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Headlines friday 20 january 2023

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No decision on supplying German-made tanks to Kyiv; ‘very difficult’ to remove Putin’s forces this year, US says – as it happened

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[HMRC](#)

HMRC names three schemes linked to Mone's husband as tax avoidance

AML Tax (UK) Ltd, which ran payment programmes, was 'part of Doug Barrowman's Isle of Man-based Knox Group'



Doug Barrowman with Michelle Mone at Cheltenham racecourse in 2019. Photograph: Max Mumby/Indigo/Getty

[David Conn](#)

Fri 20 Jan 2023 04.03 EST Last modified on Fri 20 Jan 2023 16.49 EST

Three payment programmes operated by a company linked to the husband of the Conservative peer Michelle Mone have been [named as tax avoidance schemes](#) by HM Revenue and Customs.

Douglas Barrowman, Lady Mone's husband since they married on the [Isle of Man](#) in November 2020, is the founder and chairman of the Knox Group, a financial services and wealth management firm based on the island, which

is widely considered to be a tax haven. HMRC said a Manchester-based company, AML Tax (UK) Ltd, which ran the three newly named tax avoidance schemes was “a part of Doug Barrowman’s Isle of Man-based Knox Group”.

HMRC won legal cases against AML last year under tax laws that require companies to notify [HMRC](#) of payment schemes that should be classified as tax avoidance schemes because one of the “main benefits” is to obtain a “tax advantage”.

AML’s director, Arthur Lancaster, told the tax tribunal last year that AML was part of the Knox Group, together with other companies such as Knox House Trust, of which Lancaster was [the chairman](#) in 2019.

In March, HMRC also won a separate legal case against AML, which was fined £150,000 after being found not to have provided details to the tax authority required by law. In that case, Lancaster was said by the tribunal to have been “evasive” and displayed “a lack of candour” in some of the evidence he gave.

HMRC also linked AML to Barrowman’s Knox Group at that time, stating in [a press release](#) announcing the result of the case: “Doug Barrowman tax avoidance firm fined,” and saying: “A company which has aggressively promoted tax avoidance schemes in the UK for years has been fined £150,000 for failing to provide HMRC with legally required information.

“AML [Tax](#) (UK) Limited, directed by Arthur Lancaster and part of Doug Barrowman’s Isle of Man based Knox Group, was fined £150,000 after HMRC brought an upper tribunal case over the firm’s failure to comply with formal information notices as part of a tax investigation.”

Also, in relation to some of the evidence Lancaster gave in [a different legal case](#), he was described as “disingenuous” and “increasingly evasive” by the tax tribunal judge Tracey Bowler, who classed two of the AML schemes as tax avoidance.

A source at HMRC said its growing policy of publicly naming such schemes is part of a strategy aimed at deterring people from signing up for them, and ultimately driving the schemes out of business. The UK tax authority's enforcement actions have attracted intense controversy in recent years because people working in relatively modestly paid jobs, who were paid through such schemes, have been hit with large bills after HMRC succeeded in establishing that insufficient tax had been paid.

In its [campaign](#), "Tax avoidance – don't get caught out", HMRC features a nurse and an IT project manager who signed up for schemes, not stated to be those of AML, that offered to maximise their take-home pay, but who were later subjected to large bills for tax that was avoided.

In relation to the three AML schemes named this week, Mary Aiston, HMRC's director of counter-avoidance, said: "These schemes are cynically marketed as clever ways to pay less tax. The truth is they rarely work in the way the promoters claim and it is the users that end up with big tax bills. HMRC will continue to use all the powers at our disposal to crack down on promoters.

"Anyone who thinks they may be involved in a tax avoidance scheme, or have been approached by a scheme promoter, should contact us as soon as possible to get help."

Mone, who was appointed to the House of Lords by David Cameron in 2015, [announced a leave of absence](#) from parliament in December to "clear her name", according to a spokesperson, after the Guardian reported details relating to a different company linked to her and Barrowman, PPE Medpro. The Guardian reported that bank documents indicated that [Mone and her three adult children had received £29m](#) originating from the profits of the company on government PPE contracts. The £29m had been distributed by Barrowman from at least £65m he was paid from PPE Medpro's profits, according to the documents.

A lawyer for Mone said at the time: "There are a number of reasons why our client cannot comment on these issues and she is under no duty to do so."

Timeline

The Guardian's two-year investigation

Show

December 2020

The Guardian reports that PPE Medpro, a company awarded two government contracts worth over £200m, has links to Douglas Barrowman, Michelle Mone's husband. Lawyers for Mone and Barrowman denied that they had any "role or function in the company, or in the process by which the contracts were awarded".

April 2021

Reporting on emails released in a legal challenge brought by the Good Law Project, the Guardian reports on the existence of the VIP route or high priority lane, and reveals that [ministers were among the "main routes"](#) through which well-connected companies were given priority in the sourcing of PPE equipment.

November 2021

Mone is revealed as the "VIP" who referred PPE Medpro Ltd to Lord Agnew. Lawyers representing Mone [described the referral](#) as a "very simple, solitary and brief step".

January 2022

[Leaked documents](#) suggest Mone and Barrowman are involved in PPE Medpro.

March 2022

[Documents reveal](#) that Mone secretly approached Michael Gove, who was then a Cabinet Office minister, and Lord Agnew through their private emails.

March 2022

More [leaked documents](#) reveal surgical gowns bought by the government for £122m were purchased by PPE Medpro's supply chain partners for £46m from a Chinese manufacturer.

November 2022

Guardian [reveals £29m](#) originating from PPE Medpro profits was paid to a secret offshore trust of which Mone and her children were beneficiaries, according to a report compiled by HSBC and leaked to the newspaper.

6 December 2022

Mone takes a [leave of absence](#) from the House of Lords with immediate effect "in order to clear her name of the allegations that have been unjustly levelled against her", according to her spokesperson.

19 December 2022

The UK government confirms it has started [legal action to recover the £122m it paid to PPE Medpro](#) to supply 25m sterile surgical gowns, as well as the costs of storing and disposing of the gowns, which were rejected after inspection.

5 January 2023

The Department of Health and Social Care claims the [PPE Medpro gowns were not sterile](#) and could have compromised the safety of patients in the NHS.

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.

A lawyer who represents Barrowman and PPE Medpro said that a continuing investigation limited what his clients were able to say. He added: "For the time being we are also instructed to say that there is much inaccuracy in the portrayal of the alleged 'facts' and a number of them are completely wrong."

Responding to questions about AML's tax avoidance schemes, Mone's lawyer said: "Baroness Mone has no involvement in the companies you have referred to."

Barrowman's lawyer said he was in meetings and could not be reached for a response in the time given.

Lancaster said he was working on a full response to HMRC's naming of the schemes, but said: "I should point out that AML Tax (UK) Ltd ceased its business over six years ago, following the introduction of the much-criticised 2019 loan charge. This was designed by HMRC to retrospectively tax arrangements which had, until then, been in accordance with the legislation as confirmed by several tax cases."

HMRC has defended the "loan charge" as a means of ensuring full tax is paid where it was avoided by means of loans, and denies that it is retrospective. A spokesperson said of the concerns of people hit with large bills: "We take concerns about the wellbeing of all taxpayers seriously and recognise that large tax liabilities can add significant pressures for some taxpayers."

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[Jacinda Ardern](#)

Jacinda Ardern: political figures believe abuse and threats contributed to PM's resignation

Ardern says she slept soundly 'for the first time in a long time,' as colleagues in New Zealand deplore her treatment as PM and race begins to replace her



Jacinda Ardern speaks to the media a day after announcing her resignation as prime minister of New Zealand. Photograph: Ben Mckay/EPA

[Tess McClure](#) in Auckland

[@tessairini](#)

Thu 19 Jan 2023 20.25 ESTFirst published on Thu 19 Jan 2023 19.46 EST

Jacinda Ardern has said she slept soundly after her [shock resignation](#) “for the first time in a long time”, as speculation grows that abuse and threats against the prime minister contributed to her stepping down.

Speaking briefly with reporters outside Hawke's Bay airport on Friday, Ardern said she was feeling "a range of emotions" and had no regrets about leaving the job.

"I of course feel sad – but also I do have a sense of relief."

On Thursday, the prime minister said abuse or threats to her and her family had not been a decisive factor in her decision to resign, and that she simply "no longer [had] enough in the tank to do it justice".

Prominent [New Zealand](#) political leaders and public figures, however, say that "constant vilification," abuse and personal attacks have contributed to that burnout – with some MPs saying the prime minister was "driven from office", and calling for New Zealand to reexamine its political culture.

"It is a sad day for politics where an outstanding leader has been driven from office for constant personalisation and vilification," Māori party co-leader Debbie Ngarewa-Packer said in the wake of Ardern's surprise resignation on Thursday.

"Her whānau [family] have withstood the ugliest attacks over the last two years with what we believe to be the most demeaning form of politics we have ever seen".

Former prime minister Helen Clark, New Zealand's first female elected leader, said that Ardern had faced "unprecedented" attacks during her tenure.

"The pressures on prime ministers are always great, but in this era of social media, clickbait and 24/7 media cycles, Jacinda has faced a level of hatred and vitriol which in my experience is unprecedented in our country," she said. "Our society could now usefully reflect on whether it wants to continue to tolerate the excessive polarisation which is making politics an increasingly unattractive calling."

How the world fell in love with Jacinda Ardern – video

In 2022, New Zealand police reported that [threats against the prime minister had nearly tripled](#) over three years. While police could not determine motives for every individual threat, documents they released showed anti-vaccination sentiment was a driving force of a number of threats, and opposition to legislation to regulate firearms after the 15 March mass shooting in Christchurch was another factor.

A weeks-long anti-vaccine-mandate occupation of parliament's lawns descended into [a violent riot in early 2022](#), with protesters calling for the prime minister's execution. The protests, coupled with increased threats and abuse against the prime minister and other MPs, prompted New Zealand's typically open and accessible parliament to up security measures.

Over the past year, a number of men have been arrested, formally warned or faced criminal charges for threatening to assassinate Ardern, with one found guilty of sabotage in an attempt to destroy the country's power grid connections. Public appearances by the prime minister increasingly attracted small, at times abusive groups of protesters.

In one ugly incident, [protesters in a car chased the prime minister's van](#), shouting obscenities and screaming that she was "a Nazi", at one point forcing it on to the footpath, and in February 2022, shouting [protesters again chased the prime minister's van](#) down a driveway as she visited a primary school.

Kate Hannah, director of the Disinformation Project which monitors online extremism at research centre Te Pūnaha Matatini, said the program had seen a significant increase in abusive, threatening material directed at Ardern, and believed it had likely contributed to her leaving the role.

"The scope of what we've observed over the last three years is such that there's no way it could not have been a contributing factor – for any person," she said.

"What we see now is absolutely normative, extremely vulgar and violent slurs ... incredibly violent use of imagery around death threats."

Jacinda Ardern resigns as prime minister of New Zealand in shock announcement – video

In her resignation announcement on Thursday, Ardern was asked how threats to her safety had played into her decision. “It does have an impact. We are humans after all, but that was not the basis of my decision,” she said.

“I am human, politicians are human. We give all that we can for as long as we can. And then it’s time. And for me, it’s time,” she said.

Now, the race is on for Labour to find a replacement for Ardern. Their caucus will meet on Sunday to vote on candidates for a new leader. A nominee must gain two-thirds of the caucus vote to clinch the leadership – if not, the vote will be taken to the party’s wider membership. The eventual winner will be tasked with leading the party into a tough 14 October election.

Chris Hipkins, 44, is the early frontrunner after Ardern’s deputy Grant Robertson swiftly ruled himself out of the race.

Other names in the mix are Justice Minister Kiri Allan, one of Labour’s senior Maori MPs, and Immigration Minister Michael Wood. None of the three has so far confirmed they will contest the ballot.

Allan, a former commercial lawyer who entered parliament in 2017, has been touted as possibly New Zealand’s first Maori prime minister.

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[New Zealand](#)

[Explainer](#)

New Zealand's next PM: How will they be chosen and when will we know who it is?

The New Zealand Labour party is racing to find Jacinda Ardern's replacement, with votes among MPs set to begin on Sunday



New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announced her resignation on 19 January. Photograph: Kerry Marshall/Getty Images

Reuters

Fri 20 Jan 2023 01.35 ESTLast modified on Fri 20 Jan 2023 01.37 EST

New Zealand's prime minister, Jacinda Ardern, will step down no later than 7 February after her [shock resignation](#) on Thursday in which she said she "no longer had enough in the tank" to do the job.

Leadership hopefuls will gather on Sunday when the centre-left [Labour party](#) caucus meets to elect a new leader – who will go on to become prime minister. Here's what will happen:

Who can vote and how?

The 64 Labour members of parliament, known as the caucus, will meet in private at 1pm local time (0000 GMT) on Sunday to elect a new leader. Those who can't make it can vote by proxy. The winner requires at least two-thirds of the votes, or 43 members.

Leadership hopefuls need seven colleagues to make it on to the ballot: at least 10% of the caucus, excluding themselves. Nominations must be received by 9 am local time on Saturday.

As Labour holds a majority in parliament, whoever they elect will become prime minister, leading the country for a little more than eight months before a general election on 14 October.

Polling over recent months has placed the Ardern-led Labour party slightly behind the opposition National. The most recent polling – taken before Ardern stepped down – suggest that if an election was held today, Labour would lose power.

What if the caucus can't decide?

They keep going. Multiple votes are allowed, with the lowest polling candidate eliminated each round. The caucus has until 26 January to decide.

If the caucus is unable to pick a new leader by then, the vote will be expanded to include Labour party members and affiliated unions. The caucus vote will be weighted at 40%, party members at 40% and unions at 20%.

Who are the frontrunners?

[There are a few](#). Immigration, police and transport minister Chris Hipkins is a household name for his role leading the government's Covid-19 response. He declined to rule out running on Thursday.

Transport minister Michael Wood and Minister of Justice Kiri Allan are newer faces in parliament, elected in 2016 and 2017, respectively. If elected Allen would make history as the country's first Māori prime minister and first openly gay leader

Grant Robertson would have been an obvious frontrunner having managed New Zealand's finances through the pandemic. He has, however, ruled himself out of the contest. Candidates occasionally become leaders despite this – Ardern herself had said she didn't want the job shortly before she took it.

