverty campaigner and budget cooking expert Jack Monroe. Anderson told Times Radio he was glad he had whipped up a "leftwing" furore "because at the moment all we're hearing in chamber is 'food bank use is on the up'". Probably [because it is](#). Anderson doubled down in an interview with the deputy leader of the Reclaim party, Martin Daubney, even alleging that Monroe was profiteering from the poor. Monroe has since [instructed libel lawyers](#).

It's all very Wagatha Christie, except rather than embarrassing himself by allegedly selling soundbites to the press, Anderson is seemingly doing it for free. He is hardly the first Conservative MP to make such comments. Multiple ministers over the past decade have publicly argued there isn't really a reason for food banks, coincidentally just as they pulled [tens of billions](#) of pounds from the social safety net. Jacob Rees-Mog thinks food banks are "[rather uplifting](#)". Michael Gove believes those turning to food donations just haven't made the right "[decisions ... to manage their finances](#)". Dominic Raab said people visit food banks because they have a "[cashflow problem](#)". Indeed, Anderson isn't the only Tory MP to make such a remark *this week*. On Monday, minister Rachel Maclean suggested that in the long term, people struggling with the cost of living could just take on [more hours at work](#) or move to a better-paid job.

Such comments are grossly insulting at the best of times, but land particularly badly with the public in a time of a mounting food and energy costs. When people are hungry from [skipping meals](#), I suppose they do tend to get tetchy.

It would be easy to dismiss such comments as thoughtless anger-bait, but they serve a political purpose. Discrediting food banks or casting work as an easy route out of poverty suggest that hardship isn't down to low wages, benefit cuts, high energy prices or unaffordable housing, but rather that working-class people are too stupid to budget properly or too lazy to look for a better job.

This reduces the fact of millions of people going hungry and cold in this country to a few families who can't cook. Fundamentally, such remarks attempt to shift responsibility from the government and place it firmly on the individual. If a single mum is wasting her universal credit, why should ministers increase benefits in line with inflation? Tory MPs are playing their get-out-of-jail cards, taken from the old deck that if only the poor tried hard enough, they wouldn't be in poverty. Or as rightwing commentator Isabel Oakeshott put it recently: having to survive on low rate benefits "[concentrates the mind](#)".

It is ignorance that leads to these comments, sure, but it is also a wilful refusal to accept the facts. Charities such as the Trussell Trust have been explaining the reasons for [growing use of food banks](#) for years. (Spoiler for Anderson: it is less their copy of Nigella's latest cookbook people have lost, more their disability benefits.) Similarly, as Monroe points out, it is not hard to understand that “30p meals” don’t actually exist, not least because buying a hot meal means being able to afford both food and the energy to cook it. These are not exactly radical ideas; even the [boss of Iceland](#) recognises that some food bank users are declining items such as potatoes because they can’t afford the energy it would take to boil them.

Rightwing MPs and pundits choose to believe these myths because it suits them. It is in the Conservatives’ interests to depoliticise poverty, to propagate the idea that hardship is a result of an individual’s bad decisions rather than government policies. We see this in the bizarre trend of Tory MPs posing at [food banks](#) in their local constituencies, which is not dissimilar to an arsonist taking a selfie next to the fire.

The problem for Anderson and his ilk is that the rising inflation crisis means the dots are only going to get easier for the public to join: families are well familiar with the political events that mean they’re now unable to afford the weekly shop. No amount of budgeting will help if the money coming in is less than the bills going out. What people in Britain need is benefits that match inflation, a living wage, energy profit taxes – and politicians that understand the position they’re in. I’ll give Anderson that food for thought for free.

- Frances Ryan is a Guardian columnist
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OpinionFestivals

I'm sure rightwingers read books. But you'll never meet one at a literary festival

[Zoe Williams](#)



No one hates the government more than your average book-fest crowd – and don't they let you know it?



Heavily weighted to the left ... a typical litfest crowd. Photograph: Cliff Hide Local News/Alamy

Tue 17 May 2022 02.00 EDT

I have just been to the Bath festival of books to talk with my esteemed colleague [John Crace](#) about his book [A Farewell to Calm](#). It has been two years, more or less, without these events – two years when we had to pretend the experience was the same as we watched on a tiny screen, only half listening, only for it all to come rushing back: the steamy crowd (it had been raining), the thrill of the spoken word.

There is one specific thing I love about book festivals. It's a convention that you have to spend the first five or even 10 minutes pretending to think the audience are politically neutral. You enter into the charade of thinking these are just regular, respectable people, who may disagree with the government but equally, may agree with it; they may be remainers, they may be leavers; they may be left, they may be right. Just think of them as shareholders, except instead of buying shares, they buy books.

You will never meet a group of people more consistent in their views than at a literary festival

Yet this is the absolute opposite of the truth. You will never meet a group of people more consistent in their views, and not because most of them also go to the same pilates class. Every man jack of them voted remain, and they are considerably more leftwing than those at any meeting of any political party. In the interests of sounding mature, I should probably pretend to think there are rightwing book festivals, which people attend to worship [David Starkey](#) or ask creepy questions of [Niall Ferguson](#), but I don't think that. If even the Cheltenham literature festival turns the town briefly into a people's republic, I can't think what town would host a Toryfest.

The audience absolutely hate being politically misidentified, and they spend those first 10 minutes desperately signalling, with spontaneous clapping and foot-stamping, to indicate that nobody hates the government more than they. So it's like a panto, with an audience metaphorically shouting "He's behind you," but really meaning it – as if you might not know.

The atmosphere, it probably goes without saying, is electrifying. Sure, read this brilliant book if you wish, but you'll have more fun buying it at a book festival.

- 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*
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[Opinion](#)[LGBT rights](#)

Why homophobia against straight men matters

[Owen Jones](#)



Understanding the hatred faced by LGBTQ+ people requires that we confront it in all its forms



‘Homophobia can have catastrophic consequences for straight men.’
Photograph: Tero Vesalainen/Alamy

Tue 17 May 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 17 May 2022 05.26 EDT

Homophobia cast a long shadow over Callum’s childhood. “Gay”, “bender” and “faggot” were spat at him by classmates with abandon; beaten up in the changing rooms before PE, he was forced to change in the cleaner’s cupboard instead. But the thing is, Callum isn’t actually gay at all: he’s a straight man. That didn’t matter to his assailants – most of Callum’s friends were girls or those also treated as “outcasts”, some of whom were “exploring their sexuality” as teenagers; he hated sport, and loved performing arts.

Now, discussing homophobia in the context of straight men may seem like a distraction. “I feel really conflicted about it now – even though I’m absolutely over the bullying, I always feel like I was the victim of homophobic bullying,” Callum tells me. “But how can a straight cis man be a victim of homophobia?” Indeed, he fears “invalidating the experiences of those who are actually gay whenever I talk about this”. But there’s nothing invalidating about his story at all, because Callum was the victim of sustained homophobic bullying, and the same goes for countless other straight men, too. Their experiences aren’t outliers: they are key to understanding what homophobia actually is.

When I did a shout out for straight men to come forward with their own experiences of homophobia, I was inundated. For some, it was simply for having long hair, or for their dress sense, or for a job – like being a primary school or drama teacher – or for extracurricular activities deemed to be “unmanly”. “I had the shit beaten out of me at least once a week for being gay, or a ‘poof’, or ‘bent’,” says Matthew, a former choirboy. “If anything was considered outside the ‘norm’, it was considered ‘gay’ when I was in secondary school in the noughties,” says another. “I used to dress in a somewhat gothic way: eyeliner, black nail varnish, and I was on the receiving end of homophobic insults quite a few times. Even if you showed any form of affection towards another man, it was ‘gay’.” Indeed, acts of kindness are frequently cited as provoking homophobic responses.

Asking “but what about the straights?” may rankle some LGBT people. A distinction should be made: homophobic bullying is an existential question for a queer person in a way it isn’t for a straight person, because being abused for your actual identity tends to inflict more psychological harm. But that doesn’t mean it can’t have catastrophic consequences for straight men. Whenever Robbie showed any care or kindness as a teenager at his high school, he suffered homophobic verbal and physical abuse, which was compounded by similar treatment from his stepfather. “That led to my long-term, serious mental health conditions, spanning from the age of 11 to my mental breakdown at 23,” he tells me.

The [2010 Equality Act](#) included “[perceptive discrimination](#)” for a reason: that is, when people are “treated unfairly” on the grounds they have a protected characteristic, whether they actually do or not. And it is these examples that expose the reality of the bigotry in question. For example, a staple response from apologists for Islamophobia is that hatred of Muslims does not qualify as racism, because Muslims are not a race. Yet witness how many Sikh men – [on both sides of the Atlantic](#) – have been victims of Islamophobic hate crimes, underlining that anti-Muslim bigotry is based on racialising minorities.

Similarly, so many straight men are victims of homophobia because it is principally about policing the boundaries of masculinity, rather than repulsion towards gayness per se. Queer men are normally the biggest sufferers of homophobic abuse and violence precisely because they are seen

to be the worst violators of masculine norms. What is deemed more “unmanly” than having sex with other men, after all? This is why the designated term for queer people in Margaret Atwood’s dystopic *The Handmaid’s Tale* – “gender traitors” – is so apt. But if straight men engage in behaviour deemed to violate the boundaries of masculinity, they are at risk of homophobia, too: from failing to show enough physical aggression, to not objectifying women or treating them as equals, to talking about feelings or showing compassion – coded as a feminine trait – towards others.

Homophobia is the bastard child of misogyny: a means of conditioning men into embracing and glorifying traits that menace women and “unmanly” men alike. Eliminating homophobia will principally liberate queer people, but it will free straight men, too, to be themselves. It will mean a society with less violence and more love. And that’s why the homophobic persecution of straight men isn’t a tasteless distraction: to ignore it is to fail to understand homophobia at all.

- Owen Jones is a Guardian columnist

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[SportblogSoccer](#)

Thanks for your leadership, Jake Daniels: a gay man and professional footballer

[Barney Ronay](#)



The young Blackpool forward has shown remarkable strength to take this step – he deserves the freedom now just to play

Blackpool forward Jake Daniels: coming out as gay is 'massive relief' – video

Mon 16 May 2022 17.30 EDTLast modified on Tue 17 May 2022 06.27 EDT

Well played, Jake Daniels. Applause, please. And thank you for your leadership. Football, sport, male environments and, indeed, the wider world have all become slightly more sane places with the news that [Daniels has](#)

decided to discuss publicly the fact that he is not only a professional footballer but a gay man.

The first part of this is, of course, not remarkable. The second part is. To those unfamiliar with football's internal workings it might seem genuinely loopy that this should even be news, that a trailblazer is required, and indeed that this should turn out to be a teenager who made his debut for Blackpool two weeks ago. But make no mistake this is both a remarkable moment for men's professional football and a sterling show of courage from a 17-year-old, yet to establish himself in his industry; but unwilling, as he says, "to pretend".

For men's football – and indeed men's sport, professional and amateur – this is the sound of a wall being torn down. It is 32 years since Justin Fashanu became the first and until now only male British professional footballer to come out as gay, in his case via a salacious newspaper splash. Fashanu played on for seven years in various leagues, but he suffered terribly at the hands of his sport, his family and the wider public.

Thomas Hitzlsperger, a Premier League player and German international, revealed in retirement that he is gay. The Australian Josh Cavallo came out last year, aged 22, and is playing regularly for Adelaide United in the A-League. Beyond this women's sports have shown the way on this front. Openly gay players and indeed managers are a part of the everyday landscape in women's football. The England women's cricket team has a long-term couple in it.

Men's cricket had a flash of light when Steven Davies came out while he was still an England player 11 years ago. Davies is still going strong. But he is yet to be followed by anyone else.



Blackpool's Jake Daniels in action during their Championship match at Peterborough. Photograph: Lee Parker/CameraSport/Getty Images

And this is the real significance of Daniels's openness, and indeed why none of this should be taken lightly. It is tempting to shrug and tut at football, to chide it for lagging behind the more liberated sections of society. But the fact is football does, as ever, reflect its environment. And there is a massive problem still with homophobia in Britain and the wider world, from everyday abuse and violence, to the anxiety young people might have over coming out to parents and friends, to institutional and religious intolerance.

Daniels's courage will speak to all those other footballers – and there have of course been plenty – who have lived through that narrow culture. It will provide a different model, a different version of the future for young people playing the sport now at any level. But it will have resonance beyond, too. People do need role models. The backing for Daniels from his club, the FA and the PFA is significant and not just within the sport. Yes, normal life is simply being normalised here. Slow handclap, football. What kept you? But society is not always nice or liberal or progressive. This is football using its platform in a good way.

It will, of course, be far from straightforward. Daniels will face other barriers. There will be kickback and resistance, from misguided banter to genuine abuse; to moments of awkwardness and doubt, the micro-adjustments others will have to make in this deeply ritualistic male industry.

Things are never as easy as we might hope. But listening to him speak it was impossible not to feel proud and also protective. It has required remarkable strength and clarity of mind to take this step aged 17. Football will now goggle a little, scratch its head and search for the right words.

The best response is, as ever, support, admiration and the freedom from here just to play.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/football/blog/2022/may/16/thanks-for-your-leadership-jake-daniels-a-gay-man-and-professional-footballer>

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[Afghanistan](#)

Taliban dissolves Afghanistan's human rights commission as 'unnecessary'

Four other government departments scrapped as cash-strapped regime faces \$500m budget deficit



Afghanistan's human rights commission and four other government departments dissolved as country battles financial crunch. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Reuters

Mon 16 May 2022 19.57 EDT

Taliban authorities in [Afghanistan](#) dissolved five key departments of the former US-backed government, including the country's human rights commission, deeming them unnecessary in the face of a financial crunch, an official said.

Afghanistan faced a budget deficit of 44bn Afghanis (\$501m) this financial year, [Taliban](#) authorities said as they announced their first annual national budget since taking over last August.

“Because these departments were not deemed necessary and were not included in the budget, they have been dissolved,” said Innamullah Samangani, the Taliban government’s deputy spokesperson.

Also dissolved was the high council for national reconciliation (HCNR), the once high-powered national security council, and the commission for overseeing the implementation of the Afghan constitution.

The HCNR was last headed by former Afghan president Abdullah Abdullah, and was working to negotiate a peace between the US-backed government of former president Ashraf Ghani and the then-insurgent Taliban.

In August 2021, 20 years after invading Afghanistan, foreign forces withdrew leading to the collapse of the government and a Taliban takeover.

Samangani said the national budget was “based on objective facts” and intended only for departments that had been active and productive.

He added that the bodies could be reactivated in the future “if needed”.