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2023.01.20 - Spotlight

- 'I deserve respect' Azealia Banks on redemption, Republicans – and Kanye
- 'I get a lemonade for every 1,000 hits!' The rise of the child podcast superstars
- Joshua Tree's 'Invisible House' It could be yours for \$18m
- 'How do you have authority? Not by screaming' Mary Nighy on misogyny, famous parents and channelling Mary Poppins

‘I deserve respect’: Azealia Banks on redemption, Republicans – and Kanye

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[Podcasts](#)

‘I get a lemonade for every 1,000 hits!’ The rise of the child podcast superstars



‘When I found out I’d won an award, I ran around like crazy’ ... Jack Andrews, nine, presents Jack to the Future. Photograph: Graeme

Robertson/The Guardian

From time machines to legal jeopardy and the war in Ukraine, kids as young as nine are muscling into podcast territory – and A-listers are queueing up to be grilled. We meet the pre-teens who are already veteran hosts

[Alexi Duggins](#)

Fri 20 Jan 2023 04.00 EST

From pre-pubescent hosts interviewing sporting megastars to mum-assisted anchors taking adults to task over the Ukraine war, the next generation of podcast superstars has arrived – and they're primary school-aged. Who are the ones to watch? We speak to the big names in this thrilling new wave.

‘I’d like to build a forcefield or a time machine’

Jack Andrews, nine, Hertfordshire, UK

The podcast: [Jack to the Future](#), an award-winning show about the future, covering topics from deep space communication to renewable energy. Winner of a BBC Sounds Rising Talent award.

Sometimes people are surprised when I tell them I’m a podcaster. To be honest, I’m surprised I had the confidence to start one as a seven-year-old. But during lockdown, I found out that our delivery guy had his own show on Hertfordshire local radio, and he started recording me telling jokes. Then I started doing a feature where I would try to cheer listeners up. By March 2021, I had decided to do my own podcast.

I named it after my favourite film, Back to the Future. I’ve seen all the films five times – and the West End show! I’m really interested in science and helping the planet, and whether we can reach net zero by 2030. We got in touch with the Institution of Engineering and Technology to ask for one to interview – and I got 13 saying they wanted to do it. So I didn’t say no to any of them and did a whole season on Stem [science, technology,

engineering and maths]. Some people might think doing a whole series on Stem is a very advanced thing to do for my age, but I don't.

When I found out I won a BBC Talent award, I started running around like crazy. I also presented an award at the Arias with Harriet Rose from Kiss FM and got to meet Rylan! At one point, I went to the Houses of Parliament for a future of radio show and I was one of the youngest there. I talked to loads of people about my podcast – and there were lots of cakes and sandwiches!

Everybody asks me what I want to be in the future. I'd like to be an engineer, or a biologist or a physicist or a chemist – the more people I interview, the more ideas I get. I'd like to do things that seem impossible now, like make a forcefield! Or a time machine!

‘Our minds are little, not our thoughts’

Siyona Vikram, 11, Bangalore, India



‘Maybe a kid could fix our oceans’ ... Siyona Vikram. Photograph: Geetha K

The podcast: [Little Mind Chats](#), a current affairs show for children, featuring themed seasons on topics such as education and health. Has its own spin-off environmental activist group, Little-WISE Club, featuring 400 children collecting plastic that's converted into agricultural piping.

When I was seven, I discovered podcasts and realised that all the series for children were storytelling ones. There weren't any covering things like current affairs, so I decided to tackle that. My slogan is: 'Our minds are little, not our thoughts.' Children may have small minds, but our ideas can be big. We can start revolutions – we just need to put our thoughts into action. One expert on our podcast said there's a lot of plastic in the ocean. Well, maybe a kid could come up with a solution – if only they knew about the problem.

When I ask guests to appear, mostly they say yes. I think it's exciting for them to be interviewed by a child. It's not something they encounter every day. Some of them think it's a fascinating experience; some come on just to see what my podcast is like and then they're stunned to find it's just like an adult one. Most of them enjoy the interview.

I cover topics like the Ukraine invasion, as I think it's important to cover negative news. We need a mix of good and bad: like we need a balanced diet, we need a balanced knowhow, so we can take action in the future. If adults are going to start unnecessary wars, how can they tell us kids not to hit our peers without a reason? It doesn't make sense. Wars deeply affect us. If adults are going to go round starting wars all over the world, they're going to destroy the place. This is a good thing for kids to know about.

The podcast will run as long as I'm interested in it. I'm starting to lose interest a little bit as I've been doing it for a long time. It will run for maybe three more years, until I'm a teen, when there will be a lot more schoolwork. I'll pause the podcast for a few years, then come back to it. I will keep podcasting.

'Lady Hale was my first guest. I wore a brooch'

Alma-Constance Denis-Smith, 11, London, UK



‘I’m scared now’ ... Alma-Constance Denis-Smith. Photograph: Alicia Canter/The Guardian

The podcast: [Kids Law](#), a legal show that interviews prominent figures in the judicial system about how children are affected by the law. Guests have included judges, MPs and the director of the Crown Prosecution Service.

I started podcasting as a 10-year-old, when my parents told me I’d reached the criminal age of responsibility. I was shocked to realise I could be prosecuted – and wanted to inform other children. My mum is a lawyer, my dad a barrister. I’ve grown up in this world. Even so, when I found out what turning 10 means, I thought: ‘I’m scared now.’

For my first episode, I was very nervous, shaking, really trying not to get things wrong. Now I just take the microphone, try to articulate and it’s OK. The hardest part of being a child podcaster is understanding the things adults say. Sometimes it’s a lot to get into your head. Law’s a difficult topic. Luckily, I have a co-host, the lawyer Lucinda Acland, who works with my mum. I invited her as she has experience, is very good with children and has a great voice.

When people find out my podcast is about the law, they’re really surprised. They just don’t think children can understand that. ‘Oh,’ they say, ‘but it’s

about basic law, right?’ I have to explain in detail, otherwise they just can’t get their head around it.

I actually got to meet Lady Hale [former president of the UK supreme court]. I wore my ladybird brooch which has all these sparkly bits on and she noticed. I was very proud – she had a brooch on, too! She was actually my first guest. It was a great start to have this amazing person on.

Most of our interviews are done with Zoom, although I did meet Cressida Dick [ex-head of the Met] in person. I went to New Scotland Yard. I met two spaniels and a German shepherd. And Cressida Dick gave me a toy dog to keep!

When I look back at what I’ve done, I’m so proud of myself. We always have this little celebration at home whenever I reach another 1,000 downloads: I have some lemonade. Knowing that I’ve done something that will impact children is great. I’m going to carry on until at least series 10. I just think this show is really important.

‘After 300 episodes, I’m about to launch another’

Eva Karpman, 13, Los Angeles



‘The new podcast is about homesteading’ ... Eva Karpman. Photograph: PR

The podcast: [Dream Big](#), a show encouraging young people to pursue their passions. Episodes vary between interviews with celebrities and ‘solo shows’ that examine personal development.

Today, I find it easy to talk to people, to just start a conversation. I did a speech for Nike a couple of years ago in front of 5,000 people at the launch of a new campaign. I was actually the guest MC. I was nine at the time. But a couple of years before that, I was very shy. I didn’t talk to a lot of people. I would never have been able to do something like order at a restaurant. So when my parents realised I was struggling to find kid-friendly podcasts to listen to, they thought starting my own would get me out of my shell.

I soon realised that if I wanted a guest to accept my invite, I had to send them a video of myself. Unless they saw my face, I don’t think they really took me seriously. I needed them to see how important it was to me. They’d be reading an email saying: ‘Hi, I’m an eight-year-old who has a podcast.’ And a lot of them would think: ‘This is just a fan letter.’ One of the most difficult things about podcasting as a kid is that a lot of times, people don’t exactly take you seriously.

The most exciting guest I had on the show has to be the basketball star Kobe Bryant, back in 2018. He actually emailed *us* asking if he could be on the podcast – which was really exciting. I went to one of the Lakers games as a kid and had always looked up to him.

After 300 episodes, I’ve decided to take a step back, and let my seven-year-old sister start doing more, while I launch another podcast about homesteading. Listening back to those early episodes shows me how much I’ve grown. At the beginning, I was this squeaky voiced seven-year-old. To get to here is pretty awesome.

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Joshua Tree's 'Invisible House' could be yours for \$18m



The house is a surreal, box-like structure, with glinting glass walls that reflect the desert landscape. Photograph: Chris Hanley/Courtesy of Aaron

Kirman and Matt Adamo of AKG | Christie's International Real Estate

A surreal desert structure that 'flaunts its abundance' has attracted celebrities and more: 'Demi Lovato saw aliens there'



[Lois Beckett](#) in Los Angeles

[@loisbeckett](#)

Fri 20 Jan 2023 01.00 ESTLast modified on Fri 20 Jan 2023 21.27 EST

Joshua Tree's real estate boom may have reached a symbolic peak, as the desert town's iconic, mirror-walled mansion goes [on the market for \\$18m](#) in what is said to be a record-setting asking price.

The Invisible House, constructed in 2019 by film producers Chris and Roberta Hanley, has hosted celebrities like Lizzo, Alicia Keys, Ariana Grande and The Weeknd, and been featured in the Netflix series The World's Most Amazing Vacation Rentals.

The house is a surreal, box-like structure, with glinting glass walls that reflect the desert landscape, and a massive, 100ft indoor pool that stretches nearly half the length of the house. Its owners have touted the meditative aspects of the property.

“I think Demi Lovato saw aliens there,” Roberta Hanley [told the Wall Street Journal](#).

The house had previously been available to rent for \$150,000 a month, \$6,000 per day, or [\\$1,000 per hour](#), Mansion Global reported last summer. A [rental website](#) touted the house’s “[dramatic desert contrasts](#)” and the “oversized” pool that “flaunts its abundance in a seemingly barren land”.



The home features a 100ft indoor pool that stretches nearly half the length of the house. Photograph: Brian Ashby/Courtesy of Aaron Kirman and Matt Adamo of AKG | Christie’s International Real Estate

The residence, which offers a modest three bedrooms and four bathrooms, has a “fully-mirrored exterior which ‘disappears’ into the surrounding desert”, as well as [high-end kitchen appliances](#) and charging stations for three Teslas.

“To our knowledge, it is the most expensive listing in Joshua Tree now,” said Matt Adam, one of the property’s listing agents.

Even if the Invisible House ends up selling for \$9m, half the current asking price, “it will be the most expensive home ever sold in Joshua Tree”, local newspaper [San Bernardino Sun reported](#).

Just a few years ago, Joshua Tree, a tiny town in [California](#) set next to a stunning national park, was a refuge for artists and oddballs, a place where locals said it was possible to rent an apartment for \$500 a month.

But during the pandemic, the town's two-hour proximity to Los Angeles, and the social media-fueled popularity of Joshua Tree national park, led to one of the largest increases in housing prices in the state. The result has been a worsening local housing crisis, with many longtime residents and local service industry employees saying that skyrocketing rental costs have forced them out of their homes.

In recent months, the booming desert housing market has started to slow. Average Joshua Tree housing sale prices were [down 25% in December 2022](#), compared with the year before, and the number of houses sold was down by more than 50%, according to Redfin, a real estate company that publishes housing data.

The Invisible House, of course, is not even close to an average Joshua Tree home, the median price of which was \$343,000 last month, according to Redfin.

Real estate agents at AKG Christie's International Real Estate have been "bombarded with calls" from journalists and others since the house was put on the market, Adamo said.

Much of the interest so far has come from potential buyers interested in the house as an investment property, Adamo said. The house has previously brought in as much as \$1.4m in income in a single year in rental and production fees, he said.

So far, there has been more interest from potential American buyers than from international customers, Adamo said, since Americans have a better understanding of the cultural appeal of Joshua Tree's remote desert landscape, while international buyers are more interested in properties closer to the bright lights of Los Angeles, a two to three hour drive from Joshua Tree.



Bedroom A of the house. Photograph: Brian Ashby/Courtesy of Aaron Kirman and Matt Adamo of AKG | Christie's International Real Estate

Chris Hanley, known for producing films like the *Virgin Suicides*, *American Psycho*, and *Spring Breakers*, [has described](#) the “Invisible House” as part art project, part residence, which was inspired in part by a monolith in 2001: *A Space Odyssey* and by his old friend, Andy Warhol.

Just buying the glass for the house’s construction cost nearly \$700,000, he told the *Wall Street Journal*. Hanley did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the property.

“It’s so close with nature and so integrated with the rock formations and everything in the desert. That’s probably the most exciting and appealing aspect,” Adamo said.

One of Adamo’s favorite aspects of the house is that “the sun literally goes from sunrise to sunset in the [master] bedroom. You could stay there all day and see the house light up in different ways from the angle of the sun and the stars”.

- This article was amended on 20 January 2023 to correct a misspelled name in a photo caption.

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‘How do you have authority? Not by screaming’: Mary Nighy on misogyny, famous parents and channelling Mary Poppins

[Cath Clarke](#)



‘On the first day, calmly lay out your house rules. If anything goes wrong, don’t scream or shout’ ... Mary Nighy on her directing style. Photograph: Canadian Press/Rex/Shutterstock

As the child of Bill Nighy and Diana Quick, she would be plonked in a rehearsal room after school – so it’s no surprise she’s stepping behind the camera. The film-maker talks about her extraordinary debut feature, *Alice, Darling*

Fri 20 Jan 2023 03.00 ESTLast modified on Fri 20 Jan 2023 10.20 EST

When Mary Nighy was a young actor, an unhealthy number of scripts landed in her inbox featuring a character that went something like: “18-year-old-girl, naked, dead.” “Sexual abuse or violence is often just used as a plot device. It’s a catalyst for drama,” she says. “It doesn’t really tell you much about the experience of being abused. Or how you emerge from it.”

Now, with her first feature film as a director, she has made a film that does exactly that: exploring what it might feel like to be trapped inside a coercive, controlling and psychologically abusive relationship. [Alice, Darling](#) is the story of an accidental intervention, after three female friends drive from Toronto to a cottage to celebrate a 30th birthday. One of the trio,

Alice (Anna Kendrick) is in a relationship with Simon, a successful artist. He seems nice enough, but something about him feels off.