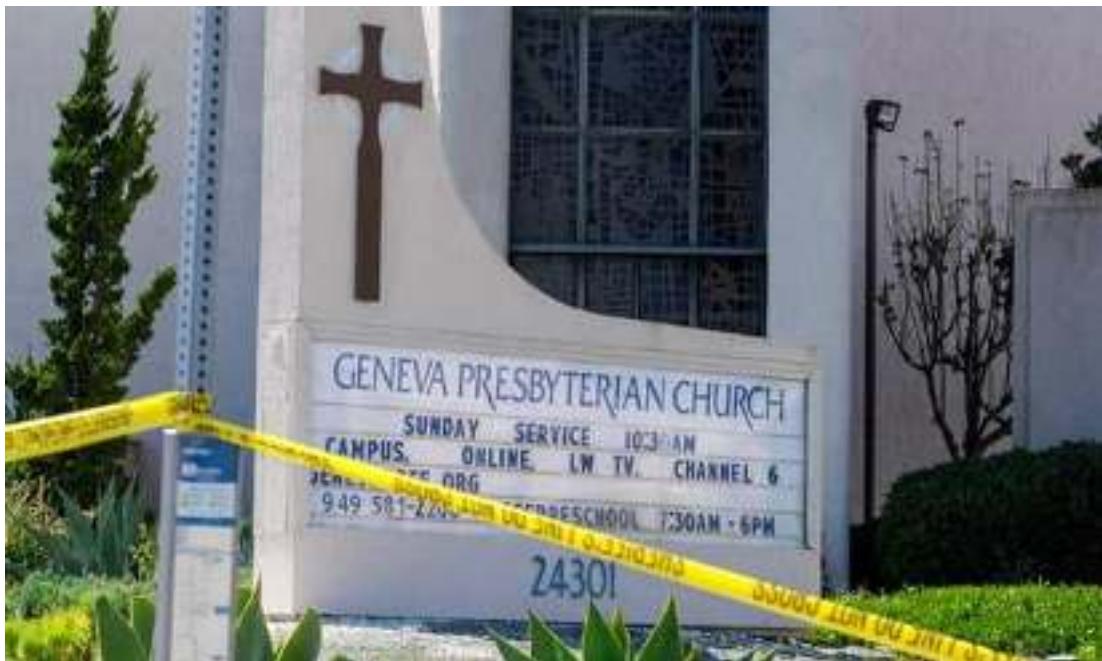
After taking over in 2021, the Taliban assured the world they would be more moderate. However, they are yet to allow older girls to restart education, and have also introduced rules that mandate that women and girls wear veils and requiring them to have male relatives accompany them in public places.

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[California](#)

California police say 68-year-old suspect in church shooting was motivated by hate

David Chou, a Chinese immigrant from Las Vegas, had a grievance with the Taiwanese community, officials say



Orange county police have identified a suspect in a shooting that left one dead over the weekend. Photograph: Ringo Chiu/AFP/Getty Images

*Dani Anguiano and agencies
[@dani_anguiano](#)*

Mon 16 May 2022 21.19 EDTFirst published on Mon 16 May 2022 16.48 EDT

As the US was rocked by deadly gun violence over the weekend, a shooting at an Orange county church on Sunday left southern [California](#) reeling when

a gunman motivated by hate for Taiwanese people fired on congregants who managed to put a stop to the bloodshed.

Authorities on Monday identified the suspect, who is accused of killing one person and wounding five others at the Geneva Presbyterian church, as David Chou of Las Vegas. The Orange county sheriff's department booked the 68-year-old on a felony count of murder and five felony counts of attempted murder and was being held on \$1m bail.

'Exceptional bravery': California congregants tie up gunman in fatal church attack – video

The violence in Irvine, about 50 miles south-east of Los Angeles, unfolded amid a weekend of horrific gun violence across America, including in Buffalo where an 18-year-old white supremacist killed 10 people at a grocery store in a predominantly Black neighborhood. In Los Angeles, a man died in a shooting at Grand Central Market on Saturday. Some of the patrons had been discussing the shooting in New York when the shots started and forced them to flee for cover.

More people could have died in the Laguna Woods church shooting on Saturday were it not for churchgoers, authorities said. The shooter opened fire during a lunch banquet at the Irvine Taiwanese Presbyterian church, which worships at Geneva Presbyterian, but was stopped when a pastor hit him on the head with a chair and parishioners used electrical cords to restrain him until police arrived.

John Cheng, 52, was killed in the shooting, authorities said at a Monday news conference.

Don Barnes, the Orange county sheriff, said the motive of the shooting was a grievance between Chou, identified as a Chinese immigrant, and the Taiwanese community. China claims Taiwan is a part of its national territory and has not ruled out force to bring the island under its rule.

Chou is expected to appear in state court on Tuesday and it was not immediately clear whether he had an attorney who could speak on his behalf. A federal hate crime investigation is also ongoing.

Chou's family was among many that were apparently forcibly removed from China to Taiwan sometime after 1948, the Orange county district attorney, Todd Spitzer, said. Chou's hatred toward the island, allegedly documented in handwritten notes that authorities found, seems like it began when he felt he wasn't treated well while living there.

Barnes said Chou was a US citizen and had been in the US for years. It is unclear how long Chou had previously lived in Taiwan.

Barnes said Chou drove to the Orange County church, where he was not a regular attendee, secured the doors and started shooting. He had also placed four molotov cocktail-like devices inside the church, the sheriff said. Chou lawfully purchased the two 9mm pistols used in the shooting in Las Vegas, said Stephen Galloway, ATF Los Angeles assistant special agent in charge.

Barnes said Cheng, survived by a wife and two children, heroically charged at the shooter and attempted to disarm him, allowing others to intervene. A pastor hit the gunman on the head with a chair and parishioners hog-tied him with electrical cords. But Barnes said Cheng was hit by gunshots.

"Understanding that there was elderly everywhere and they couldn't get out of the premises because the doors had been chained ... he took it upon himself to charge across the room and to do everything he could to disable the assailant," said Spitzer.

A former neighbor said Chou's life had unraveled after his wife left him. Chou had been a pleasant man who used to own the Las Vegas apartment building where he lived until February, according to Balmore Orellana, the Associated Press reported.

Records showed the four-unit property was sold last October for a little more than \$500,000. Orellana said Chou's wife had used the money from the sale to move to Taiwan, the AP reported.

Before Orellana moved in about five years ago, Chou had received a head injury and other serious injuries in an attack by a tenant, the neighbor said. More recently his mental health had declined, and last summer a bullet

entered Orellana's apartment after a gun was fired inside Chou's apartment, although nobody was hurt, Orellana said.

Police reports about the assault and the shooting were not immediately available on Monday, according to the AP.

Jerry Chen, 72, a longtime member of the church, said he had just stepped into a church kitchen when he heard gunshots and people began screaming. Peeking around the corner, he saw people running and hiding under tables.

"I knew someone was shooting," he said. "I was very, very scared. I ran out the kitchen door to call 911." Chen said he was so shocked that he couldn't tell the operator the church's location and had to ask someone else for the address.



John Cheng was killed in Sunday's shooting at Geneva Presbyterian church.
Photograph: Jae C Hong/AP

About 40 people had gathered in the fellowship hall for a luncheon after a morning service to welcome their former Pastor Billy Chang, Chen said, who worked at the church for 20 years. Chang, a beloved and respected community member, moved back to Taiwan two years ago, Chen said, adding that this was his first time back in the US.

“Everyone had just finished lunch,” he said. “They were taking photos with Pastor Chang. I had just finished my lunch and went into the kitchen.”

Then he heard the gunshots and ran out to the parking lot. Fellow congregants told Chen that when the gunman stopped to reload, Pastor Chang hit him on the head with a chair. Others quickly went to grab the shooter’s gun, and subdued him and tied him up, Chen said.

“It was amazing how brave [Chang] and the others were,” he said. “This is just so sad. I never, ever thought something like this would happen in my church, in my community.”

Most of the church’s members are older, highly educated Taiwanese immigrants, Chen said. “We’re mostly retirees and the average age of our church is 80,” he said.

All of those wounded in the shooting were senior citizens and four of them suffered critical gunshot injuries. Those wounded by gunshots included four Asian men, ages 66, 75, 82 and 92, and an 86-year-old Asian woman, the sheriff’s department said. The majority of those inside the church at the time were believed to be of Taiwanese descent, said Carrie Braun, a sheriff’s spokesperson.

Laguna Woods, where the shooting occurred, was built as a senior living community and later became a city. More than 80% of residents in the city of 18,000 people are at least 65.

The shooting took place in an area with a cluster of houses of worship, including Catholic, Lutheran and Methodist churches and a Jewish synagogue.

The sheriff’s office has said the investigation was in its early stages, and that investigators are looking into he was known to church members and how many shots were fired.

The afternoon lunch reception was to honor a former pastor of the Taiwanese congregation, according to a statement from the Presbytery of Los Ranchos, a church administrative body.

“Please keep the leadership of the Taiwanese congregation and Geneva in your prayers as they care for the those traumatized by this shooting,” the presbytery’s Tom Cramer said in a statement on Facebook.

On its website, Geneva Presbyterian church says its mission was “to remember, tell, and live the way of Jesus by being just, kind, and humble”.

“All are welcome here. Really, we mean that! Geneva aspires to be an inclusive congregation worshipping, learning, connecting, giving and serving together.”

The governor’s office said on Twitter that he was closely monitoring the situation.

“No one should have to fear going to their place of worship. Our thoughts are with the victims, community, and all those impacted by this tragic event,” the tweet said.

The US has seen multiple shootings inside houses of worship in recent years. The deadliest incident was in 2017 in Sutherland Springs, Texas, where a gunman opened fire during a Sunday service at First Baptist church and killed more than two dozen people.

In 2015, the white supremacist Dylann Roof fired dozens of bullets during the closing prayer of a Bible study session at Charleston’s Mother Emanuel AME church in South Carolina. Roof killed nine members of the Black congregation and was the first person in the US sentenced to death for a federal hate crime. His appeal remains before the supreme court.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/may/16/california-police-suspect-church-shooting>.

[Taiwan](#)

Beijing's rhetoric in spotlight as Taiwan condemns California shooting

Deadly incident renews debate over cross-strait tensions and Beijing's reunification rhetoric



A woman places flowers at a makeshift memorial outside the Taiwanese Presbyterian church in Laguna Woods, California, on Monday. Photograph: Robyn Beck/AFP/Getty Images

Sum Lok-kei in Hong Kong

Tue 17 May 2022 06.21 EDTFirst published on Tue 17 May 2022 03.25 EDT

Taiwan's president has condemned the deadly [shooting at a Taiwanese church in California](#) by a man reportedly driven by hatred of the self-governing island, where debate about cross-strait tensions has intensified along with Beijing's reunification rhetoric.

Tsai Ing-wen's office issued a statement saying she condemned "any form of violence" and extended her condolences to those killed and injured, and that she had asked the island's chief representative in the US to fly to [California](#) to provide assistance.

David Chou, 68, was arrested on Sunday at Laguna Woods, Orange County, after he allegedly opened fire on a group of people at Geneva Presbyterian church, killing one and injuring five others.

Police described the shooting as a "politically motivated hate incident", saying the suspect could have been motivated by his discontent with cross-strait tensions in recent years.

Don Barnes, the Orange county sheriff, said evidence recovered from Chou's vehicle demonstrated his "hatred for the Taiwanese people", which could have developed while Chou was living in [Taiwan](#) as a young man, where he was "not well-received".

The notes also suggested Chou believed Taiwan should not be independent from [China](#). Online pictures placed Chou at a meeting of a Las Vegas group that supports the "peaceful unification" of Taiwan and mainland China. The group had sought to distance itself from Chou, Chinese-language media reported.



Tsai Ing-wen, the president of Taiwan. Photograph: Walid Berrazeg/Sopa Images/Rex/Shutterstock

According to the Alliance for China's Peaceful Reunification, there are more than 30 such groups operating across the US. These groups, which are loosely affiliated with a central body in Beijing, can also be found among Chinese communities in Britain, publishing writings against Taiwan independence.

Chou, a US citizen, apparently had grievances with the Taiwanese community in the US, police said. Although police told the Guardian he was born in mainland China, Taiwan's Central News Agency, citing the head of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Los Angeles, Taiwan's de facto consulate in the city, reported that he was born in Taiwan in 1953.

While local authorities did not make clear when Chou had moved to the US, it appears that he graduated from the Taichung First Senior High school in Taiwan in 1971 and was involved in an alumni association in the US, according to the [school alumni association's website](#) accessed by the Guardian. Chou's name has now been removed.

According to a 2012 news article, Chou had moved to Las Vegas in 2009 to become a landlord. Local authorities said he lived alone and the rest of his

family was in Taiwan, adding Chou had worked as a security guard in the Las Vegas area.

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News of the shooting was widely circulated in Taiwan on Tuesday, with local media highlighting Chou's ties with the pro-unification group. Pro-democracy politicians blamed Beijing's rhetoric around reunification for "radicalising" Chou into committing the violent act.

"These extremist groups or individuals could infiltrate and damage Taiwanese communities under the influence of others," legislator Freddy Lim wrote.

The Kuomintang, which is more pro-China than the ruling Democratic Progressive party, issued a statement condemning the violence, but did not touch on Chou's political stance.

Dr Wen Liu, assistant research professor at Academia Sinica, a Taiwanese government research facility, blamed the incident on Beijing's rhetoric in recent years.

"Beijing's pro-unification campaign has been sending out dehumanising languages such as 'annihilating the people and saving the island' and dismissing the Taiwanese independence movement as a violent separatist crime," Liu said.

China claims the self-ruled democratic Taiwan as its own territory and has since Tsai's election in 2016 blamed her for "pro-independence moves". In recent years, Beijing's reunification rhetoric had become increasingly militant, as Taiwan sought to align itself with western powers and rejoin the United Nations system.

Meanwhile, discourse over the shooting on Chinese social media platform Weibo mostly centred on Chou's nationality, as users argued whether he was Chinese, Taiwanese or American.

“He’s been naturalised, if anything this is an American discontent with Taiwan authorities, what has this got to do with mainland [China]?” one user wrote.

Despite active public discourse, both Taiwan and Beijing authorities have not played up the incident on Tuesday.

Wang Wenbin, a spokesperson for China’s ministry of foreign affairs, said he had “noticed” relevant reports on the shooting and the suspect’s Taiwanese origin. He added: “We hope the US government can take action against its increasingly severe gun violence problem.”

Associated Press contributed to this report

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/17/taiwan-president-tsai-ing-wen-condemns-california-church-shooting>

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[Music](#)

Ricky Gardiner, guitarist for David Bowie and Iggy Pop, dies aged 73

Musician who wrote classic riffs for songs including The Passenger had Parkinson's disease



Ricky Gardiner, who has died aged 73. Photograph: Virginia Scott

[Ben Beaumont-Thomas](#)

[@ben_bt](#)

Tue 17 May 2022 05.47 EDT Last modified on Tue 17 May 2022 06.58 EDT

Ricky Gardiner, the guitarist who performed classic riffs for albums including David Bowie's *Low* and Iggy Pop's *Lust for Life*, has died aged 73.