“He doesn’t hit me, though,” Alice protests, defensively, when the penny drops for her friends as to the extent of his controlling behaviour. No, he doesn’t hit her. The abuse is subtle and devastating: he isolates Alice from her friends, monitors her emails, belittles her.

As a portrait of coercive control, the film is horribly believable. Still, one of the things I liked most about it is how little screen time Simon gets. Nighy nods. “*He* is not the focus,” she says firmly. “He is not the protagonist. We didn’t want that. Instead, the film focuses on Anna, what it must be like to live with cortisol levels constantly through the roof, feeling under threat.”

Nighy doesn’t have first-hand experience of coercive control. But in her first conversation with Kendrick – a two-hour chat over Zoom during the pandemic – the actor revealed that she had been in an emotionally and psychologically abusive relationship. So one of Nighy’s biggest concerns became creating a protective workspace for Kendrick, and other members of the cast and crew affected, “trying to be aware of that for her, making it a supportive environment”.

Nighy is eloquent and quietly confident. We meet in a cafe in east London close to where we both live. Before I switch the tape recorder on, we make small talk about the local swimming pool, where her two young daughters have had lessons – my daughter too. She is warm and chatty; it’s the kind of conversation you’d have with a parent at a playdate. There is absolutely nothing to suggest she is acting royalty.



Nighy with her mother, Diana Quick, and father, Bill Nighy in Paris in 2003 for the French premiere of *Love Actually*. Photograph: Toni Anne Barson Archive/WireImage

Nighy, 38, was born and raised in London, the only child of the actors Diana Quick and [Bill Nighy](#); the couple split in 2008 after 27 years together. When she was little it was her mother who was the breadwinner – and her most famous parent, thanks to her portrayal of Julia Flyte in the 1980s TV adaptation of *Brideshead Revisited*. For years, Nighy had boys of a bookish persuasion coming up to her to talk about her mum. “Even at university, men would say how they were fans of my mum, or had a poster of her up on their wall or whatever.” She grins.

For her father, fame came later in life. It was lovely, she says, watching his success following *Love Actually* in 2003. “He’d worked for so many years, with so many good people, and was really owning it by the time it all came together.”

Bill was in the audience at the premiere of *Alice, Darling* at the Toronto film festival last year. In [a recent Vogue interview](#) he confessed proudly to reading all the reviews at Toronto. “Oh God!” says Nighy, mock-appalled.

“He kept that quiet. I didn’t know that!” There’s now talk of the two of them working together.

We met the week of peak interest in “[nepo babies](#)”. What has been driving people nuts on Twitter is how so many kids of celebrity families are oblivious to their privilege. Nighy isn’t one of them. “I get it. I’m hugely lucky to have the access, the education,” she says. “Every job as an actor I had to audition for. There are a lot of jobs I didn’t get.”

But she often thinks about the cultural capital of growing up in her house, and the training it gave her. “Sometimes my parents didn’t have childcare. I would be in a rehearsal room watching Matthew Warchus direct my mum. That’s an amazing education. There’s stuff you accrue without realising it.”

Plus, she adds, there is a huge benefit to having parents who get it. Her grandmother’s response, when her father announced he wanted to be an actor, was: “Is he gay?”



Nighy (left) directing Wunmi Mosaku, Kaniehtiio Horn and Anna Kendrick on the set of *Alice, Darling*. Photograph: Lionsgate

That said, when she was growing up, neither of her parents encouraged her to follow in their footsteps. Nighy wonders if that might be partly because

of her mother's own grim experiences as a young woman in the film industry. She remembers being in the car with Quick when she was in her late teens or early 20s, listening to the stories. "It took my breath away, the objectification of her body. She was very matter-of-fact telling me all this. I felt like crying, I couldn't bear it. That's my privilege, in a way, of being a younger generation."

She pauses, formulating the thought. "Sexism and misogyny are still there. The patriarchy exists. But the level of it, how explicit it was in the 60s, 70s and 80s ... it was ..." She trails off, arms gesturing at the scale.

Nighy did not have any terrible experience as a young actor. But she found it depressing, being judged by her looks. "It felt like that wasn't the most interesting aspect of who I was. That was a big part of why, very early, I wanted to direct."



Nighy (left) with Kirsten Dunst in Sofia Coppola's 2006 film Marie Antoinette. Photograph: Maximum Film/Alamy

When she was 21, during her final year studying English at University College London, she landed a part in Sofia Coppola's 2006 film [Marie Antoinette](#). Watching Coppola in action on set was a revelation. "She was so quiet and prepared. A lot of the male directors I'd worked with were big

presences. They were quite loud, needed attention. It was so exciting to see someone who didn't feel the need to be anything except herself."

Nighy wrote her first short on the set of *Marie Antoinette*, and in her mid-20s put in two years at the National Film and Television School. "I wanted to have the confidence that came with a good solid training."

Before she flew out to Canada to make *Alice, Darling*, she picked up a good tip for directing from Autumn de Wilde, who made the 2020 Jane Austen adaptation of [Emma](#). De Wilde's advice was to channel Mary Poppins. Nighy talks me through it: "On the first day, calmly and gently lay out your house rules. If anything goes wrong, don't scream or shout. Just firmly and clearly explain that this is not the way to behave: we don't do that in our house. It's a brilliant analogy."

She values emotional intelligence. "I'm always interested in how you can have authority without being dictatorial or ultra-macho. It does have parallels with children. How do you have authority with your kids? Not by screaming at them."

So, is being a parent good training for directing? Nighy nods. "I think there are many ways to be a director. But my career coincided in a way with having children, and becoming a mother gave me a lot of confidence. That was quite useful when it came to directing – it was very empowering." She pauses and adds finally, with a grin: "Not that I want to mother everyone on set."

Alice, Darling is released on 20 January

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2023.01.20 - Opinion

- This is an era of plentiful, cheap, renewable energy, but the fossil fuel dinosaurs can't admit it
- The climate crisis threatens economic stability – why are central bankers divided?
- All hail the fearless and funny Jennifer Coolidge – and the glorious art of not giving a damn
- Are AI-generated songs a 'grotesque mockery' of humanity or simply an opportunity to make a new kind of music?

[Opinion](#)Renewable energy.

This is an era of plentiful, cheap, renewable energy, but the fossil fuel dinosaurs can't admit it

[Zoe Williams](#)



For a couple of days this month, wind power supplied over half the UK's electricity. You wouldn't know it from our bills – or our politicians



‘There is a real prospect of limitless cheap energy’: electricity pylons and wind turbines near Scunthorpe, Lincolnshire. Photograph: Lindsey Parnaby/AFP/Getty Images

Fri 20 Jan 2023 01.00 ESTLast modified on Fri 20 Jan 2023 09.06 EST

I remember the first time wind energy emerged as a serious contender in the UK’s energy provision. It was 6 November 2012, and the country’s electricity use from wind hit an [all-time high](#) in the middle of the afternoon, at 9.3%. The casual observer wouldn’t have noticed, and the expert wouldn’t have been surprised, but for people between those poles, it was astonishing. Windfarms were then perceived as a nascent technology, so infant and speculative they needed endless subsidy, intervention, special pleading.

To this day, it remains a mystery how a reputation for well-meant inadequacy clings to renewable energy sources: it can’t all be the result of lobbying by the fossil fuel industry. Sometimes, it feels like we just don’t want good news.

Last week, for two days straight, wind power hit a peak of supplying over [half of all the UK’s electricity use](#). For five months last year, low-carbon electricity sources (solar, wind, hydrogen and nuclear) constituted more

than 50% of the country's energy use. And unbelievably, the National Grid spends [hundreds of millions to billions](#) a year [constraining energy supplies](#), that is, paying renewable suppliers when they're generating too much power for the grid to handle.

It's one triumph after another in green energy, but you wouldn't know it to look at our bills, nor to examine our short- and medium-term policy framework. UK energy unit prices are the [highest in the world](#). Without the government price cap intervention, businesses would already be bankrupt, schools probably shut down and people freezing in their homes. Jeremy Hunt's pledge to [withdraw the price cap from next April](#) looks fanciful: sure, the words coming out of his mouth make sense – prices can't be held down forever because it wouldn't be "responsible". But there's no imaginable reality in which the "unlimited volatility in international gas prices" he refers to can be weathered by the average household.

Meanwhile, research by Nesta, the innovation foundation, has shown that if we meet the [offshore wind target](#) set by the government's energy security strategy – 50GW by 2030 – then on an ideal windy day, that alone would provide almost [twice as much energy as we use](#), before you even factor in onshore and solar. There is a real prospect of limitless cheap energy, some of the time, with windless days covered by, ideally, nuclear as an alternative.



‘UK energy unit prices are the [highest in the world](#).’ Photograph: Just Jus/Alamy

The only brake on this bright future is in storage, grid capacity and interconnectivity. Research and investment are urgently needed into ways to store renewables, as well as viable exchange between us and mainland Europe and the island of Ireland. It is no longer wild to imagine a time when all the weather conditions of the continent can be pooled so that we benefit from one another’s surpluses; and this is before you factor in the development in hydrogen, which is hoped to provide [10GW by 2030](#). Green energy insiders liken it to the vaccine quest: these things take a decade when you give them a decade. Greater urgency sharpens the senses, and can accelerate the most arduous discovery process to a fraction of that.

The ramifications of this abundance are immense. The promise of going into the 2030s with net zero assured reshapes every sector, every ambition. Then there are the immediate, concrete impacts: households and businesses that can afford their bills; geopolitics no longer held hostage by oil and gas-rich autocrats.

So the question is, how have we allowed a sense of hardship and doom to define our energy debate, when we’re on the brink of an entirely new future? We’re partly suffering from collapsing faith in institutions and

government. It's genuinely hard to imagine constructive, farsighted decisions coming out of an administration whose core priority is stamping out wokery in higher education. Perhaps even suggesting limitless cheap energy sounds woke to Rishi Sunak.

Yet the more proximal cause of our malaise is that the advances in renewables aren't reflected in our energy prices, which are set by the gas price. A [UCL report noted](#) that fossil fuels set the electricity price most of the time, at levels that are now much higher than the green sources that constitute at least half of the load: so renewables can get ever cheaper and more efficient, and we won't feel it in our bills. Energy markets must be broken up into clean power and fossil power.

Finally, there is a drumbeat of despair that even when inflation has subsided, even after the war in Ukraine comes to an end, high energy prices are here to stay. Oil and gas companies, bemoaning the windfall taxes and green investments required of them, predict prices that are elevated, if less volatile, for ever. "We need to treat energy as something that is not abundant," [said Anders Opedal](#), chief executive of Norway's state oil producer, Equinor, this week.

The cynicism is jaw-dropping: the fossil fuel industry situates its problems in the green investments that are, in fact, our only salvation. And Conservative politicians and commentators parrot them, through some combination of lobbying and lack of imagination which would be unedifying to pick apart. We will not grasp the scale and plenty of the green revolution until we treat vested interests who naysay it with the scepticism they deserve: and we need to grasp it, if we're going to make it happen.

- Zoe Williams is a Guardian columnist

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The climate crisis threatens economic stability – why are central bankers divided?

[Howard Davies](#)

Jerome Powell and Mervyn King reject taking on climate policy, while Mark Carney and Christine Lagarde say action is vital



Federal Reserve chair Jerome Powell says the central bank should not be a ‘climate policymaker’. Photograph: Xinhua/REX/Shutterstock

Fri 20 Jan 2023 02.00 ESTLast modified on Fri 20 Jan 2023 12.19 EST

The climate crisis has come to represent a major challenge for central banks. How much should their monetary policy and approach to banking supervision be influenced by it?

On one hand, there is growing evidence that global heating, particularly through its effect on agriculture, may create [inflationary pressures](#). And there is even stronger evidence that the physical and transition risks created by the climate crisis are having, and will continue to have, a [major impact](#) on the value of financial assets and financial firms, which those responsible for the stability of the financial system cannot ignore.

On the other hand, policies to increase energy costs and lower emissions are hugely [controversial](#), especially in the US. A proactive approach might lead the central bank into a political war zone, vulnerable to attack from both sides.

So far, central banks have tended to see this as territory they cannot avoid. A group of them, principally Europeans, pushed for a new coalition of the willing, and the Network for Greening the Financial System was [established](#) at the end of 2017. The US Federal Reserve was initially a wallflower but became a [full member](#) after Joe Biden's election. The People's Bank of China was there from the start, and for a time it seemed that a consensus on central banks' appropriate posture would emerge.

That is no longer the case. Two camps have formed, and they seem likely to drift further apart.

In the brown corner, so to speak, we find the Fed chair, Jerome Powell. At a conference in Stockholm earlier this month he nailed his colours to the mast. "We are not, and will not be, a 'climate policymaker'," he said. Integrating climate change considerations into monetary and banking supervision policies "would have significant distributional and other [effects](#) on companies, industries, regions and nations". Powell, no doubt influenced by the fact that one of Biden's nominees for the Fed board had to [withdraw](#) in the face of congressional opposition to her views on the climate crisis, insists that the Fed should not go there.

Others in the brown camp include Mervyn King, the former Bank of England governor, who [argues](#) that taking on climate responsibilities "would put at risk central bank independence". No greater risk to human

life can be imagined. Otmar Issing, the European Central Bank's first chief economist, has also weighed in. "There can be no such thing as a 'green' monetary policy," he said.



Mervyn King argues that taking on climate responsibilities 'would put at risk central bank independence'. Photograph: Reuters

But there are doughty fighters in the green corner, too. Mark Carney, an enthusiast since he led the Bank of England, [encourages](#) central banks to "examine how to revise their ... monetary-policy operations to be more consistent with the legislated climate objectives". The ECB president, [Christine Lagarde](#), herself has [described](#) the climate crisis as "mission critical". Frank Elderson, the responsible ECB board member, has [engineered](#) a "tilt" in the Bank's bond-purchase schemes away from firms with high carbon emissions, in favour of more climate-friendly companies and industries. He described the Bank as a "prudent realist," rather than "an environmental activist" (though some bankers supervised by the ECB would probably disagree). "Banks will be at the forefront of the energy and climate transition, whether they want to be or not," he said, and the supervisor's role is to encourage banks to manage their loan portfolios with that in mind.