Producer Tony Visconti announced the news on social media, saying Gardiner's wife had informed him. He described Gardiner, who had been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, as a "guitar genius".

Born in Edinburgh in 1948, his first major band was the prog rock group Beggars Opera, who formed in 1969. Beginning with Act One the following year, he recorded six albums with the band, who became a cult favourite across Europe, particularly in Germany.

He was invited to play guitar on Tony Visconti's solo album Inventory, and Visconti suggested that he perform on David Bowie's Low – Bowie then invited him to join the recording sessions at a chateau near Paris, in 1977, later moving to Hansa studios in Berlin. Gardiner played lead guitar on the album's first half, including the cheerful, whimsical lead line on Sound and Vision, the fanfare-like riff for opening track Speed of Life, and the cosmic solo on Always Crashing in the Same Car.



Performing with Iggy Pop and David Bowie in San Francisco, 1978.
Photograph: Richard McCaffrey/Getty Images

The Bowie recordings brought him into the orbit of another star, [Iggy Pop](#), and he toured with Bowie and Pop for the latter's album The Idiot, with Bowie on keyboards. On this famously debauched tour, Gardiner preferred to take early morning walks – “If others used [drugs], they must have been discreet. I enjoy the occasional drink but I would be quite happy if alcohol was returned to its rightful place in the laboratory,” he later said.

He then played guitar and contributed songwriting on the Bowie-produced Iggy Pop album *Lust for Life* later in 1977, describing the writing and recording sessions as “a joy”.

Among Gardiner’s contributions is a riff regarded to be one of the simplest and greatest of all time: the swaggering three-note motif for *The Passenger*, which came to him in bucolic surroundings not usually associated with Pop. “The apple trees were in bloom and I was doodling on the guitar as I gazed at the trees,” Gardiner later said. “I was not paying any attention to what I was playing. I was in a light dream enjoying the glorious spring morning. At a certain point my ear caught the chord sequence.”

He also co-wrote the songs *Success* and *Neighbourhood Threat*, and played drums on the closing jam *Fall in Love With Me*. “*Lust for Life* benefited from a lot of spontaneity and was largely recorded as the moon was waxing towards full,” he later explained. “The song *Success* epitomises this jubilant energy and the album on the whole shows imaginative qualities consistent with this rising lunar energy.”

Iggy Pop paid tribute to Gardiner, writing: “Dearest Ricky, lovely, lovely man, shirtless in your coveralls, nicest guy who ever played guitar.”

Gardiner became a father and didn’t continue to tour with Bowie and Pop. He set up his own studio and began exploring the possibilities of digital production, occasionally releasing albums with collaborators – including his wife Virginia Scott – such as the ambient project *Kumara*. In 1995, he released *Auschwitz*, an instrumental work marking the 50th anniversary of the camp’s liberation that he regarded as his most important solo work.

He was diagnosed with electrosensitivity in 1998, which made him feel unwell when in proximity to electronic devices – he had to adapt his home studio to accommodate the illness. As well as recording his own versions of *The Passenger*, in his later years he returned to the Beggars Opera project, releasing seven further albums.

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- [Analysis How did PM only get one fine?](#)

[Gray report](#)

Name ministers fined in Partygate, Dominic Raab urges Sue Gray

Deputy PM says there should be transparency about who breached Covid rules in civil servant's report

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



Dominic Raab committed to publishing Sue Gray's report 'as soon as possible' after it was received. Photograph: Alastair Grant/AP

Jamie Grierson
[@JamieGrierson](#)

Fri 20 May 2022 04.05 EDT Last modified on Sat 21 May 2022 00.13 EDT

The UK deputy prime minister, [Dominic Raab](#), has called for ministers who were fined for breaching Covid regulations to be named by the senior civil servant tasked with investigating the Partygate scandal.

Scotland Yard's inquiries were closed on Thursday with a total of 126 fixed penalties handed out to 83 people, as it was confirmed the [prime minister would not be punished further](#) than the £50 fine he received in April for attending his birthday party in June 2020 when indoor mixing was banned.

Westminster now awaits the publication of Sue Gray's separate report into lockdown gatherings in Downing Street and Whitehall, expected next week.

Boris Johnson has overhauled his Downing Street operation ahead of the report's release, including creating a streamlined team of officials who will work under the leadership of his permanent secretary.

Speaking to BBC Breakfast on Friday, Raab said there should be "transparency" in the report about any ministers who have been fined.

Asked if Downing Street was trying to prevent the civil servant from publishing individual names in her report into social events at Downing Street during pandemic lockdown restrictions, Raab said that was a matter for the police and Gray.

"I think that these are matters – who is identified – for Sue Gray and the Met," he said.

"What we have said is that it's right that if there's a minister who has been fined, of course there needs to be transparency around that. I think that's right."

Earlier on Times Radio, Raab committed to publishing the report "as soon as possible" after it was received.

Ken Macdonald told BBC Radio 4's Today programme "we remain very much in the dark" about the details of Partygate.

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Lord Macdonald, who is a former director of public prosecutions, said it was not known why the prime minister was fined for being at one party but not others, or why the cabinet secretary, Simon Case, was not fined.

“We don’t know who these people are, and I do feel for the junior civil servants and I quite see why they would be distressed by their names being given, but there’s a wider public interest here.

“This was a major scandal at the heart of government, at the heart of the civil service, and we remain very much in the dark about who was involved, who organised the parties, and who was responsible.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/may/20/partygate-dominic-raab-sue-gray-report-name-ministers-breached-covid-rules>

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Boris Johnson ‘grateful to Met’ for Partygate inquiry and says he hopes Sue Gray report will be published soon – as it happened

[Prime minister speaks for first time](#) since conclusion of police inquiry into lockdown-breaking gatherings in Downing Street. This live blog is now closed.

- [PM’s father Stanley Johnson ‘secures French citizenship’](#)
- [Johnson shakes up No 10 operation after Sue Gray criticism](#)
- [Analysis: PM’s survival superpower can only last so long](#)
- [Unacceptable for one party to block Stormont, says Irish PM](#)

Updated 2d ago

[Ben Quinn](#) and [Hamish Mackay](#)

Fri 20 May 2022 13.06 EDTFirst published on Fri 20 May 2022 03.56 EDT



Boris Johnson during a visit to a honey factory in Powys, Wales.
Photograph: Ben Birchall/PA

[Ben Quinn and Hamish Mackay](#)

Fri 20 May 2022 13.06 EDTFirst published on Fri 20 May 2022 03.56 EDT

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From 2d ago

08.04

Johnson: 'I am very grateful to the Met for their work'

Boris Johnson has been speaking for the first time since the Metropolitan police concluded their investigation into Downing Street parties

I am very grateful to the Met for their work. I am very grateful for the work they have done. I just think that we need to wait for Sue Gray to report and then ... fingers crossed ... that will be very soon.

Johnson, speaking on a visit to Powys, Wales, before an address to the Welsh Conservative conference, was asked if Downing Street would block Gray, the senior civil servant compiling a report on Partygate. He said it would be a matter that was entirely up to Gray.

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Updated at 08.36 EDT

2d ago12.57

Summary



Ben Quinn

Boris Johnson has shaken up his No 10 operation in response to criticism of its oversight in the interim Sue Gray report, with new powers handed to the civil service chief Samantha Jones.

With the Gray report expected next week, the prime minister is among about 30 people to have been given a gist of the criticism about him, with those contacted by the inquiry team given a few days to respond.

Gray is said to be keen to name senior civil servants, but no decisions have been taken on how many and who will be identified, or whether the report will contain any photos.

Ireland's taoiseach has said it is unacceptable for one party in Northern Ireland to block others from taking power, as he visited Belfast to try to break the deadlock over the Brexit protocol and power-sharing at Stormont.

After meetings with party leaders, Micheál Martin said the Northern Ireland assembly and executive should be formed while negotiations continue between the UK government and the EU over the protocol.

“Our view is there should be parallel discussions,” he said as he urged the DUP to abandon their decision not to return to power-sharing until “decisive

action” was taken over reforms to Northern Ireland’s Brexit arrangements.

The Bank of England will intensify its squeeze on the economy over the coming months as it seeks to bring down the highest inflation rate in 40 years, its chief economist has warned.

Noting that Threadneedle Street was facing its toughest challenge since being granted independence in 1997, Huw Pill said “further work needs to be done” to bring the annual inflation rate back to the government’s 2% target.

Inflation soared to 9% in April as the rising cost of gas and electricity pushed household energy bills to record levels and the escalating cost of food and transport also contributed to the surge in the cost of living.

Rishi Sunak has become the first frontline politician to be ranked among the UK’s wealthiest people, only days after the chancellor warned consumers that “the next few months will be tough” as the cost of living squeeze intensifies.

Sunak, a former hedge fund manager, and his Indian heiress wife, Akshata Murty, were named on the Sunday Times rich list as the 222nd wealthiest people in the UK, with a combined £730m fortune.

Becoming the first frontline politician to be named in the annual ranking since its inception in 1989 is likely to increase pressure on Sunak to do more to help households struggling with inflation, which hit 9% in April, its highest level in 40 years, and soaring energy bills.

The UK government’s independent adviser on tackling violence against women and girls has suggested her calls for street harassment to be made a crime are being blocked.

Nimco Ali, a close friend of Boris and Carrie Johnson, told the BBC’s Political Thinking with Nick Robinson that her proposal had experienced “pushback” and hinted the prime minister had not fully supported it.

The government has blocked the cabinet secretary, Simon Case, and government ethics chief Darren Tierney from appearing before the public administration and constitutional affairs committee.

The pair were due to give evidence as part of the committee's inquiry into the propriety of governance in the wake of Greensill.

The hearing was confirmed several weeks ago and it was due to discuss the Downing Street parties, the management of conflicts of interest and unregulated appointments in the civil service, and the proposed cuts to the civil service of 100,000 jobs.

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Updated at 13.00 EDT

[2d ago](#)[12.39](#)

Isle of Man minister quits in whistleblowing scandal



Helen Pidd

The Isle of Man's treasury minister — the Manx equivalent of **Rishi Sunak** — has resigned in a whistleblowing scandal.

David Ashford quit on Friday in the fall-out of [an employment tribunal](#) involving the island's former chief medical director Dr Rosalind Ranson. The tribunal found she was unfairly dismissed while Ashford was minister for health, after raising concerns about the Isle of Man's approach to Covid.

Ashford's evidence to the employment tribunal was found to be "practised and diplomatic seemingly guided by the principle of deniability of anything potentially inconvenient unless/until objective evidence was available to the contrary".

Alfred Cannan, the island's chief minister, [said he accepted](#) Ashford's resignation and thanked him for his contribution during the Covid-19 pandemic. The new treasury minister is Dr Alex Allinson, who moves over from the enterprise ministry.



The Tynwald building, housing the parliament of the Isle of Man
Photograph: Paul Ellis/AFP/Getty Images

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Updated at 13.06 EDT

2d ago 12.26

Voters support windfall tax and back Labour on cost of living crisis – poll

Voters believe Labour would be better at handling the rising cost of living, according to [a poll for Mail Online](#).

Only a quarter (24%) said the [Conservatives](#) would be better at handling the issue, compared with 39% who said the Labour party.

The survey by Savanta Comres also found that there is major support for a windfall tax on the profits of big oil and gas firms.

Three in four (75%) back the idea according to the survey, based on online interviews with 2,021 UK adults from 18-19 May.

Earlier today, **Jacob Rees-Mogg** argued it is wrong to raid the “honey pot of business” to fund measures to ease the cost-of-living crisis by imposing a windfall tax on oil and gas giants.

The Brexit opportunities minister argued that the one-off measure on the companies’ soaring profits potentially to reduce consumer bills would ultimately see the public pay more tax.

Boris Johnson has not ruled out the move, instead urging firms to invest their soaring profits, and Downing Street hinted that a decision would be coming “soon”.

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Updated at 13.04 EDT

2d ago 12.06

Almost 6,000 landlords in England started court proceedings against tenants in the first three months of 2022 after serving them with a so-called “no-fault” eviction notice, figures show.

Some 5,890 landlords started accelerated procedure claims between January and March after issuing renters with a Section 21 notice, according to figures published by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ).

This is up 63% on the previous quarter and 41% compared with the same period in 2020, before the coronavirus pandemic.

Matt Downie, chief executive of Crisis, said it was “unacceptable” that the government is allowing more people to be forced from their homes.

He said: “While families across the country battle to keep roofs over their heads, government inaction over the spiralling costs of energy, rent and food is causing more and more people to be sucked into this crisis.

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Updated at 12.59 EDT

[2d ago 11.46](#)

Ireland’s taoiseach, **Micheál Martin**, said that the Northern Ireland assembly and executive should be formed while negotiations continued between the UK government and the EU over the protocol.

He said:

All parties said to us that they are willing to abide by the [assembly election] result.

The Democratic Unionist party were clear that they have no difficulty in taking up the deputy first minister position but they have issues with the protocol. Our view is there should be parallel discussions.

The assembly and the executive should operate parallel with the UK government and the European Union engaging in substantive negotiations to resolve issues which have arisen in respect of the operation of the protocol.

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Updated at 11.51 EDT

[2d ago](#)[11.38](#)

The Liberal Democrat leader, **Ed Davey**, said if the prime minister would not resign over the Partygate scandal, Conservative MPs should “grow a backbone and get rid of him”.

Launching his party’s byelection campaign in Tiverton and Honiton, he told the PA news agency:

Boris Johnson should resign because he broke the law and he lied to parliament, not on one occasion, but on many occasions. He’s not a decent prime minister for our great country and if he won’t go of his own accord, Conservative MPs need to grow a backbone and get rid of him.

If they don’t, frankly, I hope the voters punish the Conservative party for treating the voters like fools.



Ed Davey (centre left) with candidate Richard Foord (right) during the party's Tiverton and Honiton byelection campaign launch. Photograph: Rod Minchin/PA

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Updated at 11.53 EDT

[2d ago](#)[11.33](#)

Some Tory stalwarts may be angry but the state of the economy could be what brings the prime minister down, [writes](#) the Guardian's political editor, **Heather Stewart**.

One Boris-sceptic backbencher suggested that while Gray's report might solidify things in a few MPs' minds, by setting out in black and white the unedifying details of the parties, it was unlikely to hit home with Johnson or his team.

The MP said:

I don't know what **Sue Gray**'s report is going to say next week. It won't be pretty reading, and in any normal world I'm sure it will be

devastating, but they'll no doubt crack on regardless.

Some senior Tories regard the privileges committee investigation as the more dangerous of the two.

One former cabinet minister said:

The privileges committee is the lethal one. The fundamental question is misleading the house, and whether it was deliberate or not.

It seems to me very hard to argue that it wasn't, because we now know he attended a number of parties. Either he's very stupid or he's very dishonest.

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Updated at 11.37 EDT

[2d ago 11.02](#)

We reported earlier that Johnson said he was “grateful” to the Met for their investigation into the Downing Street lockdown gatherings. You can watch a clip from that interview here:

Partygate: Boris Johnson says he is 'grateful' to Met police as investigation concludes – video

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[2d ago 10.45](#)



Richard Adams

Downing Street's demand that civil servants get back to the office has backfired for the [Department for Education](#), where desk shortages have resulted in staff being sent home and others forced to work in "chaotic" conditions.

With officials working in cramped corridors or sharing desks, civil service unions have protested to Nadhim Zahawi, the education secretary. Zahawi ordered an end to homeworking last month after pressure from the efficiency minister, [Jacob Rees-Mogg](#).

The extent of the chaos was [revealed by Schools Week](#) which reported that Susan Acland-Hood, the DfE's permanent secretary, had ordered staff to spend 80% of their time in the office – despite the department having twice as many staff as desks.

Civil servants said the first week of the new policy was "chaotic", with staff milling around trying to find space to sit and canteen tables being taken up. One described the DfE's Great Smith Street office as like "a tube station in rush hour" after the new policy was implemented.

Updated at 11.40 EDT

[2d ago](#) [10.13](#)



Jamie Grierson

The prime minister's father, **Stanley Johnson**, [has secured French citizenship, according to reports](#).

French officials reportedly told the AFP news agency that Johnson, 81, whose mother was French, obtained French nationality on Wednesday.

Johnson, father to Boris, Rachel, Leo, Jo, Julia and Maximilian, campaigned for the UK to remain in the EU in 2016, while his son Boris led the leave movement. However, Johnson Sr has since expressed support for Brexit.

He confirmed he was applying for a French passport on the eve of Britain's Brexit transition period coming to an end on 31 December 2020.

He joins thousands of Britons who have acquired EU citizenship since the Brexit vote. He previously said:

It's not a question of becoming French. If I understood correctly, I am French. My mother was born in [France](#), her mother was entirely French, and her grandfather too. So for me it's a matter of claiming what I already have.



Stanley Johnson: 'If I understood correctly, I am French. My mother was born in France.' Photograph: Tolga Akmen/AFP/Getty Images

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[2d ago](#)[10.07](#)

Senior civil servants blocked from appearing at committee inquiry

The government has blocked the cabinet secretary, **Simon Case**, and government ethics chief **Darren Tierney** from appearing before the public administration and constitutional affairs committee.

The pair were due to give evidence as part of the committee's inquiry into the propriety of governance in the wake of Greensill.

The hearing was confirmed several weeks ago and it was due to discuss the Downing Street parties, the management of conflicts of interest and unregulated appointments in the civil service, and the proposed cuts to the civil service of 100,000 jobs.

However, the committee were then told that ministerial approval for the pair to appear had been pulled. The hearing has now been rescheduled for 28 June.

The committee's chair, William Wragg MP, said:

The session with the cabinet secretary was an important one considering the number of propriety and ethics issues on the agenda.

We had also hoped to get clarity on the government's plans for civil service reform, public scrutiny of which was much-needed after they were briefed to the press last weekend.

The intervention to pull the session at such short notice evades timely parliamentary scrutiny of these plans and puts government transparency in a poor light.

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Metropolitan police

Civil servants and No 10 advisers furious over single fine for Boris Johnson

PM received only one of 126 fixed-penalty notices relating to law-breaking parties, prompting claims Met police bungled inquiry



A former Met chief warned that the force risked damaging its credibility over the decision not to explain the process by which it decided who to fine.
Photograph: Dan Kitwood/Getty Images

[Heather Stewart](#), [Vikram Dodd](#), [Peter Walker](#) and [Rajeev Syal](#)

Thu 19 May 2022 15.28 EDT Last modified on Fri 20 May 2022 00.29 EDT

Civil servants and special advisers have reacted with fury and disbelief after Scotland Yard confirmed Boris Johnson got only [one of 126 fines](#) levied for law-breaking parties at the heart of Downing Street and Whitehall.

The [Metropolitan police](#) came under intense pressure to explain how it reached its conclusions after Downing Street said officers confirmed no further action would be taken against the prime minister despite him attending gatherings for which others were fined.

The Met's four-month £460,000 investigation has concluded, paving the way for the publication of a full report by the senior civil servant Sue Gray next week. Her preliminary report found "failures of leadership and judgment by different parts of No 10 and the Cabinet Office".

A former Met chief said the force was open to claims it had bungled the investigation unless it took steps to explain itself.

Brian Paddick, now a Liberal Democrat peer, said: "The Met has no defence to the accusation that it gave the prime minister one fixed-penalty notice (FPN) as that was the minimum he could be fined, but did not do so for other events for political reasons," he said.

"The decision not to explain is a mistake. It was a mistake not to investigate in the first place. They said there was no need to investigate and then they issued 126 fines, which is not good for their credibility."

The 126 fines were issued to 83 people – 35 men and 48 women – with at least one person receiving five FPNs, the Met said. The fines, typically £50, covered events held on eight separate dates.

Officials who were among those fined were struggling to understand how Johnson could have escaped further censure. He, his wife, Carrie, and the chancellor, Rishi Sunak, [received one fine each for celebrating the prime minister's birthday](#) in June 2020 when indoor gatherings, except for work purposes, were banned.

One Whitehall source pointed out that junior civil servants had received FPNs for going to at least one event which the prime minister not only attended but also gave a speech at. Another said: "It's the twentysomethings I feel sorry for – who went to events that were their seniors' leaving bashes and things."

A former No 10 staffer said during the Covid pandemic it was usual for Johnson to wander over to officials sharing a drink while praising them for “letting off steam”.

One official said another source of resentment was the fact that evidence presented in good faith to Gray by junior officials was handed to police, while more senior figures declined to cooperate.

“Some people worry that they ended up being penalised because, before the police were even involved, they tried to help with the report, when others who stood back maybe got away with it.”

There is widespread anger at the cabinet secretary, Simon Case, who was described by one Whitehall insider as a “submarine” who had offered no leadership or counsel throughout the crisis. “People trusted their bosses and they got fined, you’d think someone might acknowledge that at some stage,” they said.

Some officials believe Case should have shouldered part of the blame for the culture that developed in No 10 during lockdowns – and as the most senior civil servant, should have spoken up for junior staffers caught up in the inquiry.

Mike Clancy, the general secretary of the Prospect union representing civil servants, said: “The scale of these breaches of the law is clearly symptomatic of a deeply damaged culture at the heart of Downing Street. Ministers in this government are far too quick to blame officials when it is they who are responsible for taking the lead when it comes to setting that culture.”

Civil servants were contacted on Wednesday by a cabinet official liaising with the Met, who acknowledged it was a “challenging time” and warned that a “small number” of the 126 fines remain to be issued in the coming days.

Johnson is not expected to give his own response to the completion of the Met’s investigation until Gray publishes her full report.

Officials say it remains possible the final report could include photographs used as evidence but these are unlikely to be of parties in progress, or show individuals.

A decision also had yet to be made on naming any individuals involved, although if this happened, it would only be for people at senior grades.

A source said the report, which was being updated before being sent to lawyers, would be sober in tone: “I don’t think there will be any salacious details not heard before. It will be quite dry, but it will set out the facts, and people can assess those as they choose.”

Conservative backbenchers who previously called for Johnson’s removal say next week will be a moment of truth for colleagues who have withheld judgment about his fate. “If Gray’s report is published next week, they’re going to run out of road, and they’re going to have to make a decision.”

Meanwhile the Met will face further questions about its handling of the investigation, said Len Duvall, the leader of the Labour group on the [London](#) assembly. “I think the police and crime committee will want to ask questions and understand how the Met have reached their conclusions about the prime minister only getting one fine,” he said.

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“I think from the information in the public domain, he [Johnson] has got away lightly. It is for the police to justify why there was just one fine.”

The Met’s acting deputy commissioner, Helen Ball, said the fines were issued for the breaches after detectives scoured more than 500 photos plus emails, CCTV, and door logs to see who was where and when.

“Our view is that these 126 referrals are clearcut. We made sure after a really thorough investigation that clear evidence existed of a breach,” she said.

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Boris Johnson

Boris Johnson and Partygate: how did PM get only one fine?

Experts say it defies logic but Johnson attended gatherings deemed to have breached the rules without himself being fined



Boris Johnson received one fine and is known to have been at up to five other events for which FPNs have since been issued. Photograph: Tayfun Salci/ZUMA Press Wire/Rex/Shutterstock

Peter Walker Political correspondent

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Fri 20 May 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 20 May 2022 01.34 EDT

With the dust settling on the Metropolitan police's long investigation into Covid breaches inside Downing Street, one big question remains: how did Boris Johnson escape with just one fine?

Legal experts say it defies logic – and to many voters, it defies common sense too.

This is, however, a mystery that appears unlikely to be solved any time soon.

It's not that the PM and his wife got off scot-free. Johnson and Carrie did break Covid laws.

Last month, they [received fixed-penalty notices \(FPNs\)](#) for attending the prime minister's birthday celebration in June 2020, as did Rishi Sunak, the chancellor, who reportedly made just a fleeting appearance.

But while Johnson is known to have been at up to five other events for which FPNs have been issued, and [reportedly poured drinks](#) at one of them, he has escaped further punishment.

What appeared most anomalous, according to Adam Wagner, the Doughty Street Chambers barrister who is an expert on Covid rules, is how Johnson attended gatherings deemed to have breached the rules without himself being fined.

“We still don’t know very much about how the regulations work, because the higher courts haven’t looked at this,” Wagner said. “But generally, the decision is difficult to understand. The way the regulations are drafted is that the gathering itself has to be reasonably necessary, and the reason why somebody participates is not really relevant.”

To escape a fine, Wagner added, Johnson would have needed to provide a reasonable excuse: “But I don’t understand how you could ever reasonably attend an illegal gathering, unless you attended by accident, realised and left very quickly. I don’t see why, if the prime minister had a reasonable excuse for attending, the other people attending wouldn’t.”

One *possible* escape would be if the police viewed events as more than one gathering – for example as reasonably necessary for work when Johnson was there, but descending into socialising after he left. However, Wagner noted, this would appear to be contradicted by reports such as Johnson pouring drinks.

Another get-out raised by Johnson allies is the fact that Downing Street is both his workplace and home.

However, a change to Covid regulation at the end of May 2020 specifically ended being in your own home as a potential loophole.

Ultimately, without knowing what evidence the police received, it is impossible to be certain why Johnson was fined for the one event and not others.

And given the nature of the Met's inquiry, this evidence will not be aired in public, beyond whatever necessarily anonymised summary appears in the report of the senior official, Sue Gray, next week.

It is one of the several curiosities of Partygate that it involved huge stakes, not least the political survival of a prime minister, while simultaneously being centred on what are, in strictly legal terms, relatively low-level offences.

"Yes, this was people breaking rules they had made themselves, which is important," one criminal lawyer noted, speaking anonymously. "But at that the same time, you can very easily be fined more for parking on a double yellow line."

The nature of the offences meant they fell into the system of FPNs, which are investigated and levied entirely by the police, with courts only becoming involved if the fine is challenged.

Having been forced into an inquiry it had not wanted to undertake by the sheer volume of material gathered by Gray, the Met's infrequent updates were parsimonious, even opaque, even by the standards of police investigations.

While the force was at times criticised for its approach to openness, there is no obligation for someone to declare an FPN; and if they do not challenge it in court, there is no public record of one being received.

The Met did have a significant amount of evidence to go through: the team of 12 detectives had access to 345 documents, among them witness

statements, emails and door logs for one of the UK's most secure addresses, as well as more than 500 photographs and CCTV images.

However, no one suspected of wrongdoing was formally interviewed. Instead, police received 204 questionnaires filled out by people identified as connected to the gatherings.

This was another complicating factor – some people would have been notably more open and voluble with their answers than others.

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“If someone was sent one of those questionnaires and they went to me, I’d say: don’t answer it,” the criminal lawyer said. “You’ve got no obligation to fill it in. You’re not under arrest. You’ve not even been cautioned. If you tell the truth, you might be fined, and if you lie, you’re potentially committing another offence. So why risk it?”

Overall, Wagner said, the lack of transparency from a police-only investigation was “unsatisfactory”.

“The reality of it is that the Metropolitan police have decided there were at least eight illegal gatherings over the course of a year,” he said. “And the prime minister appears to have attended six of them. You think about how careful other workplaces were being, and the actual people who were writing the rules were treating them with a wanton disregard.”

A more legally comprehensible outcome, he said, would have been if police had fined Johnson just for the birthday party while decreeing that the only other illegal gatherings were three others he did not attend – a Christmas party in December 2020 and the two events on the same night in April last year, the night before Prince Philip’s funeral.

“It’s right that they take a cautious approach. And if they had said the other gatherings were on the borderline, so we’re not going to act, I would have thought that was quite liberal of them, but it would have an internal logic,” Wagner said.

“But they have given people criminal penalties for a series of illegal gatherings, just not the prime minister. I think he’s lucky to have got away with it.”

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Interview

‘We can forgive even bad fathers’: Mia Hansen-Løve on making a movie haunted by Ingmar Bergman

[Stuart Jeffries](#)



Mia Hansen-Løve ... ‘There is no chance I would compare myself to Bergman.’

Photograph: Vianney Le Caer/Invision/AP

When the French director stayed at Bergman’s retreat on Fårö island to write a screenplay about a marriage breakdown, she was consumed by her thoughts about the narcissistic genius of the great Swedish director



Fri 20 May 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 20 May 2022 05.51 EDT

Six years ago, Mia Hansen-Løve went to a little Baltic island to write a screenplay. On the face of it, a terrible idea. Fårö is not just any island, but the place [Ingmar Bergman](#) lived, worked, died and is buried.

Like a cinephile Goldilocks, Hansen-Løve slept in a bed in his old house, which may have been haunted. “One night I was alone watching a documentary on Bergman. He was talking about ghosts and sitting in his kitchen. Exactly where I was sitting! I freaked out, and fled to a B&B. I’ve never felt so close to believing in ghosts.”

How on earth did she expect to get any work done, haunted by the ghost of a narcissist? “When I think about it rationally it should have been awful,” she

says over a video call from Paris. “The burden of Bergman’s heritage! This big male genius!”