On the monetary policy front, Isabel Schnabel, the German ECB board member, recently [described](#) how and why the Bank would incorporate climate-change considerations in its approach. In addition to “removing the existing bias towards emission-intensive firms,” the ECB plans to make “climate-related disclosures compulsory for bonds to remain eligible as collateral in our refinancing operations”. Tough love.

The ECB seems unconcerned by Powell’s argument that climate policy is not for the central bank, and it justifies its approach by noting that the Bank’s [statute](#) requires it to support the EU’s economic policies, in addition to maintaining price stability. But critics warn that the ECB may soon be challenged in court for [overstepping](#) its mandate.

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The Bank of England found the risks to banks were greatest if governments delayed effective action on carbon pricing

The British seem to be positioned in the middle of the Atlantic, as is often the case. The Bank of England did, in fact, conduct a [climate stress test](#) on British banks. It was an illuminating exercise: the [risks](#) to banks were greatest if governments delayed effective action on carbon pricing, and if the necessary adjustments to achieve the new net zero objective for emissions were sudden and disruptive. That understanding has driven change by banks themselves. But the UK regulators have so far set their face against the idea of manipulating capital requirements to raise the cost of lending to high carbon emitters (the so-called brown penalising factor) or

to incentivize green lending (the green supporting factor). There is more [enthusiasm](#) for such manipulation in the eurozone, where the Banque de France is in favour.

From banks' perspective, these divergences of view are a concern. There is a clear danger that different approaches to climate risks in different jurisdictions will create competitive distortions. So, bankers hope that some convergence of view develops, and soon. Mixing brown and green paint together typically creates a darker, duller green: forest green, it is often called. That could be an appropriate solution. But for the time being the Fed seems determined to stay out of the woods.

Sir Howard Davies, the first chairman of the UK's Financial Services Authority, is the chairman of NatWest Group. He was director of the LSE and served as deputy governor of the [Bank of England](#) and CBI director general.

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OpinionGolden Globes 2023

All hail the fearless and funny Jennifer Coolidge – and the glorious art of not giving a damn

Emma Brockes



In a wonderful speech at the Golden Globes, she dared to speak of failure – the one thing other actors avoid referring to



Jennifer Coolidge making her speech after accepting the best supporting actress award at the Golden Globes on 10 January 2023. Photograph: Rich Polk/NBC/Getty Images

Fri 20 Jan 2023 03.00 EST Last modified on Fri 20 Jan 2023 05.24 EST

The Golden Globes is a demoralised brand, voted for and organised by people who, as Tina Fey [once joked](#), operate out of “the back booth of a French McDonald’s”. Still, we have last week’s 80th awards show to thank for Jennifer Coolidge, winner of best supporting actress for her role in *The White Lotus*, [rambling through a speech](#) as hilarious as anything Mike White has ever written for her. Prior to the success of her role as Tanya McQuoid (“Mc-Kwaaaad”), Coolidge – breathless on stage – characterised her acting career as one that had been “[fizzled out by life](#)”. Her triumph at the age of 61 isn’t the kind Hollywood often supports. It was an uplifting, joyful spectacle.

It was also a moment of drama the unlikeliness of which underscored the various obstacles Coolidge had to clear to get there. After the awards, the most shared photo of Coolidge was one in which she struck a friendly pose with Jean Smart, who won best actress in a musical/comedy series at the Globes last year for her role in *Hacks*, and who, at 71, is enjoying an even more unlikely renaissance. It has been stated so often as to be tedious, but

that any female actor north of 50 – let alone 60, or my god, 70 – can float back into public consciousness in a form other than the daffy Betty White model, is a rare enough phenomenon to supercharge the celebration.

For those who watch a lot of British TV, Coolidge's win felt particularly satisfying, perhaps, coinciding as it did with the return of Sarah Lancashire in *Happy Valley*, [a performance](#) that encourages one to conclude that TV shows should be peopled exclusively by middle-aged women (in high-vis jackets). The vibe that animates Lancashire's performance is one we saw displayed by Coolidge; that is, one redolent of someone who cares deeply and sincerely about her work and her peers, while – I don't know how either of them pulls this off – assuming a position of being fully beyond giving a shite about any of it.

To this end, the actor broke a bunch of rules about what you do and don't say in public at awards dos. Over the last few decades, Coolidge's career has been made up of a patchwork of small roles that were rarely equal to her talent. She had a small part in two episodes of *Glee*; she had cameos in the comedy sketch show, *Inside Amy Schumer*; she made an appearance in three episodes of *Nip/Tuck*. Or, as she put it last Tuesday night, "there were like five people that kept me going for, like, 20 years with these little jobs" – an honest admission of something to which her peers in Hollywood avoid reference to with the fervour of medieval superstition: failure. As Brad Pitt gurned his slightly baffled appreciation from the front row, Coolidge talked, with brilliant, breathy incredulity, about never being invited to parties in her neighbourhood. One upshot of her recent success, she said, was that "my neighbours are speaking to me, things like that".



‘Coolidge’s win coincided with the return of Sarah Lancashire in *Happy Valley*, a performance that encourages one to conclude that TV shows should be peopled exclusively by middle-aged women.’ Photograph: Matt Squire/BBC/Lookout Point

The charm of this performance was rooted in what felt like Coolidge’s off-the-cuff stream of consciousness, which may, of course, be just another level of her acting skill. But it’s very weird to watch something as cynical and debased as the Golden Globes and find oneself genuinely moved. It wasn’t only Coolidge’s unanticipated rise, but her tribute to White, creator of [The White Lotus](#) and a man who, if Ryan Murphy espouses a certain kind of Hollywood nightmare personality, seems, even after his success, still to embody the homespun decency of Mr Schneebly (White’s role in *School of Rock*). “He is worried about the world,” said Coolidge, as White got all teary. “He’s worried about people; he’s worried about friends of his that aren’t doing well. He’s worried about animals, all of that.” These moments at awards shows are usually unbearably fake, but I believed her.

There was so much else to love. Coolidge’s reference to the giant hook pulling her off stage at the Emmys (“I thought it left when vaudeville ended”); her early dreams to “be queen of Monaco, even though someone else did it”. Above all, what one assumes was her unintentional rebuke to

all the actors a third of her age and half her size squinting up at her with appreciation and puzzlement.

- Emma Brockes is a Guardian columnist
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Opinion Artificial intelligence (AI)

Are AI-generated songs a ‘grotesque mockery’ of humanity or simply an opportunity to make a new kind of music?

Jeff Sparrow



Nick Cave has condemned a song designed and directed by ChatGPT. But new technology should be embraced, not feared



Nick Cave performing at Melbourne's Palais Theatre, 30 November 2022. The singer-songwriter described an AI-written song as 'a replication, a kind of burlesque'. Photograph: Richard Nicholson/REX/Shutterstock

Thu 19 Jan 2023 20.45 EST Last modified on Fri 20 Jan 2023 09.07 EST

Earlier this week, [a fan called Mark](#) sent, for reasons not entirely clear, Nick Cave some lyrics written "in the style of Nick Cave" by the ChatGPT AI system.

Suffice to say Cave was not pleased by the algorithmic imitation.

"With all the love and respect in the world, this song is bullshit, a grotesque mockery of what it is to be human, and, well, I don't much like it."

Fair enough: Why would he?

But Cave's [response on his Red Hand Files blog](#) raises issues relevant to all of us, as we contemplate what the AI revolution means to our own lives and careers.

For Cave, ChatGPT could not write "a genuine song" but only "a replication, a kind of burlesque." That's because, he says, real songs arise

from “the complex, internal human struggle of creation”:

This is what we humble humans can offer, that AI can only mimic, the transcendent journey of the artist that forever grapples with his or her own shortcomings. This is where human genius resides, deeply embedded within, yet reaching beyond, those limitations.”

Now, artists have fretted about the stifling effects of technology since time immemorial.

Back in 1906, the [composer John Philip Sousa](#) polemicised, in very familiar terms, against a futuristic invention called the phonograph.

“Heretofore, the whole course of music, from its first day to this”, Sousa said, “has been along the line of making it the expression of soul states. Now, in this the 20th century, come these talking and playing machines, and offer again to reduce the expression of music to a mathematical system of megaphones, wheels, cogs, disks, cylinders.”

You can find similar denunciations of electric guitars, synthesisers, drum machines, Auto-Tune and almost every new development in the making or recording of songs.

Yet, again and again, people have discovered ways to employ the technology in exciting, creative ways.

Think of the golden age of hip-hop: how producers deployed sampling – a technique many condemned as sheer plagiarism – to make a totally fresh kind of music.

That example – particularly, the subsequent legal constraints on sampling – also illustrates how the possibilities associated with a particular technology depend on the social and economic context in which it emerges.

[Alt](#)

After all, most pop songs aren’t the result of individual geniuses, and haven’t been for a very long time. As far back as 1910, the New York Times

[could publish a piece entitled](#) “How Popular Song Factories Manufacture a Hit”.

“Nowadays,” it explained, “the consumption of songs by the masses in America is as constant as their consumption of shoes, and the demand is similarly met by factory output.”

Then, as now, corporations in a cut-throat business adopted whatever methods might make the most money as quickly as possible.

To disrupt pop music – and many other fields as well – AI doesn’t need to manifest genius. It just needs to be good enough so that its cheapness relative to human labour overrides any perceived decline in quality.

A few years ago, in his book [The Song Machine](#), John Seabrook chronicled how Swedish producers like Denniz Pop, Max Martin, Dr Luke and others transformed contemporary music. To create iconic songs for the likes of Taylor Swift, Rihanna, Katy Perry and Beyoncé, production wizards begin with simple chord progressions on laptops, circulate the files to a vast array of singers, melody makers, hook writers, lyricists and taste makers, and then mix digital takes from multiple contributors into a seamless whole.

David Hajdu of The Nation [describes the method](#) as not so much industrial as post-industrial, since it involves “mining the vast digital repository of recordings of the past, or by emulating or referencing them through synthesis, and then manipulating them and mashing them up.”

AI suits this kind of songwriting perfectly.

Famously, Max Martin gave Britney Spears the alarming lyric “Hit me baby one more time” because, as a non-native English speaker, he misunderstood teen slang for text messaging. Yet, as the songwriter Ulf Ekberg explained, “it was to our advantage that English was not our mother language because we are able to treat English very disrespectful, and just look for the word that sounded good with the melody”.

Does anyone really think Martin and his team wouldn't have made use of ChatGPT, had the software been around back then?

None of this implies that AI constitutes an obstacle, in and of itself, to musical creation. The problem lies less with the technology than with a social system that immediately orients every innovation into profit making, irrespective of the consequences for art or society.

If there's money to be made in AI-generated songs "in the style of Nick Cave", then that's what we'll get, no matter how sub par the results.

That probably won't affect Cave himself very much, given the loyalty of his fanbase. But the same logic applied elsewhere threatens [devastating consequences for ordinary people](#).

After all, an AI doesn't have to be a genius to put you out of work. It just needs to be adequate – and slightly cheaper.

Jeff Sparrow is a Guardian Australia columnist

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/jan/20/are-ai-generated-songs-a-grotesque-mockery-of-humanity-or-simply-an-opportunity-to-make-a-new-kind-of-music>

2023.01.20 - Around the world

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- [US Biden, Trump and two very different classified document scandals, explained](#)

[Peru](#)

Peru protesters fight running battles with police after thousands march in Lima

President Dina Boluarte vows to punish protesters as crowds continue to call for her resignation

Teargas fired at Peru protesters as thousands try to 'take Lima' – video report

[Dan Collyns](#) in Lima
[@yachay_dc](#)

Thu 19 Jan 2023 22.28 EST Last modified on Fri 20 Jan 2023 08.11 EST

A march billed as the “takeover of Lima” escalated into running battles between protesters and riot police amid stone-throwing and swirls of teargas on Thursday evening in Peru’s capital.

Thousands of protesters from across the country [poured into Lima](#) earlier in the week to take part in a massive march demanding the resignation of President Dina Boluarte after nearly six weeks of turmoil that has killed more than 50 people, including one police officer and eight people who died as a result of strikes and blockades.

In a late-night television address, Boluarte said police had the protests under control and that those responsible for violence and vandalism would not go “unpunished”, adding “this is not a peaceful march”. She said the “government is firm and its cabinet is more united than ever”.

Boluarte claimed that the protests had “no social agenda” but rather sought to “break the rule of law, generate chaos and disorder and seize power”. She

added that attacks on three regional airports had been planned in advance and would be punished with “all the rigour of the law”.

“To the Peruvian people, to those who want to work in peace and to those who generate acts of protest I say: I will not get tired of calling them to a good dialogue, to tell them that we work for the country,” she said.

One person died and about 10 were injured in clashes with police in the southern city of Arequipa on Thursday, according to Peru’s ombudsman’s office, when protesters reportedly tried to invade the airport. Several airports have been closed and huge swathes of the country have been paralysed by more than 120 roadblocks.



Riot police take cover after the ‘Take over Lima’ march on Thursday night.
Photograph: Sebastian Castañeda/Reuters

Outrage over the rising death toll has powered the mounting protests, which [began in early December](#) in support of [ousted former president Pedro Castillo](#) but have shifted overwhelmingly to demand Boluarte’s resignation, the closure of Congress and fresh elections. [Boluarte](#) was Castillo’s vice-president and replaced him after he attempted to shutter Congress and rule by decree on 7 December.

Earlier on Thursday, thousands marched around Lima's San Martín square, many holding banners of their place of origin. Peasant security organisations known as *ronderos* carried traditional whips and Indigenous women wore traditional colourful skirts. There were chants of "Dina, murderer, the people repudiate you" amid banners showing Peru's first female president bathed in blood.

"We want justice, we don't want our dead to be forgotten," Zulema Chacón told the Guardian. "We want that usurper out, she doesn't represent us."

"They are the thieves and they lie and lie to us," said Delia Zevallos, 52, a shopkeeper, referring to the lawmakers in Congress, Peru's most despised political organ. "The people have woken up, we're not children any more, we know how to read and write ... and no one can tell us what to do."

Boluarte, who said last week that she would not resign, met a representative of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights earlier on Thursday. Last week, the UN agency said it was ["very concerned about the rising violence"](#) in Peru.