For Bergman, it was a constant flow of ideas. I always feel this will be the last film for me

Bergman was one of those annoying people who find creativity easy: “For him it was a constant flow of ideas.” For Hansen-Løve, now 41, it is the opposite: “I always feel I have the one thing to say but always that it will be the last thing. And I always think this will be the last film I write. All that makes every new writing process tense and somehow painful. I feel very jealous of Bergman”

She had a simple premise for her screenplay. Amazingly, in Bergman’s house, she managed to develop it into her new film, a clever, playful postmodern work about sex, relationships, the anxiety of influence, how reality makes art, and vice versa, and how artistic couples help and hinder each other’s creativity.



Vicky Krieps and Tim Roth in Bergman Island.

Most of all, though, it is about how making movies is a different business for women than for men like Bergman. It begins with a couple, Tony (Tim

Roth) and Chris (Vicky Krieps), both film directors, arriving one summer on Fårö to write their screenplays – just as Hansen-Løve did. Tony is older and more successful, and his screenplay spools out of him seemingly unbidden. Chris struggles, worrying if her sliver of an idea is any good.

Bergman Island has been taken by some as a “*film-à-clef*” about Hansen-Løve’s relationship with the French film director [Olivier Assayas](#), who is 26 years her senior. In 1998, aged 17 and still a *lycéenne*, she made her screen debut in Assayas’s *Late August, Early September*. Two years later she appeared in his *Sentimental Destinies*, by which time they were lovers.

After studying dramatic art and writing for *Cahiers du Cinéma*, Hansen-Løve directed her first film, [All Is Forgiven](#) (2007), followed by [The Father of My Children](#) (2009). Her recent films have drawn on intimate relationships. In 2011’s [Goodbye First Love](#), the architect, who becomes a young student’s mentor and lover, is modelled on Assayas; in [Eden](#) (2015), the DJ is modelled on her brother Sven; and in [Things to Come](#) in 2016, Isabelle Huppert plays a character inspired by Mia’s philosopher mother.

In Bergman Island, which she wrote the year she and Assayas broke up, the couple’s marriage is unravelling: his emotional chilliness with her contrasts with the intense bondage-sex drawings she discovers in his notebook, while she seems liberated by a flirtation with a gawky film student she meets on the island.



Isabelle Huppert in *Things to Come*. Photograph: Stx Entertainment/Allstar

She draws a parallel between her couple and the lovers in [Kubrick's Eyes Wide Shut](#). “Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman meet again after years of alienation. He says to her: ‘What shall we do now?’ and she says: ‘Let’s fuck!’ The couple are very close, yet very distant. It’s a paradox and yet I understand it very well. Tony and Chris are like that – a couple who are remote, yet intimate. That sort of paradox is very much what my film is about.

“But it isn’t autobiographical,” she adds. Not at all? “I understand why people would say that and, of course, Olivier has certainly inspired some aspects of the character of Tony.”

In one scene in the film, Tony tells an admiring audience after a screening that his films always have to have a female lead. A quick look at Assayas’s filmography - Maggie Cheung in *Irma Vep*, Emmanuelle Béart in *Sentimental Destinies*, Juliette Binoche in [Clouds of Sils Maria](#) or [Kristen Stewart in Personal Shopper](#) – suggest that Tony’s creative tastes mirror Olivier’s.



Lola Creton and Sebastian Urzendowsky in *Goodbye First Love*.
Photograph: Artificial Eye/Sportsphoto/Allstar

But Tony and Olivier are very different, Hansen-Løve insists. “Olivier never set foot on the island, though he is an admirer of Bergman’s work. Maybe he would have been scared to. For me, maybe it’s easier because I’m just like this female director so there no chance that I would compare myself to Bergman.”

Certainly there is no oedipal score settling in Hansen-Løve’s film. But there is something more interesting – a meditation on what it means to be as cruel and ruthless in life and art as Bergman, and where it’s necessary to be a narcissist to be truly creative.

Early in the film, Chris and Tony have dinner with the leading members of [the Ingmar Bergman Foundation](#), who tell her that the great genius directed more than 60 films and 170 plays, while fathering nine children with six women. “How do you think he could have done that if he was also changing diapers?” asks one of them, rhetorically.

The question goes to the heart of Hansen-Løve’s concerns. She has a daughter with Assayas and a son by her current partner, the film-maker Laurent Perreau. “When you are a woman and you make films and you

make kids, you have these worries. Does being a mother mean I'm not going to be involved enough in my films? Can I be a director in the way I want to be – passionately, psychically and spiritually engaged?



Mia Hansen-Løve on set.

“It’s fucking difficult!” she shouts.

It wasn’t for Bergman. He let his partners – including the stars of his films [Liv Ullmann](#) and [Bibi Andersson](#) - do the child-rearing, while he made three films a year, many of them deranging studies of female experience. “I haven’t put an ounce of effort into my families,” [Bergman once said](#).

And yet, she refuses to be judgmental. “I would probably not have liked to have been one of his women, but then I am very happy he made 60 films that I can watch and enjoy.” She says she takes succour from the fact that one of his sons, [Ingmar Bergman Jr](#), has revived his father’s film production company. “He seems to be at total peace with who his father was. I find that quite beautiful. We can forgive even bad fathers.”

Nor is she critical about the transformation of Fårö, since Bergman’s death in 2007, into a secular shrine. Today, you can go on a [“big Bergman safari” bus tour](#) of his film locales. There are conferences about his films and

retreats for artists just as he wished. Screenings take place at his home cinema, though visitors are warned not to sit in the great man's seat.

When I giggle over this, Hansen-Løve demurs. "This kind of sacralisation of the cinema and of the director is something that I don't want to spit on. I think it's important for the kind of film-lovers that I belong to. It's part of the beauty of the relationship to this art."

I never felt so much lightness and peacefulness, and even playfulness, on Fårö

Happily, Mia Hansen-Løve was not crushed by the great man's burden while she worked on Fårö. Instead, she was creatively catalysed to write with unprecedented freedom. "I can't explain really, but I never felt so much lightness and peacefulness and I would even say playfulness."



Mia Wasikowska in Bergman Island. Photograph: CG Cinema

That beguiling playfulness comes out clearly in how the film blurs fiction and reality. When Chris describes her scenario to Tony, her idea comes to life before us as a film within the film we're watching. It's the story of a woman called Amy (Mia Wasikowska), who rekindles an affair with an old

flame, Joseph (Anders Danielsen Lie), when they both attend a friend's wedding on Fårö.

Then, Hansen Love's film gets even more imaginatively playful. We see Chris shooting the film she described to Tony. Wasikowska and Lie appear as themselves, and Chris flirts with Lie. It's more than a Brechtian demolition of the fourth wall. "It is a very complex conceit, but there is nothing intellectual about how I wrote it. It was something mystical, like a vision."

Her latest film, *One Fine Morning*, which premieres at Cannes this month, was made in lockdown and stars Léa Seydoux as a single mother. Once more, it draws on the director's own life and explores another emotional paradox. "It's the portrait of a woman whose father is dying, and she's overcome with grief and yet she is also falling in love at the same time. It's about those two impossible emotions existing together. Impossibility," she laughs, "is what I want to show in cinema."

Bergman Island is in UK cinemas from 3 June. *One Fine Morning* premieres in Cannes on 20 May.

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Sarah Perry

‘When Claire Danes and Tom Hiddleston were cast I was in shock’: Sarah Perry on The Essex Serpent

As an adaptation of her bestselling novel comes to screens, Sarah Perry describes the joys of being on set – and how the production restored her faith in storytelling



Claire Danes and Tom Hiddleston in *The Essex Serpent* ... ‘The series, like the novel, is radical in its treatment of intimacy, affection and wonder’
Photograph: Dean Rogers/Apple TV+

Sarah Perry

Fri 20 May 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 20 May 2022 10.05 EDT

In March 2021, I was driven by a stranger down to the Essex coast, and there I found myself at the end of the 19th century, in a place that had never existed, full of people who’d never been born.

At any rate, that was the impression; in fact, I'd been deposited in a field on Mersea Island, which is cut off from the Essex mainland by a causeway inaccessible at high tide. Filming was under way for an adaptation of my novel [The Essex Serpent](#), and since Mersea was one of the locations making do for Aldwinter, the imagined village where the novel is set, I'd been invited to take a look. The field had been colonised by a series of trucks and trailers, and everywhere I looked crew members were dashing about with clipboards and headsets, occasionally interspersed with actors in top hats, or in petticoats inches deep in Essex mud.

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I know Mersea well, and had last visited with my goddaughter, so as I walked about there was the strangest sensation of double familiarity. On the one hand, there were the same old wooden cottages, and the same sea wall with shingle below it, and the cafe where we often bought ice-cream – but overlaying it all was Aldwinter, familiar to me only because I'd invented it. Down on the quay, a fire hose was doing the work of high tide, and seaweed had been scattered about; concrete bollards had been concealed by wooden crates, and fishing nets were hung over garden walls to dry. Everywhere there was an atmosphere of diligent hard work, as crew members adjusted baskets for eels, or children wandered past in shawls and clogs, but there was also the eerie atmosphere peculiar to that part of the Essex coast. It was Aldwinter to the letter, and astoundingly uncanny: it was as if the acts of writing and reading had been bypassed entirely, and the whole thing had leapt clean out of my skull.

As I arrived, filming had begun on a scene in which Aldwinter's vicar Will Ransome (played – perfectly, in my disinterested opinion – by Tom Hiddleston) is briefly seen remonstrating with his sanctimonious verger outside the village school. The director Clio Barnard and the screenwriter Anna Symon welcomed me with characteristic kindness and I was given a headset, and shown the action on an iPad. Over and over, without once appearing to grow weary or impatient, the actors worked diligently at the brief scene until it was right, and the sight of this moved me almost to tears. That the story I'd written in a small, cold room in a Norwich terrace would

one day be accorded such extraordinary care by so many people was remarkable, and I went to sit on the quay with a solitary cigarette, looking at the Thames barges moored nearby, trying to accommodate it all.

I suppose it would be usual for a writer to daydream about this sort of thing, but I never did: I'd allowed myself only the hope of kind reviews, and the means to pay the council tax on time. So the year of publication had constituted a series of wonderful shocks, one of which was finding myself in the offices of See-Saw Films, the production company that optioned the novel. Largely I remember an immense bearded lurcher taking up a sofa in the corner, and a sensation – quite rare to me – of deep shyness. I was treated by the prospective producers with great care. Was there anything in particular I felt should be done with the novel? There was, I said, screwing my courage to the sticking place: keep it gothic, and keep the women real. To the lasting confusion of a number of readers, the novel depicted women as they were in the 1890s – not fainting away in violet-scented swoons and never allowed beyond the withdrawing room without a chaperone, but vital, intelligent, lively and well-educated people, involved in politics, social justice and the sciences, and I felt if that was lost, the betrayal would be far worse than an injustice against fiction. They gave me their word, and I left the meeting assured the book was in the right hands, and promptly forgot all about it.

To witness the years of diligence and skill the production entailed
returned the courage I'd lost

I forgot partly as an act of will. I'd been cautioned to expect agonising delays: there was casting to be seen to, of course, and all sorts of machinations regarding funding and distribution. Now and then I'd be given good news, and occasionally bad; but already I was coming to the end of my third novel, and was conscious of the dangers of dwelling on a moment of professional success, and never moving beyond it. I'd done my work, and handed it over: I didn't feel it was any of my business. Besides, I'd seen Clio's vision, and read Anna's scripts, and it seemed to me then – and it certainly seems to me now – that in fact they'd amplify the novel as they altered it, so that the TV series and the book would be happy companions, neither cancelling the other out. Still: it was extremely difficult to maintain

such a stern grip on myself when Claire Danes and Tom Hiddleston were cast, and I'm afraid on one occasion I forgot myself so far as to lie face down on the carpet in a state of elated shock.

Often I'm asked if the lead actors resemble the characters as I'd imagined them. The truth is that I give less thought to the looks of my characters than to their interior lives: as I write, I'm not looking at them, I am inhabiting them. Claire Danes, who takes the lead role of Cora Seaborne and is a slight woman of extraordinary poise, doesn't exactly resemble Cora, who is described as tall and broad-hipped and untidy. It doesn't matter: the moment she came striding through Aldwinter on a sunny March morning, I saw only my Cora – a woman of warmth and vitality and intellect, hardly able to contain her lust for the world, and nothing like as wise as she thinks she is.

Now and then, the experience has proved melancholy. The novel was published six years ago, and sometimes I've melodramatically said that the woman who wrote it is dead. I was 35 when I wrote the final pages: much is changed and lost since then. The series, like the novel, is optimistic and even radical in its treatment of intimacy, affection and wonder, and I suspect I've grown a little harder and more cynical in the years that followed. Returning to the novel – on one occasion in corsets and teal-blue Victorian gown as an extra at the Natural History Museum – has been like passing my past self on the stairs, always with a pang of affection and loss.

But earlier this spring, as I was shown the series in a tiny Soho cinema, there was only pleasure and delight. All I could do was thank the director, and the writer, and everyone within earshot – because it isn't pride I feel, it's gratitude. There had been a time during the pandemic when I'd come to feel that the pursuit of literature was more or less worthless, and that I ought to have devoted myself to medicine, perhaps, or the law. To witness the years of diligence and skill the production entailed returned the courage I'd lost: suddenly the act of storytelling was restored to something noble, and worth the full attention of my life. "What will survive of us," said Philip Larkin, albeit grudgingly, "is love." Well: *The Essex Serpent* is a book about love, that was written with love, and now has been treated with love. I might allow myself to hope it's what survives of me.

Sarah Perry will discuss The Essex Serpent and answer your questions at a Guardian Live online event on Wednesday 8 June. Book tickets [here](#). The programme is available on Apple TV+.

- The Essex Serpent by Sarah Perry (Profile Books Ltd, £8.99). To support The Guardian and Observer, order your copy at guardianbookshop.com. Delivery charges may apply.
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ExperienceWeightlifting

Experience: I'm a 79-year-old world champion powerlifter

People look at me and say, ‘She won’t be able to lift that.’ I like surprising them



Nora Langdon: ‘I didn’t do any sports when I was younger. I was lazy.’
Photograph: CJ Benninger/The Guardian

Nora Langdon

Fri 20 May 2022 05.00 EDT

I started powerlifting when I was 65. I worked in real estate in Michigan for about 35 years, and when I retired I decided I wanted to lose a bit of weight. A friend’s husband, Art Little, who is a personal trainer, invited me to his gym. He introduced me to powerlifting and is still my trainer now.

The first time I went, he gave me a broomstick to lift. The next day I told myself I wouldn't return, but I heard a voice in my head telling me to go back. So, I ended up returning day after day. After a few weeks, my trainer encouraged me to go to a tournament to watch others compete. I was really amazed by all these young women, but there was no one of my age. I asked my trainer if he thought I could do it and he said, "Oh, sure."

The first time I competed was at a state meet. There were about 45 people across the different age groups, which ranged from teenagers to people my age. There were only three of us in my age category. I did the bench press, the deadlift and the squat – the three types of lifts in powerlifting – and came first in all three. I was amazed that I won, because the others had been doing it far longer. I just came in after two months and wiped them all out. After that, I knew powerlifting was for me.

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My trainer had me going to the gym three times a week. I improved so quickly because I was consistent. If I was supposed to be there on Monday, I would be there, regardless of whether it was a holiday, raining or snowing. I didn't miss a day – and that's how I'm up to the weight I'm lifting now, although the gains happened slowly. Each year, I was getting better.

When I began powerlifting, I could bench press about 36-41kg, but now it's 91kg. My top squat is 188kg and my deadlift has increased from about 36kg to 188kg. I'm the world record-holder in all three in the 60-plus age category.

I didn't do any sports when I was younger; I was lazy. By the time I was in my 60s, I felt constantly tired and I'd get out of breath walking up and down stairs when I was showing homes as an estate agent. It was embarrassing. Now, the doctor tells me my heart is strong and healthy.

You have to build yourself up, do something active, move your body. If you sit down and do nothing, you turn to dust

My father was a workaholic. He was employed in a steel factory and passed his work ethic down to me. He instilled in me the idea that you have to be consistent and set your mind to things to get anywhere in life. I still train three days a week, with each session lasting one to three hours. Each day is dedicated to one of three powerlifting disciplines. I also do a lot of varied workouts in the gym to get my body ready for a tournament, such as leg presses, squats and pull-downs.

Working out can be challenging sometimes, but whenever I get home afterwards, I feel great. My trainer is really proud of me. I've been invited to take part in the world championships every year since I started powerlifting and I've won in my category every time. The younger competitors tell me they want to be like me when they get to my age. Judges have been shocked by how much I can lift. People often look at me and say, "Oh, she won't be able to lift that." I like surprising them.

It can be expensive, though – there's a lot of travel involved, and a piece of specialist kit, such as a squat suit, costs between \$200 and \$500 (£243-£404). I supplement my income doing food deliveries.

I'm 79 now and I tell people who are my age that they can do this, too; they just have to be consistent and start with something small. You have to build yourself up. If not powerlifting, then do something active. You have to move your body. If you sit down and do nothing, you turn to dust.

When I'm out and about, neighbours will ask me if I'm the lady who powerlifts. My daughter is a nurse and her colleagues ask if she powerlifts, too. She doesn't, but is proud of me. My son loves that I do it. His friends say he should be in the gym and he tells them it's his mama's thing. I can lift more than he can.

My goal is to do 454kg (1,000lb) total across the three disciplines by the time I go to the world championships in November. Though my biggest achievement is improving my health. As long as I keep my good health and a strong mind, that's all I care about.

As told to Amy Sedghi

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Interview

‘We’ve had our humanity ripped away’: meet Jeshi, the rapper raging at the cost of living crisis

[Ben Beaumont-Thomas](#)



It could be you ... Jeshi, who admits the odds of music ‘working out are slim’. Photograph: Francis Plummer

The east London MC was carrying a knife at 11 but is now about to release an era-defining album. The trouble is that it’s the Tories’ austerity era – something he’d rather see the back of



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Fri 20 May 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 20 May 2022 10.57 EDT

It took being beaten up on London’s Victoria line aged 13, in front of his mum and two sisters, for Jeshi to change tack. “I was sitting on the train, eating McDonald’s; I think we were going to the cinema. I look up and there’s all these guys in front of me. By the time I’d taken my headphones out, they’d punched me.” He chose not to retaliate. “Ego says: go and do something back. But I thought: ‘Who cares? I’m here, I’m alive, there’s no problem.’ I am a rarity in that situation.”

This moment, he says, was “this pivot”, away from a life of retaliatory violence and towards his current career as a strikingly singular rapper. Growing up in a deprived part of Walthamstow, east London, he started carrying a knife aged 11, something that “just feels so normal. You never really leave this two-mile radius where everyone is like you, and you find

yourself in situations that are quite fucked up. But when you're in them you're like: this is just life. You're born into situations where you have problems with people you don't even really know, but you want to kill each other."

People say: we need to open youth clubs. Like all these kids are going to be: let's drop the knives and play pool

Now 27, radiating zest in his record label offices, he is well aware of the path he could have gone down; an old schoolfriend was stabbed to death two years ago. "You feel guilt: he could have been me. He wasn't some drug lord. It's just as you get older these things get more intense: instead of being punched a couple of times on a train, you're getting stabbed outside a club. It's just a natural progression of that stuff, if you don't remove yourself from it."

Knife crime is one of the social ills Jeshi explores on his superb debut album *Universal Credit*, but as with its other subjects – such as living amid austerity, or self-worth being eroded by social media – he documents it plainly. "When it feels like someone's preaching at me, I switch off," he says. Inspired by Radiohead, Pink Floyd and Amy Winehouse while sounding nothing like any of them, and in its own hook-strewn lane somewhere between UK drill and underground US hip-hop, the album rivals the Streets' *Original Pirate Material* or Dizzee Rascal's *Boy in Da Corner* for frank, sometimes bleak but often funny framings of UK city life. Jeshi stumbles around in a druggy fog, going clubbing, driving, working and listlessly watching Phillip Schofield and *Loose Women*, a portrait of the hand-to-mouth existence you live when you're poor. "Everything's about today – what's going to make me look good, or feel good, right now," he says.

A frequent assertion by the comfortably middle class is that the perpetrators of knife violence (or other predominantly working-class crime) should simply choose not to be criminals – easier said than done in an environment where social mobility is close to nil and retributive violence can circle for

years. “I love that people are that idealistic,” scoffs Jeshi, putting on a Jacob Rees-Mogg voice: “‘You should just stop doing that and go off to school, young sir.’ And I don’t like it when people say: ‘Well, they need to open youth clubs.’ Open as many as you like: you think all these kids are going to be like: ‘Let’s drop the knives and go and play pool?’”

To try to succeed in a music career, for instance, particularly a style of rap that doesn’t sit in the mainstream, “you have to be a bit crazy”, Jeshi says. “The odds of it working out are slim; you have to be naive. I hate whenever anyone says ‘Plan B’ to me – shut the fuck up. I always took it as an insult: why should I not think I can do this?” He talks, tongue half in cheek, about the “superpower of poverty: what it does, sometimes, is that it gives you nothing to lose”. But he is scathing about a UK that leaves behind those who can scarcely risk that kind of fearlessness. “You can work in this country five days a week, in most places, and never hope to get a house. The other thing I hate: if you’re on benefits – ‘How dare you get your nails done?’ Well, maybe it makes them feel good. That £25 getting their nails done brings them some kind of happiness.

“The world of the lower class, of knife crime, of drug use: all these are people who have had the humanity ripped away from them. No one cares *why* they’re doing it, or what makes them feel like that. They just want to hit them with the ‘bad’ sticker: outcast, goodbye, stay over there.”

There’s not this thing of: now I’m going to buy my first house. All these things are completely alien concepts

Jeshi’s success – some of his tracks nose into millions of streams – is hard won. He has never met his father, who was deported to Jamaica in his very early youth; he was raised by his mother – after she had a spell in prison – and grandmother, who are hymned on his track Two Mums. “In the community I’m from, [not having a dad] was so normal, it never felt weird. If someone was like: ‘I live with my mum and my dad’, you’d be like: really?” His mum never finished school; when Jeshi did, he didn’t know where to go next. “You don’t know how to manoeuvre your child through that – it’s foreign territory,” he says. “There’s not this thing of: now I’m

going to buy my first house. All these things were completely alien concepts.”

In the late 00s, Jeshi’s peer group were making the most of free recording technology to create their own grime tracks: “To see it in such a tangible, accessible way it was like: whoa, these are people I’m in science classes with.” As his tastes expanded, he realised he didn’t want to make straightforward music. “When you’re from those kinds of environments, the mind-state is very limited. You do what everyone does, because if you don’t, people are going to look at you and say: that’s weird. I distanced myself from everyone I was around. I wanted to mould my own opinions before I let other people.”

Beginning with the Pussy Palace EP in 2016, his atmospheric tracks did touch on topics shared by his peers, with lyrics about getting high and/or horny, and listlessly attempting to manifest material things – Prada glasses, champagne, marble floors. “I was drawing from nothing in particular,” he says. “I got to a point where I wasn’t happy with where things were going for me, and it’s human instinct to blame everyone else: label, manager.” To make Universal Credit, “I snapped out of it: how can I put in more energy, effort, thought?”

His previous EP, 2020’s Bad Taste, didn’t set the world alight. “You have these grandiose ideas: I’m going to put this out and I’m going to ride off into the sunset. And it’s very grounding when it doesn’t happen. Everything I’ve ever released has been painful: you’re still in the same jobs you hate, getting fired and having to get a new one, having to borrow money off people.” He went on universal credit while he made his album – the cover shows him receiving a cheque for the benefit’s monthly payout, cut to £324.84 after the Tories removed the temporary Covid uplift – and then worked in a warehouse for £8.50 an hour, “barely any different” in terms of take-home pay. “That cut to universal credit, it wouldn’t have made a difference to the government to have not done that,” he says. “That extra bit wasn’t debilitating the UK economy, and £20 a week means a lot to people. Unfortunately, this is a cold, callous world.”

Jeshi says that at 27, he doesn't remember a time before the Tories' austerity measures, the unspoken central thesis of which is to lower the threshold of what people find acceptable. "There's this hopelessness, that this is just what people expect it to be at this stage."

In his lyrics, his solution is frequently to use ecstasy or alcohol to blot this all out, as on the exceptionally good single 3210, which evokes the grey sweat of bad pills. "Sometimes when you don't have money, you go out, you get pissed, and that [stress] all disappears. You're tapping that Monzo until the overdraft maxes out: 'It don't matter, we'll fix it tomorrow.'" These snapshots are all part of his central project: "I have a duty to open a window to my world. I don't want it to feel vague, or," – he grins righteously – "fucking American."

He admits that he doesn't have any solutions to inequality; but, while you suspect the Tories would rather citizens and the private sector take responsibility for working them out, nor should he. Instead, his self-portraiture is inspiring in its craft and damning in its truth. "Anything hard that happens in your life shapes who you are," he says. "You just learn to wear this stuff, and walk through life with it."

Universal Credit is released 27 May on Because Music

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2022.05.20 - Opinion

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- Boris Johnson and I agreed on Northern Ireland. What happened to that good faith?
- The clouds of Partygate may part for Johnson, but there will be another one along soon
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OpinionFood & drink industry

The government's obesity U-turn is a total Eton mess

[Jamie Oliver](#)

There is still time to stop the junk food ads ban being railroaded for short-term political ends

- Jamie Oliver is a chef and campaigner



‘Have no doubt that these policies would have a profound impact on child health.’ Jamie Oliver at his Eton Mess protest outside Downing Street.
Photograph: Dominic Lipinski/PA

Fri 20 May 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 20 May 2022 13.45 EDT

You really couldn’t make it up. Once again, the government has got itself into a fine mess. This time, it has gone back on its promise to make child

health a priority, blowing [a massive hole](#) in its own obesity strategy that at one stage looked genuinely progressive and even world leading.

Let's take a closer look at what just happened. At a time when child obesity has had the [biggest annual spike](#) since records began, and when kids from lower income families are twice as likely to be obese, Boris Johnson and the health secretary, Sajid Javid, have U-turned on the central policies in their own obesity strategy. They have delayed the ban on junk food advertising and multi-buy supermarket deals. These policies have only recently become law – in the case of the advertising restrictions they passed through parliament [only last month](#).

Have no doubt that these policies would have a profound impact on child health. Advertising restrictions work. A recent [peer-reviewed study](#) by the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine showed that thanks to the mayor of London's junk food advertising restrictions on the capital's buses and tube trains, families are now buying 1,000 fewer calories a week from food that is high in fat, salt and sugar.

These policies are also really popular with the public – recent polling from [ComRes](#) found that 74% of people surveyed support advertising restrictions. Measures to stop the promotion of junk food are also backed by doctors, nurses, health experts and health charities. My recent [open letter to the prime minister](#) asking him to reverse his U-turn was signed by more than 30 organisations, including Cancer Research and British Heart Foundation. And it doesn't stop there – these policies are supported by members of his own party including [William Hague](#); former health ministers [Lord Bethell and Steve Brine](#); and “red wall” MPs such as [Jo Gideon](#). According to Hague, the prime minister was torpedoed into kicking back the junk food marketing restrictions by a tiny minority of Tory backbenchers who threatened to put in letters of no confidence if he didn't. What an Eton mess this is, when critical child health policies are being decided by a cabal who now seemingly have the PM in their pocket.

The spurious reasons the government has given to justify these screeching policy U-turns are that they will help with the cost of living crisis and they will also help businesses. The government knows full well that neither of

those things are true. Why? Because its own research shows that these policies will not save families money, and that multi-buys are carefully designed to make people spend more money (of course they are!), not less. In fact, they make families spend more on their weekly shop. As far as restricting junk food advertising is concerned, stopping companies from marketing foods high in sugar, fat and salt to children has absolutely nothing to do with the cost of living.

The evidence could also not be clearer that policies that are good for child health can also be good for business. Before the Transport for London advertising restrictions came into force two years ago, the advertising and food industries were saying they would be hit hard and advertising revenues would tumble. What actually happened? Food companies simply started advertising their slightly healthier products and TfL advertising revenues actually increased by £2.3m that year.

So where do we go from here? In a few weeks' time Johnson and Javid will try to sell us their sparkly new health disparities white paper. It's increasingly looking like a bad joke. How could we possibly take them seriously when only weeks earlier they have U-turned on their own critical, evidence-based child health policies that have been years in the making? It's hard to imagine something better designed to increase health disparities than this spineless U-turn driven by political short-termism. And why do they think the tiny group of backbench MPs that have ripped a huge hole in their obesity strategy will allow them to include any meaningful policies in their new white paper?

There is still time for Johnson and Javid to do the right thing. I like Javid. I think he is a decent human being, one of the good ones. Now he needs to step up and tell his boss to protect and promote child health. To come up with measures that genuinely support those who are already struggling to feed themselves and their families well. Otherwise both the soon-to-be-launched health disparities white paper and his recently launched cancer plan won't be worth the paper they are written on.

- Jamie Oliver is a chef and campaigner
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[OpinionNorthern Ireland](#)

Boris Johnson and I agreed on Northern Ireland. What happened to that good faith?