Demonstrators clash with riot police at the Añashuayco bridge in Arequipa earlier on Thursday. Photograph: Diego Ramos/AFP/Getty Images

Both the US and UK ambassadors to Peru welcomed the meeting and issued statements on Thursday calling for calm and exhorting the government to seek dialogue.

In a statement in Spanish on [Twitter](#), the US ambassador, Lisa Kenna, said it was “fundamental that the forces of order respect human rights and protect the citizenry”.

In a similar [statement](#), her UK counterpart, Gavin Cook, called for “immediate and impartial investigations, accountability measures and justice for the victims of the reports of human rights violations”.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/20/peru-protests-running-battles-police-lima-thousands-march>

US news

US state department announces new refugee program titled Welcome Corps

Pilot scheme will allow American citizens to sponsor refugees and help them settle into their communities



Immigrants pack up blankets after sleeping outside a migrant shelter in January 2023 in El Paso, Texas. Photograph: John Moore/Getty Images

[Maya Yang](#)

Fri 20 Jan 2023 01.00 ESTLast modified on Fri 20 Jan 2023 01.02 EST

The US state department has announced a new refugee program under which ordinary Americans can financially assist and sponsor refugees seeking resettlement.

On Thursday, the state department [revealed](#) the Welcome Corps, a pilot program which will seek to mobilize 10,000 Americans as private sponsors for at least 5,000 refugees in its first year.

“The Welcome Corps is a new service opportunity for Americans to welcome refugees seeking freedom and safety and, in turn, make a difference in their own communities,” the program’s website said.

“Together, sponsor groups welcome refugee newcomers by securing and preparing initial housing, greeting refugee newcomers at the airport, enrolling children in school, and helping adults to find employment.”

Under the program, all refugees admitted through the US Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP), including those supported via Welcome Corps, will undergo extensive security vetting and a health screening conducted by the federal government. Only those cleared will be approved for settlement in the US.

According to the program, the majority of refugees who will be welcomed by private sponsors in Welcome Corps’s first months will be from sub-Saharan Africa, where “they have been waiting for years for a durable solution”.

Both American citizens and permanent residents can form Private Sponsor Groups (PSGs). Each group must have at least five members who are above 18 years old and who live in or near the same community. Sponsors are required to raise at least \$2,275 for each refugee, which will be used for their initial basic needs until the refugee finds employment.

PSGs are not required to identify a particular refugee to sponsor. Instead, the Welcome Corps will match sponsors to selected refugees. In mid-2023, the program will expand to allow private sponsors to identify refugees they wish to sponsor and also refer applicants to the USRAP for consideration.

In addition to the minimum financial commitment, PSGs commit to providing “welcoming services” to refugees for their first 90 days in the community, including housing, basic needs and connections to healthcare, education and employment services.

Welcome Corps will provide PSGS with resources such as a budget template, fundraising support and an arrival checklist.

Despite the state department [describing](#) the Welcome Corps as “the boldest innovation in refugee settlement in four decades”, many developing countries have been far more generous than the US in admitting refugees.

Turkey hosts the largest number of refugees in the world, at 3.7 million. Colombia is second, with more than 2.5 million. Pakistan and Uganda each host more than 1 million refugees, [according to](#) the United Nations.

In total, at least 103 million people are currently forcibly displaced.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/jan/20/us-state-department-new-refugee-program-welcome-corps>

[Business live](#)Davos 2023

Davos day 4: IMF's Georgieva says economic outlook 'less bad' than feared; Russia heading for 'incredible poverty' – as it happened

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/live/2023/jan/20/davos-day-4-global-economic-outlook-russia-economy-ai-business-live>

Wildlife

‘We dubbed it Toadzilla’: giant cane toad believed to be the largest of its species found in Australia

The animal weighed in at a possible new world record of 2.7kg (6lbs) and was discovered by park rangers on a walk in Queensland

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'Toadzilla': massive cane toad found in Queensland – video

[*Mostafa Rachwani*](#)
[*@Rachwani91*](#)

Thu 19 Jan 2023 19.48 ESTLast modified on Fri 20 Jan 2023 14.23 EST

She’s toxic, weighs as much as some newborn babies and was found in the wilds of Australia’s far north.

A giant cane toad, dubbed “Toadzilla”, that was found by rangers in Queensland’s Conway national park on Thursday, is believed to be the largest of her species ever found.

Ranger Kylee Gray was walking in the national park and had stopped to let a snake slither across the track when she saw the enormous toad.



Cane toads can normally grow to around 15cm in size. Photograph: Department of Environment and Science QLD

“I reached down and grabbed the cane toad and couldn’t believe how big and heavy it was,” she said.

“We dubbed it Toadzilla, and quickly put it into a container so we could remove it from the wild.”

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Cane toads, which can normally grow to around 15cm (5.9in) in size, are one of Australia’s most notorious invasive species and are considered a threat to native wildlife. They have colonised a wide variety of habitats across north-eastern Australia after they were introduced into Queensland in 1935 to control the cane beetle.



A giant cane toad, dubbed ‘Toadzilla’, found by rangers in Queensland’s Conway national park, is believed to be the largest of her species ever recorded. Illustration: Victoria Hart/Guardian Design / Getty Images

The brown, warty toads can be fatally poisonous to wildlife and have caused local extinctions of some of their predators. They also compete with native species for shelter and resources.

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Rangers believe Toadzilla has been around for a ‘long time’. Photograph: Department of Environment and Science QLD

The Guinness World Record for the largest toad in history is 2.65kg (5.8lbs), found in 1991.

The rangers who found “Toadzilla” took it back to their base and weighed it. She tipped the scales at 2.7kg (6lbs), which could be a new record.

“A cane toad that size will eat anything it can fit into its mouth, and that includes insects, reptiles and small mammals,” Gray said.

“She was found at an elevation of 393 metres, which isn’t unusual, but she has created a lot of interest among our ranger staff due to her size,” she added.

“The Queensland Museum is interested in taking her, as she might be the largest on record.”

Gray said she was not sure how old Toadzilla is, but suspected it had been around for a “long time”.

“Cane toads can live up to 15 years in the wild – so this one has been around a long time. We’re pleased to have removed her from the national park.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/jan/20/we-dubbed-it-toadzilla-giant-cane-toad-believed-to-be-the-largest-of-its-species-found-in-australia>

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[Joe Biden](#)

[Explainer](#)

Biden, Trump and two very different classified document scandals, explained

At first glance, both presidents appear to have similarly bungled the handling of documents – but here's how the two cases differ



The attorney general, Merrick Garland, has named an independent special counsel to investigate Joe Biden's handling of classified documents. Photograph: Olivier Douliery/AFP/Getty Images

[Chris Michael](#), [Andrew Witherspoon](#) and [Richard Luscombe](#)

Fri 20 Jan 2023 02.00 EST Last modified on Fri 20 Jan 2023 02.02 EST

The discovery of classified documents in offices used by Joe Biden's thinktank and in a locked storage unit in a garage near where the president keeps his Corvette may not be a criminal matter, but it does appear to have taken a political toll.

With a [new Reuters/Ipsos poll](#) on Thursday finding that Biden's approval rating, which had risen at the end of 2022, was back down to just 40% – near the lowest level of his presidency – many Democrats are smacking their foreheads, fearing Biden has done exactly what his expected 2024 opponent, Donald Trump, was under investigation for doing.

So much for painting Trump as dangerous, volatile and a threat to national security. Right?

But that's not to say the two cases are the same. The scale of the scandals is hugely lopsided: thousands of documents in Trump's possession, including many marked top secret, versus an estimated dozen in Biden's.

Crucially for justice department investigators, led by the special counsels appointed by the attorney general, [Merrick Garland](#), the actions of the two presidents are also vastly different.

Trump declared his intent to take documents, refused to hand them back, had to be raided by the FBI to secure the records, then fought authorities in court for months.

Biden's team handed the documents back voluntarily.

Here is a breakdown of how the two cases are similar – and how, in major ways, they are different.

[Interactive](#)

Biden, 80, is expected to launch another run for the White House, perhaps as soon as next month, after he delivers the State of the Union address on 7 February.

Republicans in Congress have slammed the president regarding when the documents were discovered – before the midterms – claiming Biden was not forthcoming about such potentially politically sensitive discoveries.

But the Reuters/Ipsos poll results suggest it isn't just Biden whose ratings are down as a result of various scandals in Washington.

Only 20% of respondents said they approved of the House speaker, Kevin McCarthy, the top elected Republican, while just 35% said they had a favorable view of the House as a whole and 38% approved of the Senate.

In that light, Biden's head appears to be just above water. He must be hoping no more classified documents emerge to push him back below.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/jan/20/classified-documents-biden-trump-explained>

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- [New Zealand Jacinda Ardern resigns as prime minister](#)
- [From stardust to an empty tank Ardern knew her time was up](#)
- [Jacinda Ardern Key moments of time as prime minister](#)
- ['An inspiring leader' World reacts](#)

[Jacinda Ardern](#)

Jacinda Ardern resigns as prime minister of New Zealand

Labour leader to stand down no later than 7 February, saying she ‘no longer had enough in the tank’ to do the job

- [Tell us: how will you remember Jacinda Ardern’s time as PM?](#)

Jacinda Ardern resigns as prime minister of New Zealand in shock announcement – video

[Tess McClure](#) in Auckland

[@tessairini](#)

Wed 18 Jan 2023 22.43 ESTFirst published on Wed 18 Jan 2023 19.13 EST

New Zealand’s prime minister, [Jacinda Ardern](#), has said she is resigning, in an unexpected announcement that came as she confirmed a national election for October.

At the party’s first caucus meeting of the year on Thursday, Ardern said she “no longer had enough in the tank” to do the job. “It’s time,” she added.

“I’m leaving, because with such a privileged role comes responsibility – the responsibility to know when you are the right person to lead and also when you are not. I know what this job takes. And I know that I no longer have enough in the tank to do it justice. It’s that simple,” she said.

Her term as prime minister will conclude no later than 7 February but she will continue as an MP until the election this year.

“I am human, politicians are human. We give all that we can for as long as we can. And then it’s time. And for me, it’s time,” she said.

Ardern said she had reflected over the summer break on whether she had the energy to continue in the role, and had concluded she did not.

How the world fell in love with Jacinda Ardern – video

Ardern became the world’s youngest female head of government when she was elected prime minister in 2017 at 37. She has led [New Zealand](#) through the Covid-19 pandemic, and a series of disasters including the terrorist attack on two mosques in Christchurch, and the White Island volcanic eruption.

“This has been the most fulfilling five and a half years of my life. But it’s also had its challenges – among an agenda focused on housing, child poverty and climate change, we encountered a ... domestic terror event, a major natural disaster, a global pandemic, and an economic crisis,” she said.

Asked how she would like New Zealanders to remember her leadership, Ardern said “as someone who always tried to be kind”.

“I hope I leave New Zealanders with a belief that you can be kind, but strong, empathetic but decisive, optimistic but focused. And that you can be your own kind of leader – one who knows when it’s time to go,” Ardern said.

Over the past year, [Ardern has faced a significant increase in threats of violence](#), particularly from conspiracy theorist and anti-vaccine groups infuriated by the country’s vaccine mandates and lockdowns. She said, however, that the increased risk associated with the job were not behind her decision to step down.

“I don’t want to leave the impression that the adversity you face in politics is the reason that people exit. Yes, it does have an impact. We are humans after all, but that was not the basis of my decision,” she said.

Ardern said she had no future plans, other than to spend more time with her family.

She thanked her partner, Clarke Gayford, and daughter Neve, whom she gave birth to while holding office, as “the ones that have sacrificed the most out of all of us”.

“To Neve: Mum is looking forward to being there when you start school this year. And to Clarke – let’s finally get married.”



Jacinda Ardern and partner Clarke Gayford leave after she announces her resignation in Napier, New Zealand, on Thursday. Photograph: Kerry Marshall/Getty Images

The prime minister’s announcement came as a shock to many New Zealanders. During a brief flurry of speculation over Ardern’s possible resignation in late 2022, the prime minister said she had no intention of doing so. In the weeks leading up to Thursday’s announcement, there were no clues or leaks to suggest her resignation was on the cards.

The news arrives as New Zealand enters a closely fought election year, with the date of the vote announced for 14 October. Polling over recent months

had placed the [Ardern-led Labour party slightly behind the opposition National](#).

Ardern said her decline in the polls did not prompt her decision to leave.

“I’m not leaving because I believe we can’t win the election, but because I believe we can and will, and we need a fresh set of shoulders for that challenge,” she said.

Who will replace Ardern is not yet clear: the deputy leader and finance minister, Grant Robertson, who would be considered a frontrunner, said on Thursday that he would not be seeking the position. “I am not putting myself forward to be a candidate for the leadership of the Labour party,” he said.

The Labour caucus has seven days to find out whether a new candidate holds more than two-thirds of support within caucus to become the new leader and prime minister. A caucus vote for a new leader will take place on 22 January. If no one meets that threshold level of support, the leadership contest will go to the wider Labour membership.

The National leader, Christopher Luxon, said Ardern had “made a significant contribution to New Zealand, in what is a difficult and demanding job” and called her a “strong ambassador for New Zealand on the world stage”.

“Her leadership in the aftermath of the Christchurch terror attacks was simultaneously strong and compassionate, and is something she can be proud of,” he added.

Jacinda Ardern has shown the world how to lead with intellect and strength.

She has demonstrated that empathy and insight are powerful leadership qualities.

Jacinda has been a fierce advocate for New Zealand, an inspiration to so many and a great friend to me. pic.twitter.com/QJ64mNCJMI

— Anthony Albanese (@AlboMP) [January 19, 2023](#)

The prime minister of Australia, Anthony Albanese, paid tribute to Ardern, saying she “has shown the world how to lead with intellect and strength ... She has demonstrated that empathy and insight are powerful leadership qualities.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/19/jacinda-ardern-resigns-as-prime-minister-of-new-zealand>

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[Jacinda Ardern](#)

[Analysis](#)

From stardust to an empty tank: one-of-a-kind leader Jacinda Ardern knew her time was up

[Tess McClure](#) in Auckland

New Zealand's prime minister set the standard through tough times, but knew the upcoming election would be the most gruelling yet

- [‘An inspiring leader’: World reacts to Ardern’s resignation](#)
- [The key moments of Ardern’s time as prime minister](#)
- [Tell us: how will you remember Ardern’s time as New Zealand PM?](#)

How the world fell in love with Jacinda Ardern – video

Thu 19 Jan 2023 01.53 ESTLast modified on Thu 19 Jan 2023 16.05 EST

“Be strong, and be kind.” The prime minister’s words came at the close of a hastily scheduled press conference, announcing New Zealand’s first lockdown in the face of an unknown and deadly virus. For many New Zealanders, they became a catchphrase of the early pandemic, when the country succeeded in [eliminating the coronavirus](#) within its borders.

Over the coming years, they would also become synonymous with Jacinda Ardern’s politics – for her admirers, encapsulating a signature mixture of empathy and strength, and for critics, an example of soaring rhetoric not always backed by desired legislative reforms.

In 2017, Ardern became the world’s youngest serving female leader, and went on to make history as the second woman to give birth while holding elected office. Six years later, on Thursday, she made a shock

announcement: [she will step down](#) at the close of the month, ending her two-term tenure before the next election in October.

Ardern's emergence on to New Zealand's political stage came just weeks before an election that Labour was near-universally expected to lose. "It was one of those rare moments where everything changed on the back of one force of personality," says [New Zealand](#) political writer Toby Manhire. "When her rival, then-prime minister Bill English, spoke of her 'stardust' it was meant as an insult, but he was right." On a wave of popularity dubbed "Jacindamania", she led the party to scrape an against-the-odds victory.

Over the next six years, her leadership was shaped and defined by a series of national and international crises – and her responses in those pressured moments, which repeatedly emphasised the values of empathy, humanity and kindness, will likely form the standout legacy of her political career.

"She's always been ... a leader who is at their best in a crisis – and unfortunately, she has had her fair share," says Madeleine Chapman, author of the unauthorised biography Jacinda Ardern: A New Kind of Leader.

In March 2019, some 18 months after Ardern's election, New Zealand was hit by the worst terror attack in its history, when a white supremacist gunned down worshippers at two mosques in Christchurch, killing 51. The words "they are us," scrawled by Ardern on an A4 sheet of paper in the minutes after the attack, formed the centre of her speech that afternoon, embracing the immigrant and refugee communities targeted in the attack.

Images of her clad in a hijab, hugging a woman at the mosque circled the globe. Her political response – immediately denouncing the shooter as a terrorist and introducing bipartisan gun control legislation – came as a particularly sharp contrast to then-contemporary Donald Trump in the US. "The response to the terrorist attack ... was just extraordinary," says Manhire. "Empathetic, humane, but also steely, unflinching in fronting up to the uncomfortable issues it unearthed." Those attributes would lay out a template for the most significant moments of Ardern's leadership in the coming years.

“She has extremely good emotional intelligence – and that was really the quality that was needed, particularly during Christchurch, but also during the pandemic,” says political commentator Ben Thomas, a former staffer for the previous National government. In the first year of the pandemic, she successfully united New Zealanders behind extraordinary lockdowns to stamp out Covid-19 – a policy decision that resulted in New Zealand achieving some of the lowest rates of illness and death in the world.

That period won her enormous popularity, as well as “a global fame well out of proportion to New Zealand’s size”, Manhire says. In the overseas press, she shone bright – presenting a compelling poster child for progressive leadership in an era of growing fears about the rise of the far right, misinformation and the erosion of democratic norms.

A rare leader, a mixed legacy

At home, particularly as the pandemic years dragged on, her legacy and public image were more complex. Ardern’s government [struggled to make headway on the housing crisis](#), which had led to huge numbers of people living on the streets, in cars, or in temporary accommodation. A vein of fiscal conservatism – ruling out a wealth tax or capital gains tax, and limiting tax take and spending – limited her government’s possibilities for large-scale, costly social programs beyond its Covid response. Despite major commitments on climate change, the country failed to meaningfully reduce its emissions.

On some of the issues closest to the prime minister’s heart, there were concrete legislative gains. Child poverty, the problem that she credited with spurring her into politics, has reduced across most measures in New Zealand, even amid the crisis of Covid 19 and the economic downturn it heralded. The government can tout core Labour victories for workers: record employment, 26 weeks of paid parental leave, increased sick leave, boosted bargaining power for low-wage sectors, the minimum wage up by over 30%. But the other reform efforts: to dramatically increase state housing numbers, revamp governance of ageing waterways, and settle on a mechanism to price agricultural emissions, have been mired in difficulty.

“When it came to designing and delivering complex legislation or sophisticated legislative reform, progress was much, much slower,” says Thomas. That mixed legacy reveals some of both the possibility and limitations of “be kind” as a guiding political principle. “The idea of kindness and empathy can hit its limits because politics is so often about tradeoffs,” Thomas says, particularly in the day-to-day struggles of governance, coalition-building and compromise.

As the pandemic continued, new challenges emerged: a small but highly vocal fringe of anti-vaccine and anti-mandate groups emerged, culminating in an explosion of [violent riots on parliament’s lawns](#), and directing a toxic stream of death threats and [violent rhetoric at the prime minister](#). High inflation and economic headwinds – many of them international in origin, but keenly felt in New Zealand – soured the mood of the general electorate, leading to a months-long downward slide for Ardern and Labour’s popularity. By late 2022, several successive polls had placed the centre-right National party as the most likely option to form a new government, alongside libertarian rightwing coalition partners Act.

The approaching election – now scheduled for October – was likely to be a far more gruelling battle than Ardern had ever faced previously. In 2017, she was chosen as Labour leader just weeks out from the election, leapfrogging the bitter months of campaign sparring. In the last general election in 2020, overwhelming support for the Covid response swept Labour to a near-unprecedented victory. From her early days in the political arena Ardern had always expressed a distaste for the bitter scrapping and point-scoring associated with political contests, says Chapman. “She had always said that she didn’t like that kind of type of politics, that type of campaigning. That’s exactly what this election was going to be – so I’m not surprised that she was not feeling incredibly enthusiastic about it.”

And there were other factors at play. After six years of crises and calamities, Ardern had run out of gas. “I know there’ll be much discussion in the aftermath of this decision as to what the so called ‘real reason’ was. I can tell you that what I’m sharing today is the only interesting angle that you will find - that after going on six years of some big challenges, I am

human,” she said. “I know what this job takes, and I know that I no longer have enough in the tank to do it justice. It’s that simple.”

Her daughter Neve, whom Ardern famously held as an infant at the United Nations general assembly, is now about to start school. Ardern said on Thursday that her family had made the biggest sacrifices of all. Drawing her remarks to a close, she addressed them directly. “Neve: mum is looking forward to being there when you start school this year. And to Clarke: let’s finally get married.”

As she announced her resignation – her voice occasionally cracking with emotion, Ardern returned again to the principles that formed the central pillars of her tenure.

“I hope I leave New Zealanders with a belief that you can be kind, but strong, empathetic but decisive, optimistic but focused,” she said. “And that you can be your own kind of leader – one who knows when it’s time to go.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/19/from-stardust-to-an-empty-tank-one-of-a-kind-leader-jacinda-ardern-knew-her-time-was-up>

Jacinda Ardern

The key moments of Jacinda Ardern's time as prime minister

From her response to the Christchurch mosque attacks and Covid to becoming a mother while in office, Ardern attracted headlines worldwide

- [Jacinda Ardern resigns as prime minister of New Zealand](#)
- [Tell us: how will you remember Jacinda Ardern's time as PM?](#)

How the world fell in love with Jacinda Ardern – video



[Ben Doherty](#)

[@bendohertycorro](#)

Thu 19 Jan 2023 00.15 ESTLast modified on Thu 19 Jan 2023 09.05 EST

Since her election in 2017, [New Zealand](#) has faced multiple crises, and her leadership has attracted headlines across the world. Here are some of the key aspects of her time in office.

The Christchurch mosque attacks

In the uncertain hours after the Christchurch mosque attacks of 15 March 2019, Ardern emphasised that the victims of the massacre were beloved, integral members of the New Zealand community. The attacker was not.

“Many of those who will have been directly affected by this shooting may be migrants to New Zealand, they may even be refugees here. They have chosen to make New Zealand their home, and it is their home.

“They are us. The person who has perpetuated this violence against us is not,” Ardern said. “They have no place in New Zealand. There is no place in New Zealand for such acts of extreme and unprecedented violence, which it is clear this act was.”

The violent shooting attack on two Christchurch mosques by a lone Australian terrorist, which killed 51 people, was the cataclysmic event of Ardern’s premiership, and her response to it its defining act.

Ardern wore a hijab as she sat with survivors and the families of victims, and emphasising her country’s solidarity with them.

“Speak the names of those who were lost rather than the man who took them,” she said. “He may seek notoriety but we will give him nothing, not even his name.”

Strong leadership: New Zealand Prime Minister [@jacindaardern](#) visits grieving Muslim families, wearing hijab as a sign of respect.

She tells them: You are us. pic.twitter.com/rhglbJyZ36

— Negar Mortazavi نگار مرتضوی (@NegarMortazavi) [March 16, 2019](#)

In the immediate aftermath, Ardern moved to tighten New Zealand’s gun laws, banning military-style semi-automatic weapons just six days after the attack. More than 62,000 firearms were ultimately removed from circulation through a gun buy-back scheme.

And she became an outspoken campaigner to eliminate terrorist and violent extremist content online, spearheading – alongside the French president, Emmanuel Macron – the Christchurch Call to Action.

Covid-19



Jacinda Ardern announces an easing of Covid restrictions in November 2021. Photograph: Getty Images

All premierships since 2020 will be marked, in some way, against the scorecard of Covid-19. Ardern, helped by New Zealand’s island nation geography and relatively robust public health system, was widely praised for a “world-leading” response, but significantly thanked her “team of 5 million” New Zealanders for their support, and the sacrifices they had made.

New Zealand’s Covid-19 response – an initial strategy of elimination (which included border closures and lockdown) transitioning to a mitigation strategy – has kept infections and deaths low.

In the first 18 months of the pandemic, until vaccines became widely available, New Zealand had low Covid-19 mortality rates: [life expectancy](#).

[actually increased](#). To January 2023, the country has recorded fewer than 2,500 deaths in total from the pandemic.

Pockets of disaffection have remained tenacious – a small core of conspiracy-prone anti-government protesters [occupied parliament's lawns for weeks](#) in 2022, some threatening violence – but Ardern's response was widely seen as having saved lives.

Whakaari/White Island volcano

Further tragedy was visited upon New Zealand in December 2019, when Whakaari/White Island erupted, killing 21 people, including tourists from the UK, US, Australia, China and Malaysia.

Ardern met first responders in Whakatāne, praising the helicopter pilots who flew to the island in the immediate aftermath of the eruption to rescue those stranded. The pilots, Ardern said, made “an incredibly brave decision under extraordinary, dangerous circumstances in an attempt to get people out”.

She later told parliament: “I say to those who have lost and grieve – you are forever linked to our nation and we will hold you close”.



Jacinda Ardern pays her respects at the Te Mānuka Tūtahi Marae in 2020 on the anniversary of the eruption in Whakatane. Photograph: Phil Walter/Getty Images

Fame, and a family

In the early months of her premiership, there was a word for it: “Jacindamania”. Ardern was celebrated around the world, alongside Macron and Canada’s Justin Trudeau, as a progressive riposte to the rise of Donald Trump in the US.



Jacinda Ardern with Neve, her newborn daughter, and Clarke Gayford at Wellington Airport, New Zealand, in 2018. Photograph: Boris Jancic/AAP

Ardern was featured on the cover of British Vogue, replete with glamorous photoshoot inside. She appeared repeatedly on the American TV host Stephen Colbert’s Late Show, and made Time magazine’s list of 100 of the world’s “most influential people”.

She became only the second world leader to give birth while in office (Pakistan’s Benazir Bhutto was first, in 1990). She took her infant daughter, Neve, to the UN general assembly in New York. All attracted attention, bordering on adulation.

But fame was occasionally a double-edged sword. Ardern faced [repeated intrusive questioning](#) about her personal life – her pregnancy, her partner, her hair. And when she met the Finnish prime minister, Sanna Marin, she was interrogated as to whether they'd only met because they were both young female prime ministers.

“I wonder whether or not anyone ever asked Barack Obama and John Key if they met because they were of similar age,” she mused in response.

In 2022, Ardern earned a standing ovation – and again made global headlines – for a commencement speech to students at Harvard University, urging a defence of “fragile” democracy against a rising tide of authoritarianism and intolerance.

“This imperfect but precious way that we organise ourselves, that has been created to give equal voice to the weak and to the strong, that is designed to help drive consensus. It is fragile.”

Domestic political malaise

Ardern's premiership has also been marked by domestic policy disappointments as her party stumbled over reforms to housing, waterways and agriculture.

Economic headwinds have buffeted New Zealand's economy. Inflation hit 7.2% in 2022 (with grocery costs rising more than 10%), forcing New Zealand's reserve bank to plan a “shallow recession” for the country. Interest rates were lifted, putting further pressure on household budgets, and petrol prices spiked.

KiwiBuild, the Ardern government's much-touted intervention into the housing market, was ambitious – 100,000 homes by 2028 – but ultimately a failure.

Growing concern about crime further fuelled discontent, and New Zealanders grew more pessimistic during the second half of Ardern's tenure. In early 2021, a poll showed 70% of New Zealanders “think the

country is going in the right direction”. By the end of 2022, that figure was 30%.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/19/the-key-moments-of-jacinda-ardern-time-as-prime-minister-of-nz-new-zealand>

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[Jacinda Ardern](#)

‘An inspiring leader’: world reacts to Jacinda Ardern’s resignation as New Zealand PM

‘The difference you have made is immeasurable,’ says Canadian prime minister Justin Trudeau



New Zealand's prime minister, Jacinda Ardern, has announced her resignation, prompting tributes to her leadership. Photograph: Marty Melville/AFP/Getty Images

[Samantha Lock](#) and [Jon Henley](#)

Thu 19 Jan 2023 19.42 ESTFirst published on Thu 19 Jan 2023 01.00 EST

The US president, together with the prime ministers of Canada and Australia, have paid tribute to their New Zealand counterpart, who shocked the world by announcing she would be [resigning as her country’s leader](#).

Joe Biden applauded Ardern's "stewardship in advancing a free and open Indo-Pacific" and credited her leadership for making the US-New Zealand partnership "stronger than ever".