[Leo Varadkar](#)

The EU's flexibility has been met by the UK government talking about scrapping the protocol and breaching international law

- Leo Varadkar is Ireland's tánaiste (deputy prime minister), and was taoiseach during Brexit negotiations



Leo Varadkar and Boris Johnson in October 2019. Photograph: Getty Images

Fri 20 May 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 20 May 2022 05.49 EDT

In October 2019 I [met Boris Johnson](#) in the Wirral. It was an appropriately “neutral” venue, and I was happy to meet the prime minister in the north-

west of England. At the time, controversy surrounded the backstop, which the European Union had negotiated with the former prime minister Theresa May. This mechanism was designed to prevent a hard border on the island of Ireland, and to protect Ireland's place in the EU single market while respecting Northern Ireland's place in the UK's internal market. It would have kept the whole of the United Kingdom close to the European single market on regulations and customs rules, thus removing the need for many of the checks between Britain and Northern Ireland that are currently required.

May's commitment to the union was so strong and genuine that she was willing to opt for a "soft" Brexit to protect it. I was keen to hear whether Johnson had any suggestions that could resolve the impasse, and perhaps develop into an alternative to the backstop. We had a very good meeting, much of it conducted in private, one-on-one. We both wanted a deal. I felt that we understood each other's needs and red lines. A crucial point was democratic consent: we both agreed that only the [Northern Ireland](#) assembly should be allowed to revoke any solution that we agreed.

Immediately following the meeting, we both spoke publicly about having reached a "[pathway towards an agreement](#)". This pathway led ultimately to the protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland, a vital component in the "oven-ready" Brexit deal that the prime minister used to secure his 80-seat majority in the general election that followed.

Since then, Brexit has taken place, and the protocol is now part of a legally binding international agreement. It is international law. In its final form, it was co-designed by the UK and the EU. It was adopted by the British parliament, the European parliament and the Irish parliament, as well as the governments of 26 other member states. That's not an easy thing to do.

The protocol is working. There is no hard border between Ireland's north and south. The EU single market is protected, as is the Republic of Ireland's place in it. Northern [Ireland](#) is outperforming the rest of the UK economically, and north-south trade on the island of Ireland has increased.

The protocol was even beginning to gain acceptance – albeit without enthusiasm – from some unionist politicians. It is broadly supported by Northern Ireland's business community, which has access to the British market, as well as the [European Union](#) and its 450 million consumers.

Yet the UK government has changed tack, threatening to unilaterally suspend parts of the protocol. The uncertainty about whether the protocol will survive and in what form is now the major concern of Northern Ireland's businesses, and the country is losing out on investment opportunities as a result.

Crucially, a clear majority of members in the newly elected Northern Ireland assembly and four of the five political parties are in favour of retaining the protocol, either as it stands or in a modified form. They may want improvements, changes, the removal of some barriers or some of the checks, but they do not want it scrapped or overridden, and oppose any unilateral action by London.

The MLAs (Members of the Legislative Assembly) who want the protocol to be scrapped are in a minority. Many members of the unionist community have concerns about the protocol that cannot be dismissed. There are issues regarding the transit of goods from Britain to Northern Ireland that are destined for the province. I can understand these concerns. Nobody wants checks or controls on trade within their own country, even if it was an inevitable and forewarned consequence of the [Brexit](#) that many of them supported.

The protocol can be improved and modified. The EU has been very flexible already. The European commission has been engaging diligently with the British government to resolve these concerns for years. That has been demonstrated in changes we made with regard to medicines, and tolerance of the fact that some checks and controls required by the protocol have not been fully implemented. The EU will continue talking to the UK for as long as the UK is willing to engage. But negotiating with a partner that is willing to break agreements and change its mind on what it wants is not easy. The EU's flexibility and good faith have not been reciprocated by the UK government. This is breeding mistrust in EU capitals.

The fact that the UK government has talked openly about breaching international law is a matter of concern and contrasts with the leadership that it has shown for Ukraine, supporting the country against Russia's invasion, which has breached international law in a very serious way.

Ireland has always been open to other solutions, including a customs union, a closer relationship with the single market, a European free trade area and the backstop. That would have eliminated the need for checks between Northern Ireland and Britain. Perhaps in the future, Britain may reconsider these options, but I know they are not options at the moment.

Any British government that claims to be "pro-union" and any British prime minister who is also the [minister for the union](#) must understand the consequences of imposing a policy on Northern Ireland that is not supported by the majority of the people there. They must recognise that this will further reduce support for the union, in my view. Brexit weakened middle-ground support for the union in Northern Ireland. Unilateral action on the protocol will weaken it even more.

Ireland will continue to work with the UK government and the EU to improve the protocol in the interests of the people of Northern Ireland. Trust can be restored and progress can be made, which would be to the benefit of everyone on these islands.

But talk of scrapping the protocol and starting again is totally counterproductive. The democratic vote of the people of Northern Ireland has to be respected. It has to be acknowledged that the protocol was freely agreed by the British government and led by Johnson, and by EU governments. The focus has to be on improving the protocol, not scrapping it. That is the only way to protect the benefits it brings for the people of Northern Ireland.

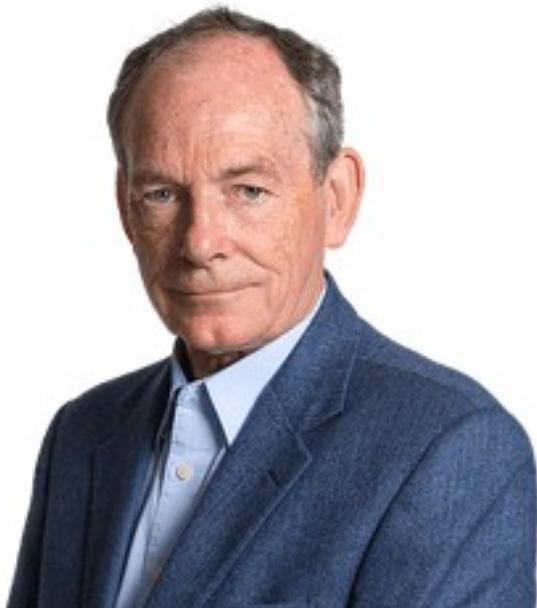
- Leo Varadkar is Ireland's tanaiste (deputy prime minister), and was taoiseach during Brexit negotiations

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Opinion**Boris Johnson**

The clouds of Partygate may part for Johnson, but there will be another one along soon

[Simon Jenkins](#)



He stumbles from one fine mess to another. It is hard to know when there was worse custodianship of national affairs



Boris Johnson leaving Downing Street on 18 May. Photograph: Tayfun Salcı/Zuma Press Wire/Rex/Shutterstock

Thu 19 May 2022 09.35 EDT Last modified on Thu 19 May 2022 14.58 EDT

Another triumph for Boris Johnson's Houdini act. Partygate appears over with [today's announcement](#) that the Metropolitan police has closed the file on Downing Street parties, with 126 penalty notices and reportedly no more for the prime minister. Rumours are that Sue Gray's separate report on the parties will be published next week, but it is hard to see what it is likely to add, or what will come from the continuing inquiry into whether the prime minister "misled parliament". Johnson's tactic of devolving judgment to a dilatory police force has worked, albeit at the cost of £460,000. What appeared last December to be a resignation issue has been kicked down the road so many times as to disappear from view.

Like all high-profile political sagas, Partygate looks like one of those transient Westminster storms more seismic at the time than in retrospect. It stands with other "affairs", such as [Profumo](#), [Westland](#), [Formula One](#) and [Cheriegate](#) in the canon of moments when the strictures of Westminster seemed to usurp those of the electorate. They display De Tocqueville's truth about British politics, that its ethos is that of a club not of a mob. Leaders are at most short-term risk when they offend the club, not the people.

The breaking of lockdown rules by Downing Street in 2020 infuriated the British public. It had been asked to suffer social privation on an unprecedented scale and did so only after the most explicit insistence from the prime minister that it was for the greater good. It led to extreme misery and suffering during a desperately difficult time for all.

It also led to many cases where people did not follow the stricter – admittedly often sillier – rules. When Johnson was himself found guilty of this, public anger was understandable. It was exacerbated by his display of habitual mendacity under pressure and his clear belief that he could waffle and stall his way out of trouble. In this he was helped by Vladimir Putin’s war in Ukraine, which he exploited outrageously, and by an unfortunate slip by Labour’s Keir Starmer, his prime tormenter, caught drinking a bottle of beer in an office. Starmer was duly goaded by the rightwing press into Beergate, and a promise to resign if found to have erred likewise.

Since then, much water has flowed past the walls of Westminster. Johnson has had to sack a half dozen of his closest advisers. He has also paid a predictably heavy price at the [May local elections](#). But the heat has been waning. Forecasts that the May election would end his stay of execution for Partygate were false. Time was the healer. As of now, Johnson can plead that he still has the “misleading parliament” inquiry to pass judgment, and that is expected to be under [Tory acting chairmanship](#).

For the time being, Johnson’s cabinet or parliamentary party seem unlikely to summon a leadership election to eject him. Any cabinet colleague suspected of disloyalty can expect to vanish in a summer reshuffle. Partygate is over and, in all common decency, the Durham police, de facto collaborators in Johnson’s escapology, should also end Starmer’s torment. His “crime” was footling in comparison with Johnson’s.

The irony of politics is the deeper the mess into which a leader takes his country, the more secure he probably is in the short term. The prime minister stumbles from mess to mess, each one somehow overriding the last. Partygate now seems trivial against the shambles of [Johnson’s Northern Ireland protocol](#), where his past ineptitude remains critically in need of resolution. Yet that, too, seems in just a week to have given way to its

successor, the cost of living crisis. Here again, the impression is of a leader fumbling for policy options, with a team of B-grade ministers all nervous for their jobs. It is hard to recall a time when the British economy was in worse custodianship just when it most needed the best.

As so often in Johnson's career, all that matters is the now. His judgment is fixed not on interest rates or taxes, energy prices or health spending, Brexit or Ukraine. It is fixed on opinion polls, headlines, press leaks, tearoom gossip and letters to the 1922 Committee. The clouds of Partygate may have cleared and Johnson may be free, but one thing is certain of this prime minister. When one cloud clears, another is on the horizon.

- Simon Jenkins is a Guardian columnist
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[SportblogBlackpool](#)

Jake Daniels can inspire next generation of footballers to be whoever they are

[Anita Asante](#)

Young Blackpool forward's decision to come out is going to help so many people and shows the conversation is shifting



Jake Daniels said 'the time is right to be myself, be free and be confident' when he came out this week. Photograph: Lee Parker/CameraSport/Getty Images

Fri 20 May 2022 03.00 EDT

I was emotional on Jake Daniels' behalf when on Monday he became the first male professional footballer to [come out publicly for 30 years](#) in the UK. I was amazed it was happening; we have waited three decades for a player to feel he can be himself and tell his story in the way Jake has.

There are many openly gay players in the women's game. We have worked hard to cultivate an environment where inclusion, acceptance and diversity is key to a thriving work and performance environment. If you want to get the best out of a person, regardless of their job, they need to be able to be their true selves. We actively – individually and collectively – work hard to create that culture.

It is not down to the person coming out, it is about everyone else lifting that emotional burden from that person, so they can walk into their changing room, the pitch, wherever it is and be truly themselves and know they will be truly supported. Jake said he felt comfortable telling his story thanks to the support shown by his family. Those in the dressing room need to be that family at work.

It was fantastic to see players such as Harry Kane, Eric Dier and Ben Mee show their support for Jake when the news was announced. Being an ally, openly speaking up and showing their support for the gay community is great because these guys are role models and what they say is heard. They can help influence this conversation. They are all active participants in being self aware in their own environments – how they are communicating is influencing young academy boys in their own direct environments.

We can change the landscape within our own sport by being very aware of what it means to be a leader through actions and words. It is great they are speaking up and hopefully it encourages more players across the game to join them and if there are any negative influences they are vocally supported and they condemn those as well.

Throughout my whole playing career, I have never experienced homophobia from teammates or coaches. I've played in several different countries and clubs and my experiences have largely been positive. The only time I have experienced anything like that is largely from complete strangers on social media. It speaks to the culture we have created in the women's game to accept everyone regardless of background and that is the part we celebrate. That's part of the game we are very proud of and that's really what it is about.

Toxic masculinity, rather than homophobia, in the men's game stops so many young people feeling free enough to come out. It is the whole idea, as Jake referenced, that if you are gay you are weak, you are not man enough, you are not tough enough. That concept restrains and restricts young men from being out. It is used to weaponise and create that "othering" of people who are part of the LGBT+ community, whereas in the women's game we are not dealing with that.

Thank you Jake for being brave and confident enough to share your story because it is far reaching

In the past athletes who have come out have waited until much later in life, many once they have retired, to do so. I think the younger generation are shifting the conversation and the environment and are more open to these conversations. These are the ones pushing our game forward in the best way. They have a powerful voice to share and they have the space and platform to do that. I think Jake is reflective of that and the younger generation and how much more vocal they are on so many issues.

To have so many female players in the game share their personal stories with such courage and in a way that shows them standing tall, that they are proud to tell their personal love stories and who they are, it inspires so many young women around them, including myself. I feel I belong in this space. I have like-minded people around me who think we all have a right to the game. We all have the right to be who we are. Seeing people like Megan Rapinoe, Magda Eriksson, Pernille Harder – these girls are going to consistently inspire the next generation of women to do whatever they want to do and be whoever they are. Hopefully Jake can be that figure among men.

Jake's decision will alleviate the pressure on other athletes who want to come out, whether it is in football, golf, tennis or any other sport. I want it to be an organic process where more sportsmen can be their true selves in the open. I do not think it is about forcing or hunting out people, to find out who is gay and who is not. That sort of conversation in the past, especially in the tabloid press, was unhelpful. It is about creating the structures from within that allow that steady growth in terms of creating safe environments, where people will find the right time for themselves. There is no right time – every

individual is different – it's about how comfortable and safe they feel in their professional and personal lives to make that leap.

Thank you, Jake, for being brave and confident enough to share your story because it is far reaching and it is going to help so many individuals out there. Jake came out for himself, not anyone else, so he can be his authentic self and can perform without any kind of burden on his shoulders. We are just very lucky to be able to share in his joy and new freedom.

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North Korea

North Korea's Covid caseload passes 2 million amid global concern about regime's pandemic plan

Experts believe North Korean authorities are underreporting deaths to prove that their response has been effective

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Staff disinfect Pyongyang train station during North Korea's campaign against Covid. It now has reported a total of 2.2 million people with fever, state media says. Photograph: KCNA/EPA

[Justin McCurry](#) and agencies

Thu 19 May 2022 23.21 EDTFirst published on Thu 19 May 2022 19.49 EDT

Experts have questioned North Korea's claim that it is achieving "good results" in its battle against a Covid-19 outbreak, as the number of people with symptoms of the virus surpassed 2 million.

The regime reported 263,370 new fever cases on Friday and two deaths, taking the total caseload to 2.24 million, including 65 deaths, according to state news agency KCNA.

It did not report how many of those cases had tested positive for Covid but said the country was seeing "good results" in its battle against the virus.