Ardern is "a forward-looking, global leader who has inspired millions around the world", vice-president Kamala Harris added.

Justin Trudeau said the 42-year-old prime minister's leadership had made an "immeasurable" difference on the world stage, as Anthony Albanese expressed his admiration for Ardern's "intellect and strength".

"Thank you for your partnership and your friendship – and for your empathic, compassionate, strong, and steady leadership over these past several years," the Canadian premier [tweeted](#).

Prime Minister Ardern, the U.S.-New Zealand partnership is stronger than ever, thanks in large part to your leadership.

Your stewardship in advancing a free and open Indo-Pacific was crucial – I look forward to deepening our nations' ties for generations to come. pic.twitter.com/ePqIP3uRJm

— President Biden (@POTUS) [January 19, 2023](#)

Albanese said Ardern had been a "fierce advocate for New Zealand" and had "shown the world how to lead with intellect and strength ... She has demonstrated that empathy and insight are powerful leadership qualities."

The former Australian premier Kevin Rudd also praised Ardern's record, saying she "rewrote the rulebook for how world leaders are supposed to look and act" and had provided "a masterclass in international public diplomacy".

Roberta Metsola, the president of the European parliament, said Ardern had "led New Zealand with grace and dignity under extraordinary pressure in extraordinary times", adding that she was "a friend to Europe who has been

a trailblazing example – to young women in particular – showing how politics can be a force for positive change”.

Dutch prime minister Mark Rutte described Arden as a “formidable leader” and an example to all.

“I believe that she is a formidable leader, in New Zealand, but also in the region, and in the UN. And she really is an example to us,” he said.

Former US secretary of state Hillary Clinton said Arden would be remembered “for guiding her country with strength, compassion, and grace through multiple historic crises, doubtless saving countless lives”.

“She’s shown the world a new model of powerful leadership. A true stateswoman,” she [added](#).

Jacinda Arden has shown the world how to lead with intellect and strength.

She has demonstrated that empathy and insight are powerful leadership qualities.

Jacinda has been a fierce advocate for New Zealand, an inspiration to so many and a great friend to me. pic.twitter.com/QJ64mNCJMI

— Anthony Albanese (@AlboMP) [January 19, 2023](#)

Arden began her political career as a researcher in the office of the former New Zealand prime minister Helen Clark.

On Thursday, Clark said she was deeply saddened by the news of her resignation. “Jacinda has done an amazing job leading NZ & always brought humanity, empathy, & intelligence to the job. Much to be said, but for now – just thank you.”

Maria Shriver, the American journalist and former first lady of California, described Arden as “an inspiring leader”, saying she had to “hand it to her

for her honesty though. This makes me sad and it shows what a drain leading can be.”

The New Zealand actor Sam Neill described Ardern as a “great leader” in a Twitter [post](#). “I am not surprised nor do I blame her,” he said. “Her treatment, the pile-on, in the last few months has been disgraceful and embarrassing. All the bullies, the misogynists, the aggrieved. She deserved so much better.”

How the world fell in love with Jacinda Ardern – video

Ardern’s government has been sliding steadily in the polls over the past year amid soaring inflation, a looming recession and a resurgent conservative opposition.

The opposition National leader, Christopher Luxon, said Ardern had “made a significant contribution to New Zealand, in what is a difficult and demanding job” and called her a “strong ambassador for New Zealand on the world stage”.

The leader of New Zealand’s libertarian-right Act party, said Ardern was a “well-meaning person” whose “idealism collided hard with reality”.

Grant Robertson, New Zealand’s deputy prime minister, said: “We’re extremely proud of what Jacinda has done for New Zealand and what as a party we’ve been able to achieve, and also a sense that we want to carry on as well.”

Ardern became the world’s youngest female head of government when she was elected prime minister in 2017 at 37. She was also the second prime minister in the world to give birth while in office, becoming a global icon for women in leadership.

The Indian congressman Jairam Ramesh said Indian politics needed more leaders like Ardern, who “go when people ask why [are they] going, instead of why aren’t they”.

Ardern – who steered the country through natural disasters, the Covid pandemic and its worst terrorist attack – said on Thursday she no longer had “enough in the tank” to do the job. “It’s time ... I’d be doing a disservice to New Zealand if I continued,” she told her party’s annual caucus meeting.

Farid Ahmed, a survivor of the 2019 Christchurch terrorist attack that killed 51 people – including his wife – and injured 40, said Ardern’s “universal call for human unity with compassion made me cry with joy then, and it makes me cry now”.

The prime minister’s “kindness, wisdom and efforts for a peaceful world have been a remarkable example for world leaders,” Ahmed said. “I understand that she needs rest, and I wish her all the best in her life.”

Popstar Pink also gave a gushing tribute over social media.

“Prime minister Jacinda Ardern there will never be another like you. I wish there were,” she [tweeted](#). “You have my admiration, my respect, my well wishes for you+your beautiful family. I have watched you shine uniquely+bravely from afar. Thank you 4showing the rest of the world what’s possible.”

Ardern’s term as prime minister will conclude no later than 7 February but she will continue as an MP until the election this year.

Prime Minister [@jacindaardern](#) there will never be another like you. I wish there were. You have my admiration, my respect, my well wishes for you+your beautiful family. I have watched you shine uniquely+bravely from afar. Thank you 4showing the rest of the world what’s possible.

— P!nk (@Pink) [January 19, 2023](#)

Agence France-Presse contributed to this report.

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A tragedy pushed to the shadows: the truth about China's Cultural Revolution

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UK cost of living crisis

‘Dignity and choice’: community pantries spring up as UK cost of living soars

Local cooperatives can offer an alternative to food banks, allowing neighbours to club together while tackling food waste



‘Doing it together, we save money and we build power’: members select vegetables at a Cooperation Town centre. Photograph: Martin Godwin/The Guardian

[Esther Addley](#)

Thu 19 Jan 2023 03.00 ESTLast modified on Thu 19 Jan 2023 05.47 EST

In a large, bright room in Gospel Oak, north-west London, 20 green plastic boxes have been arranged on the floor in an approximate circle. Four volunteers are moving between them, putting food items into each: a packet of cornflakes, bags of rice, four oranges, a handful of large mushrooms.

Before long – a mango, a jar of chickpeas – the boxes are almost full. From a large sack, one of the volunteers takes a fistful of garlic bulbs to drop in each container: “It’s winter. People need garlic,” she says with a grin. These crammed, healthy boxes of food will go a long way to feeding a family each week. The cost to each recipient: £5.

This is the Lismore food cooperative, a group of 22 neighbours from a local housing estate who came together two years ago to share food – some of it excess supermarket stock, some bought in bulk or sourced elsewhere – and to feed their families cheaply. As word quickly spread among neighbours, others wanted to join and were encouraged to start their own group operating out of the same building. There are now six co-ops here, with others in the community eager to start their own.

Food cooperatives are not new – the movement originated in the 1840s in Rochdale, and many [similar groups](#) have long flourished across the UK. But as the cost of food and other essentials has soared and [food banks multiplied](#), a diverse range of community food initiatives – founded, in many cases, to tackle food waste or bring neighbours together – have similarly seen their numbers balloon.

This time last year, [Cooperation Town](#), which supports the Gospel Oak groups, had six co-ops under its umbrella; there are now about 20, and it expects soon to have twice that.



Cooperation Town members pause for a cup of tea while collecting their groceries. Photograph: Martin Godwin/The Guardian

Also multiplying is a network called [Your Local Pantry](#), which operates on a more formal scale, inviting members to “shop” for a large quantity of food and other groceries from volunteer-run premises for as little as £3 a week.

Originating in Stockport a decade ago and now (loosely) under the auspices of the Church Action on Poverty, Your Local Pantry oversaw 15 pantries nationally at the start of the pandemic. Now there are more than 80, and [a new partnership](#) with the Co-op supermarket will see that number increase to 225.

Community fridges, too, have doubled to more than 430 over the past two years, says Ellen Rutherford from [Hubbub](#), which oversees the national network. These are shared fridges “where anyone can share or take home good food that would otherwise go to waste”, she says.

Unlike pantries and most co-ops, community fridges are free, and while “their main aim is to be a community-led solution to food waste”, according to Rutherford, demand for them, too, has soared. One fridge network in Milton Keynes normally shares 3.9 tonnes of surplus food a week – in 10 days over Christmas it distributed 11 tonnes, reaching 1,800 families.

These are diverse initiatives and their growth is not only about the cost of living. Cooperation Town would love to see a co-op in every street in every town, says Shiri Shalmy, one of the group's core organisers – precisely because it is not a food bank. “This is not about us going begging for food to support our children. It's about each one of us saying, ‘We're smart, we're capable. We know our neighbours. We can do our shopping together. And through doing it together, we save money and we build power.’”

It's about each one of us saying, ‘We're smart, we're capable. We know our neighbours. We can do our shopping together’

Members may not be on the breadline, but cheaper food is still greatly appreciated, says Brad Hepburn, a former vet originally from Massachusetts who was forced to retire because of illness and now survives on a small pension. When first approached, as chair of the local resident's association, he assumed the co-op would be for people worse off. “But when I came and saw how it worked, I said, ‘sign me up’.” As he lives alone, Hepburn found he had too much food, so he divides his box with a neighbour, each paying £2.50.

“I would be too ashamed to tell my family that I am going to a food bank, but I am really proud to tell them I am part of a food co-op,” he says. “But I had to go through a learning curve myself.”

The group has become what Shalmy calls “a community of friendship” that allows everyone to participate, from the man in his 80s who comes early with his wife each week to lay out the boxes, to the young local woman who has taken on the role of treasurer and will soon be training others to take over.

Those involved in community pantries say they are important because they are not about handouts but “dignity and choice”. Jo Green, the co-manager of a My Local Pantry that operates from [a church hall in North End](#), Portsmouth, previously managed the food bank that, until 18 months ago, was run from the same site.

“The difference is that there’s a stigma with food banks,” she says. “The beautiful thing about pantries is that it doesn’t matter whether you’re here because you want to help reduce food waste, or you need help with your food shop. We’re open to everybody.”

Members pay £4 a week for the opportunity to choose a set number of items from that week’s range – worth about £25 to £30 if bought elsewhere. Because the bulk of their food is supermarket surplus, “you never know what’s coming til it gets here”, says Green. “Sometimes it’s, oh my goodness, what am I going to get today?” Fresh meat is particularly prized, she says. Their membership has doubled in a year to 160 families.



Shiri Shalmy: the way food is grown and sold in Britain ‘has waste built into it’. Photograph: Martin Godwin/The Guardian

There is much to be welcomed in the expansion of alternative ways of sourcing affordable food. But all three networks acknowledge the irony that they are reliant, to varying degrees, on surplus food unused or discarded by the supermarket industry – and they are not alone.

[FareShare](#), the largest distributor of charitable and surplus food in Britain, supplies about 9,500 groups, including food banks, co-ops, community cafes and school clubs, but it currently has a waiting list of 1,500. “We

believe this is just the tip of the iceberg for the number of charities and community groups needing more support,” says Ben Ashmore, the organisation’s head of marketing.

“Ninety per cent of our charities have told us the demand for support has skyrocketed this year.

“We do not have enough food to meet this soaring demand, so [we’re asking the government](#) to provide us with £25m to help us unlock an additional 42,500 tonnes of surplus food, the equivalent of 100m meals, to the people worst hit by the cost of living crisis.”

James Henderson, My Local Pantry development coordinator, acknowledges that on one level its growth is “damning”. “I think we’re not doing as much as we can to support people who are vulnerable in our society. Increasingly, we’re seeing a change in our membership, more people are being drawn into vulnerability.”

For this reason, he says, his organisation cannot only be about food. It is also developing a project called [Speaking Truth to Power](#), to encourage and equip people to speak out about the systemic changes that are needed. “I really believe that people in our communities do have the answers, but they’re just not being listened to.”

For Cooperation Town’s Shalmy, too, co-ops should mean much more than affordable food and a sense of community. Rather, she says, the solidarity and confidence that can be gained from joining a co-op might just be the first step towards changing in the way food is grown and sold in Britain, a system that “has waste built into it.

“I don’t like to use the word ‘empower’, because we have power,” she says. “We just need to learn how to exercise it. Maybe we can change the system if we learn how to organise against it.”

Art

What happened to Trafalgar Square's previous fourth plinth statues?

While most of the artworks are in storage, some went on tour and some have found permanent homes

- [Rachel Whiteread calls for end to Trafalgar Square fourth plinth sculptures](#)



The empty fourth plinth in Trafalgar Square, London. Photograph: Toby Melville/Reuters



Matthew Weaver

Thu 19 Jan 2023 02.00 ESTLast modified on Thu 19 Jan 2023 05.33 EST

Most of the sculptures that have appeared on the fourth plinth in Trafalgar Square are in storage, and only one is currently on display in the UK. Here's what happened next.

1999 Ecce Homo by Mark Wallinger



Ecce homo by Mark Wallinger. Photograph: Martin Argles/The Guardian

Wallinger said: “Trafalgar Square and the approaching millennium constituted the context for Ecce Homo; it was where it belonged. Permanence is a radical step. I’m content to hope there might be other contexts for other artworks that might get along together on a more permanent basis.”

After being taken down from the plinth, Ecce Homo has appeared in several European locations including Vienna, Venice, Swansea, and Milan. In 2017 it was shown on the steps of St Paul’s Cathedral and it was last in Innsbruck in 2021.

2000 Regardless of History by Bill Woodrow



Regardless of History by Bill Woodrow. Photograph: Graham Turner/The Guardian

Woodrow's sculpture was part of a group show in a sculpture park in Goodwood, West Sussex, in 2002. He said the work is "currently in storage pending a possible new siting".

"Talks, negotiations, planning etc are currently being held."

2001 Monument by Rachel Whiteread



Monument by Rachel Whiteread. Photograph: Sarah Lee/The Guardian

Monument has not been seen in public since coming down from the plinth, and it was too heavy to be included a retrospective show of her work at Tate Britain in 2017. Whiteread said: "I just haven't really found the right place to put it. When you make monumental work that's just how things go sometimes." She produced 15 smaller versions to help fund the work.