The rising caseload and a lack of medical resources and vaccines have led the UN human rights agency to warn of "devastating" consequences for North Korea's 25 million people, and World Health Organization officials worry an unchecked spread could give rise to deadlier new variants.

Cases of fever reported by the government had declined in the capital Pyongyang but risen in rural provinces. The figures were unlikely to be fully accurate, either due to error or deliberate manipulation, said Martyn Williams, a researcher at the US-based observer 38 North. "I doubt they represent the exact picture," he said on Twitter.

Some North Korea watchers believe the regime was forced to acknowledge the Covid-19 outbreak last week because attempting to conceal the virus's spread would have been futile and could have fuelled public discontent with the country's leader, Kim Jong-un.

Instead, they believe North Korean authorities are underreporting deaths to prove that their response has been effective.

"It's true that there has been a hole in its two and a half years of pandemic fighting," said Kwak Gil Sup, head of One Korea Center, a website specialising in North Korea affairs. "But there is a saying that North Korea is 'a theatre state,' and I think they are massaging Covid-19 statistics."

While North Korea is partly using the outbreak as a propaganda tool to cast Kim's leadership in a favourable light, it has "a Plan B" and "a Plan C" to

seek Chinese and other foreign aid if the pandemic gets out of hand, Kwak said.

Kee Park, a global health specialist at Harvard medical school who has worked on health care projects in North Korea, said earlier the number of new cases should start to slow as a result of strengthened preventive measures such as travel restrictions and keeping workers separated in groups according to their jobs.

But, Park said, North Korea will struggle to provide treatment for the already large number of people with Covid-19, adding that deaths could reach the tens of thousands.

Despite the caseload, the isolated country claimed that farming continued, factories were working and it was planning a state funeral for a former general.

“Even under the maximum emergency epidemic prevention situation, normal production is kept at key industrial sectors and large-scale construction projects are propelled without let-up,” KCNA said on Friday. “Good results are reported steadily in the ongoing anti-epidemic war.”

North Korea said on Wednesday the country’s virus outbreak was taking a “favourable turn”, although officials in South Korea say it is hard to draw a conclusion as it is unclear how North Korea is calculating the number of fever and Covid patients.

South Korea and the US have both offered to help North Korea fight the virus, including sending aid, but have not received a response, Seoul’s deputy national security adviser said this week.

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Buffalo shooting

Suspect in Buffalo mass shooting heckled as ‘coward’ in court

Payton Gendron, 18, accused of killing 10 Black people at supermarket, not required to speak at brief court hearing



A memorial for the victims of the shooting at the Tops Friendly supermarket in Buffalo. Photograph: Scott Olson/Getty Images

[Edward Helmore](#) in Buffalo

Thu 19 May 2022 13.29 EDTLast modified on Thu 19 May 2022 17.08 EDT

The man accused of killing 10 Black people in a racist attack at a supermarket in Buffalo, [New York](#), at the weekend was called a coward by a loved one of one of the victims when he made a fresh appearance in court on Thursday.

Payton Gendron, 18, who is white, was not required to speak – his court-appointed lawyer had already entered a plea of not guilty to one count of first-degree murder – but it was the first time families of the victims who had come to the courthouse came face to face with him.

“Peyton, you’re a coward,” shouted one, as Gendron, who was shackled and dressed in orange Erie county jail clothes, was led out of court to return to custody after the short hearing.

Journalists were told by court officials not to approach the 12 family members of victims who attended the court hearing. The identity of the young woman who called out could not immediately be established.

Prosecutor Gary Hackbush, the chief of Buffalo’s homicide unit, said that a grand jury had convened on Wednesday and voted for an indictment against Gendron. The suspect had waived his right to a psychiatric evaluation, the court heard.

With Gendron’s next court appearance scheduled for 9 June, authorities continue to investigate the options of hate crime or terrorism charges.

Under New York criminal statutes, prosecutors can charge a defendant with first-degree murder only under special circumstances, including when multiple people are killed in a single incident. The single count covers all 10 deaths at the supermarket.

The Erie county district attorney, John Flynn, issued the following statement after the felony hearing was adjourned: “The defendant continues to remain held without bail. There will be no further comment from our office until there is a report following an investigation by the grand jury.”

The investigation includes hundreds of pages of writings by the suspect, detailing his plans for the assault and his racist motivations that he posted to a small group on the social media platform Discord 30 minutes before the shootings began. It is not yet clear if anyone who had access to the screed tried to alert police.

New York's governor, Kathy Hochul, [announced state legislation](#), citing "an intersection of two crises: the mainstreaming of hate speech – including white nationalism, racism and white supremacy – and the easy access to military-style weapons".

The House of Representatives [passed a bill](#) dealing with domestic terrorism that has previously languished in Congress after failing in the Senate.

Hochul also authorized the state's attorney general, Letitia James, to [investigate social media](#) platforms used before the attack, to determine if they were liable for "providing a platform to plan and promote violence".

The suspect wrote in the online forum that he planned the attack after becoming obsessed with white supremacist ideology he had found online. He wrote that he planned his attack in secret, with no outside help.

On 15 April he wrote: "I literally can't wait any longer, my parents know something is wrong."

Two months earlier, he wrote: "My parents know little about me." "They don't know about ... the hundreds of dollars I've spent on ammo. They don't know that I spent close to \$1,000 on random military shit. They don't even know I own a shotgun or an AR-15, or illegal magazines."

In the messages, he wrote about tensions with Black students at school during childhood. In sixth grade, he wrote, he was suspended for a day after a Black student accused him of using a racist slur against her. In his posts, Gendron wrote he did not think of himself a true racist until 2020 when he [began reading 4chan](#), the online message board.

Thursday's hearing came after it was revealed that an emergency services dispatcher could lose her job after allegedly shouting at the employee at Tops Friendly grocery store who called 911 during the assault on the supermarket.

A Tops employee, who was hiding and terrified that the gunman might hear them, alleges the dispatcher asked why she was whispering – then hung up.

The employee said she had to call her boyfriend and tell him to dial 911 and report the shooting.

The dispatcher, who has not been identified, is facing a disciplinary hearing next week where “termination will be sought”, [according to NBC News](#).

Funeral services for the victims of the mass shooting, which [included](#) elderly customers and a retired Buffalo police officer, will begin on Friday in Buffalo with Deacon Heyward Patterson.

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Buffalo shooting

‘She got mad’: 911 dispatcher allegedly hung up during Buffalo shooting call

Dispatcher could lose her job after Tops employee says dispatcher took on a nasty tone and asked her why she was whispering



A memorial is seen in the wake of a weekend shooting at a Tops supermarket in Buffalo, New York. Photograph: Brendan McDermid/Reuters

[Maya Yang](#) in New York

Thu 19 May 2022 14.52 EDT Last modified on Thu 19 May 2022 17.22 EDT

A 911 dispatcher has been placed on administrative leave and will probably be fired after allegedly hanging up on a Tops supermarket employee during Saturday’s shooting rampage in Buffalo, [New York](#), where a white supremacist allegedly killed 10 people.

Latisha Rogers, an assistant office manager at the Tops supermarket, said she called 911 and whispered quietly into the phone about the shooter, who was already in the store.

“I called 911, I go through the whole operator and everything, the dispatcher comes on and I’m whispering to her and I said ‘Miss, please send help to 1275 Jefferson – there is a shooter in the store,’” Rogers [told](#) WGRZ.

“She proceeded in a very nasty tone and says, ‘I can’t hear you, why are you whispering? You don’t have to whisper, they can’t hear you.’ So I continued to whisper and I said ‘Ma’am he’s still in the store, he’s still shooting! I’m scared for my life, please send help!’ Out of nervousness, my phone fell out of my hand, she said something I couldn’t make out, and then the phone hung up,” Rogers said.

In a separate interview with Buffalo News, Rogers [said](#), “She got mad at me, hung up in my face.”

Rogers said she proceeded to call her boyfriend whom she instructed to call 911.

“I felt that lady left me to die yesterday,” she added.

On Wednesday, Erie county executive Mark Poloncarz said that the dispatcher had been placed on administrative leave and may have her employment terminated at the end of the month.

“The individual was put on administrative leave pending a hearing which will be held on May 30 in which our intention is to terminate the 911 call taker, who acted totally inappropriately not following protocol,” Poloncarz said.

He did not publicly identify the dispatcher, who has been on the job for eight years.

Further investigation into the shooting has [revealed](#) that Payton Gendron, the 18-year-old suspect, had been plotting the massacre in a series of online statements over the past five months.

The Washington Post found that he had made plans as early as December to murder those he regarded as “replacers” – a reference to the racist conspiracy that open immigration policies and high birthrates for Black people are being promoted to displace white voters.

After Saturday’s shooting, New York governor Kathy Hochul unveiled a “comprehensive” plan on Wednesday to combat domestic terror and gun violence. She described the attack as “a wake-up call” and included new anti-terrorism measures in her plan, including the requirement of state police to file an “extreme risk protection” order under New York’s “red flag law” when there is credible reason to believe a person could seriously harm themselves or others.

“We as a country are facing an intersection of two crises: the mainstreaming of hate speech – including white nationalism, racism and white supremacy – and the easy access to military-style weapons and magazines,” Hochul said, adding that the measures were implemented to address “one of the most pressing threats to public safety across the United States”.

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FBI

FBI failing to address white supremacist violence, warns former special agent

Michael German, who infiltrated white supremacist groups in the 1990s, says the FBI continues to underplay the scope of the threat



Despite a clear mandate from Congress, the bureau has yet to produce statistics revealing the scale of white supremacist crimes. Photograph: Yuri Gripas/Reuters

*[Ed Pilkington](#)
[@edpilkington](#)*

Fri 20 May 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 20 May 2022 09.00 EDT

The Federal Bureau of Investigation is failing to address the rising scourge of white supremacist violence despite stark warnings that such attacks pose the greatest domestic terrorism threat in the US, a leading authority on law enforcement has told the Guardian.

Michael German, a former [FBI](#) special agent who infiltrated white supremacist groups in the 1990s, said the bureau continues to underplay the scope of the threat. As a result, communities targeted by white supremacists and far-right militia groups – such as the largely African American neighborhood of Buffalo, New York, where 10 people were killed by a suspected racist gunman this week – are left fatally exposed.

“US law enforcement is failing, as it long has, to provide victimized communities like Buffalo’s with equal protection under the law. They are not actually investigating the crimes that occur,” said German, a fellow with the Brennan Center at NYU School of Law.

Saturday’s mass shooting in Buffalo was allegedly carried out by a white gunman who selected the Tops supermarket because it served one of the largest Black populations in the state. In a 180-page diatribe he is believed to have posted online, he espoused [the false racist belief](#) that white Americans are being “replaced” by immigrants of colour.

Numerous recent [studies](#) have pinpointed white supremacy as the greatest domestic terrorism threat in America today. The FBI itself has sounded the alarm, with its former director Christopher Wray telling Congress in 2020 that “racially and ethnically motivated violent extremists” were the main source of ideological killings, superseding jihadists.

In an interview with the Guardian, German said that US law enforcement in general, and the FBI in particular, were lagging behind. Despite a clear mandate from Congress, the bureau has yet to produce statistics revealing the scale of white supremacist crimes.

“White supremacists kill far more Americans than anybody else the FBI designates as domestic terrorists, yet the bureau still doesn’t document the crimes and fatalities that occur.”

He added: “I think that’s a reflection of lack of concern for the victims of that violence.”

The US attorney general, Merrick Garland, put out [a statement](#) after Buffalo in which he pledged to seek justice for the innocent victims. He said the justice department (DoJ) would treat the massacre as a “hate crime and an act of racially motivated violent extremism”.

In German’s opinion, both these designations – “hate crime” and “racially motivated violent extremism” – are problematic in terms of how they are routinely applied to white supremacist incidents. Most acts that are deemed to be hate crimes are deferred by the DoJ to state and local police for investigation, though 85% of those agencies do not recognize hate crimes as a phenomenon.

“Police in these jurisdictions don’t record or may not even investigate hate crimes, so the incident gets lost,” German said.

The invisibility of white supremacist hatred to law enforcement is reflected in those official figures that do exist. In recent years, surveys based on the experiences of crime victims themselves have recorded [more than 200,000](#) hate crime incidents each year.

Compare that with the [average number](#) of hate crime cases prosecuted by the DoJ annually – 21.

“Racially motivated violent extremism” is also less than helpful as a designation, German said. Though it is classed as terrorism, it is a catchall in which white supremacy groups are lumped together with Black nationalists and those classified as “Black identity extremists”.

The end result is that the spotlight that should be tightly focused on the growing threat of white supremacy is diffused. Federal resources are scattered between animal rights groups, native American protesters, non-violent civil disobedience movements, even pro-abortion groups designated as terrorist entities, though there is no evidence such groups exist.

Meanwhile, organized criminal groups dedicated to upholding white power fly largely beneath the radar.

There is a dramatic contrast with the overweening surveillance that was aimed at Muslim communities after 9/11, German said. He pointed to the many telltale signs that the Buffalo suspect appears to have offered months before Saturday's attack.

He announced a “murder/suicide” mission at his school that was referred to state police. According to the [Washington Post](#), the matter was dropped after the individual reassured them he had been “joking”.

“Can you imagine if the Buffalo shooter had been Muslim, and he was telling his friends he was enamored with Osama bin Laden,” German said. “You have to think the response would have been different.”

German said it was puzzling that an institution like the FBI that had effectively turned itself into a counter-terrorism intelligence agency after 9/11 was, by contrast, so lax in its handling of white supremacy. One factor, he said, was that the FBI displays the prejudices of American society writ large: “we fail to recognize how foundational white supremacism is to our culture,” he said.

FBI agents are also overwhelmingly white and male, and the bureau has been infused with elements of white supremacist ideology stretching back decades. German knows that from personal experience.

“When I was going undercover in the 1990s I was warned about sympathy towards white supremacy among officers – that was raised as a hazard for my undercover operation.”

In 2006 the FBI drew up an [internal intelligence assessment](#) that found that “white supremacist presence among law enforcement personnel is a concern”. It said that organized groups were infiltrating law enforcement agencies, while individuals sympathetic to “white supremacist causes” were also joining the ranks.

That was 16 years ago. To this day there has been no national effort to root out the infection.

“If there had been an internal FBI report that Isis had infiltrated US law enforcement, you’d expect a nationwide attempt to get to the bottom of it,” German said.

Given the devastating nature of the Buffalo shootings – and Joe Biden’s promise to the victims’ families that “hate will not prevail” – the DoJ is likely to devote resources to this particular investigation. But German warns that the underlying tendency to under-record and underestimate the scope of white supremacist criminal activity shows no sign of changing.

What does that do to people of color who are the targets of all the hatred? “It creates a recognition for these communities that they have to solve their own problems. They know that law enforcement, the FBI included, treat them harshly when they are suspects and ignore them when they are victims.”

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