2005 Alison Lapper Pregnant by Marc Quinn



Alison Lapper Pregnant by Marc Quinn.
Photograph: David Levene/The Guardian

Lapper said: “The last I heard was that it was off the M25 being cleaned somewhere. It had to be cleaned because the pigeons pooped on it. Whether that was rotting my nipples I’m not sure. It certainly didn’t do me any harm being up there. I was very grateful for the opportunity.”

A spokesperson for Quinn said: “The Alison Lapper Pregnant sculpture is currently in storage, which isn’t near the M25.”

2007 Model for a Hotel by Thomas Schütte



Model for a Hotel by Thomas Schütte.
Photograph: Graeme Robertson/The Guardian

A spokesperson for Schütte said the work was currently in storage.

2009 One and Other by Antony Gormley



The first participant takes to the plinth in One And Other, by Antony Gormley. Photograph: David Levene/The Guardian

This was conceived as a living sculpture in which members of the public could apply to appear on the plinth for timed segments. Video of 100 hours of those appearances has been archived in the British Library. A book was also made about the project.

2010 Nelson's Ship in a Bottle by Yinka Shonibare



Nelson's Ship in a Bottle by Yinka Shonibare. Photograph: Nic Hamilton Photographic/Alamy

The work is the only fourth plinth commission to be permanently relocated elsewhere in the UK. It is now part of the collection of the [National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, London](#).

2012 Powerless Structures, Fig. 101 by Michael Elmgreen and Ingar Dragset



Powerless Structures, Fig. 101 by Michael Elmgreen and Ingar Dragset.
Photograph: David Levene/The Guardian

The work is now on permanent view outside the Arken Museum of Modern [Art](#) in Ishøj, Denmark. Asked about a possible group show for all the fourth plinth works, a spokesperson for the Berlin-based duo, said: “It would be a unique challenge, since many of the pieces have been designed to be seen from below, and are proportioned as such.”

2013 Hahn/Cock by Katharina Fritsch



Katharina Fritsch and the then London mayor, Boris Johnson, at the unveiling of Hahn/Cock. Photograph: Jonathan Brady/PA

The piece was first acquired by the US Glenstone Foundation before being permanently donated to the [National Gallery in Washington](#).

2015 Gift Horse by Hans Haacke



Hans Haacke at the unveiling of Gift Horse.
Photograph: Matt Dunham/AP

Haacke's spokesperson said that since appearing on the plinth, the work has been shown in Munich and Chicago, and was last seen in New York in 2020. It is now in storage but is expected to appear at a retrospective of the artist's work at Schirn Kunsthalle in Frankfurt in 2024.

2016 Really Good by David Shrigley



David Shrigley poses for photos in front of his seven-metre high sculpture Really Good. Photograph: Andy Rain/EPA

Shrigley said: "Lots of people have asked me: 'Where is it now, can I have it?' We've had various negotiations or proposals for public collections to put it in. The problem is it weighs several tonnes, so even if we gave it to a public collection they would still have to find the money to build a structure it would go on."

2018 The Invisible Enemy Should Not Exist by Michael Rakowitz



The Iraqi-American artist Michael Rakowitz at the unveiling of *The Invisible Enemy Should Not Exist* on the fourth plinth. Photograph: Jack Taylor/Getty Images

Rakowitz has agreed to donate the work to Tate Modern if it can share custody of it with Iraq. He said: “Because of all the upheaval with Iraqi governments, there hasn’t been any opportunity to finalise the terms yet. Having pieces sitting in storage is always a bummer, but most museum collections are always in storage. The one thing I didn’t want to see happen with it was for it to disappear into a private collection.”

2020 The End by Heather Phillipson



Heather Phillipson with her fourth plinth sculpture titled *The End*.
Photograph: Ray Tang/Rex/Shutterstock

Phillipson said: “The work is currently in storage, while we look for a longer-term home for it. If anyone is interested in finding or offering a home for it, that would be even better.”

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Ghana's school on stilts: the floating village where teachers are too scared to go

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2023.01.19 - Opinion

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Suella Braverman proved it again: racism is a fire the Tories love to play with

[Aditya Chakraborty](#)



The home secretary was confronted by a Holocaust survivor for her inflammatory language. But it's a rich party tradition



Illustration: Alex Mellon/The Guardian

Thu 19 Jan 2023 01.00 EST Last modified on Thu 19 Jan 2023 05.07 EST

Last Friday, an 82-year-old woman wrapped up warm and set off on a 200-mile round trip for a meeting that she half suspected wouldn't even let her in. As you read this, the film of her speaking that evening has been viewed more than five million times. Which is odd, because it's not much to look at: a wobbly side-view of a woman with white hair, intense closeups of grey cardigan. [Bridgerton](#) this is not.

But it's the words that count. Joan Salter has got herself down to Hampshire for a public meeting with the home secretary, and now it is [her turn to ask a question](#). As a child survivor of the Holocaust, she hears Suella Braverman demean and dehumanise refugees and it is a reminder of how the Nazis justified murdering Jews like her. So why do it?

Even as the words come out, Braverman's face freezes. The evening so far has been a Tory activists' love-in, which, Salter tells me later, made her nervous about being the sole dissenter. But then the [home secretary responds](#), "I won't apologise for the language I've used" – and a disturbing truth is exposed about what Britain has become.



‘Suella Braverman labels those seeking sanctuary in Britain an “invasion”.’
Photograph: Jessica Taylor/UK Parliament/AFP/Getty Images

Braverman labels those seeking sanctuary in Britain an “invasion”. Quite the word, invasion. It strips people of their humanity and pretends they are instead a hostile army, sent to maraud our borders. Her junior minister Robert Jenrick once begged colleagues [not to “demonise”](#) migrants; now he [stars in videos](#) almost licking his jowls over “the Albanians” forced on to a flight to Tirana. Salter is right to say such attitudes from the top fuel and license extremists on the ground. We saw it after the toxic Brexit campaign, when Polish-origin schoolchildren in Huntingdon [were called “vermin”](#) on cards left outside their school gates, as race and religious hate crimes soared that summer.

Today, the air is once again poisonous. Far-right groups have been visiting accommodation for asylum seekers, trying to terrify those inside – many of whom have fled terror to come here – often before sharing their videos on social media. The anti-fascist campaigners Hope Not Hate recorded 182 such jaunts last year alone, culminating in a [petrol bomb tossed at an asylum centre](#) in Dover by a man with links to far-right groups and who would post about how “all Muslims are guilty of grooming ... they only rape non-Muslims”.

Unlike those big men in their big boots frightening innocent people, Salter isn't chasing social media clout. The grandmother wants to warn us not to return to the times that sent her, at the age of three, running with her parents across Europe in search of sanctuary. She does make a mistake in yoking the home secretary to the term "swarms". As far as I can see, this figurehead for the new Tory extremism has yet to use that vile word. But I can think of a Tory prime minister who has used that word: [David Cameron](#), the Old Etonian never shy of blowing on a dog whistle, who made a speech [denouncing multiculturalism](#) even as Tommy Robinson's troops [marched on Luton](#). And Margaret Thatcher talked of how the British felt "[rather swamped](#)" by immigrants. In those venerable names from the party's past lies the big picture about the Conservatives' chronic addiction to racist politics.

Because racism is not what polite people do – and yet Tories keep on doing it, commentators will often put it behind some behavioural cordon. It's a few rotten apples, you'll be told, after some councillor [dons a blackshirt](#) or moans about [the new Doctor Who](#). Or: they need to fend off the effect of Nigel Farage. Or even, as [one Times commentator wrote](#) in 2019, Boris Johnson says it but he "barely believes a word" of it. Such clairvoyance! But that's the thing about power: other people trot behind with a dustpan and brush to sweep up the mess you keep making.



‘David Cameron, the Old Etonian never shy of blowing on a dog whistle, made a speech denouncing multiculturalism even as Tommy Robinson’s troops marched on Luton.’ Photograph: Owen Humphreys/PA

Yet there was no Ukip when Benjamin Disraeli declared that the Irish “hate our order, our civilisation, our enterprising industry, our pure religion. This wild, reckless, indolent, uncertain and superstitious race have no sympathy with the English character.” It was no rotten apple but Winston Churchill, the Tory idol, who as prime minister [pronounced](#): “I hate Indians. They are a beastly people with a beastly religion. The famine was their own fault for breeding like rabbits.” The Bengal famine of 1943 is widely estimated to have killed about 2 million people.

I draw these quotes from a new book, [Racism and the Tory Party](#), by the sociologist Mike Cole. Far from being a mere slip of the tongue, racism, he argues, “has saturated the party from the beginning of the 19th century to the second decade of the 21st”. From Enoch Powell’s “[rivers of blood](#)” to Theresa May’s hostile environment, it courses through Tory history. And it is not just words. In its online safety bill, the government wants this week to make illegal any online video of people in small boats that shows such Channel crossing [in a “positive light”](#). Braverman still grinds on with her plan to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda, to stay in hostels with [12 toilets and five showers](#) for 100 inmates.

For the Tories, racism is a fire that they just love to play with. The heat it throws off can be electorally useful. But it is always someone else who gets burned. The targets change – two centuries ago it was the Irish, today it is Albanians – but the strategy is always the same: pick the group, render them inhuman, then chuck them out. The mystery is why a party with such a long and inglorious history can still be lauded by the press for sprinkling a few non-white people along its frontbench.



‘From her own life, this remarkable woman knows that fascism is not just a one-off and racism never a mere faux pas.’ Joan Salter, centre, on Holocaust Memorial Day in London, January 2022. Photograph: Guy Bell/REX/Shutterstock

The woman who is today Joan Salter was in 1943 a three-year-old girl called Fanny Zimetbaum. As Polish-origin Jews, her family were not granted sanctuary in Britain from the Nazis marching into their home of France. Instead, her parents had to scramble through Europe, while Joan was shipped across the Atlantic to an orphanage in America. Only years later, through much wrangling, were the family reunited in London. By then, she remembers her parents as “thoroughly broken”.

When she was in her 70s and studying for a master’s, Salter went through the archives. She read a parliamentary debate from 1943, concerning 2,000 Jewish children in France [refused British visas](#) and who were then deported to Hitler’s Germany. She read foreign secretary Anthony Eden claiming “no knowledge” of the matter. Then she read the minutes and memos that proved he was lying: he was in the war cabinet meeting where the issue was discussed. Still the children were abandoned, just as her family were left to their fate.

From her own life, this remarkable woman knows that fascism is not just a one-off and racism never a mere faux pas. They are forces of evil that lurk on the political perimeter and threaten to consume our society wholesale. Joan Salter bears a warning. The rest of us should listen.

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

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[Opinion](#)Protest

More conflict, more violence: that's the future if the UK's new anti-protest law is passed

[Stephen Reicher](#)

Decades of study expose this legislation as the perfect playbook for turning peaceful events into scenes of chaos and disorder



Climate activists calling on the government to stop the Rosebank oil and gas field hold a paper whale at a demonstration outside Downing Street on 15 January, 2023. Photograph: Vuk Valcic/SOPA Images/REX/Shutterstock

Thu 19 Jan 2023 03.00 ESTLast modified on Thu 19 Jan 2023 14.36 EST

The government is to introduce legislation this week that, [according to Downing Street](#), is designed to stop such heinous tactics as “slow marching”, and will mean that police “will not need to wait for disruption to take place and can shut protests down before chaos erupts”.

As I read this story, it seemed strangely familiar. Where had I heard it before? In a history of some emerging authoritarian regime? In the playbook of Steve Bannon or his equivalent? And then I remembered the Christmas of 1973. My favourite present was [The Brand New Monty Python Papperbok](#), and my favourite piece was on “LLAP-Goch”, a self-defence system “that requires NO INTELLIGENCE, STRENGTH or PHYSICAL courage”.

LLAP-Goch involves attacking your assailant before he attacks you. “or BETTER... BEFORE the THOUGHT of doing so has EVEN OCCURRED TO HIM!!!” (If you’re wondering about the capitals, it’s because the sort of person who buys into this nonsense “HAS less trouble under-sTANDING words if they ARE written in BIG letters”.)

Now the absurdist imagination of the Monty Python team has been translated into policy by Rishi Sunak. His government intends to empower the police to stop protesters causing disruption, even when they aren’t causing disruption. It isn’t a spoof. It isn’t remotely funny. But it remains just as absurd. For if the government thinks that such legislation will do anything to limit protest or stop conflict, they will soon discover just how wrong they are.

History shows that attempts to suppress dissent through indiscriminate repression have precisely the opposite effect. Such an approach generally recruits more dissenters and radicalises their actions. It creates, rather than pre-empts, chaos.

In *America on Fire*, a searing account of relations between black people and police in the US during the late 1960s and early 1970s, [Elizabeth Hinton](#) refers to “the cycle”. Protests against racial inequality were treated as a “law and order” problem, to be met by an increasingly heavy policing and legislative response. This in turn compounded the original sense of injustice and provoked more protest – and so demonstrations became confrontations and confrontations became armed conflicts.



Police arrest a protester during an anti-Vietnam war demonstration in New York City in May 1970. Photograph: Stuart Lutz/Gado/Getty Images

Between 1968 and 1972 President Lyndon Johnson's strategy of preventing disorder "with muscle and with toughness" resulted in [1,949 disturbances](#) during which 40,000 people were arrested, 10,000 injured and 220 killed. "The cycle" continues to this day in the era of Black Lives Matter protests, with many states – such as Oklahoma – passing laws that criminalise acts such as [blocking a public street](#).

Of course, there are many differences between the US and the UK, between black struggle and environmental action. But Hinton's general account of the cycle applies to both countries and both causes. So does her concluding question, "Will the cycle be broken before the fires consume us all?" – the question has a further layer of significance when it comes to environmental protests about our burning planet.

Over the last 20 years or so, [my colleagues and I have been looking](#) in more detail at precisely how different forms of policing crowds lead either to the escalation or the de-escalation of conflict and, from all we have learned, it is clear that the measures the UK government is proposing will have multiple toxic consequences.

First, conflict is generally less to do with the police doing things the crowd doesn't like or stopping crowd members doing what they want to do. [It is more a matter of legitimacy](#) – protesters seeing the police as either doing things they have no right to do, or else preventing crowd members from doing things they do have a right to do. If the police impede actions that everyone in the crowd sees as a basic right, then they can unite even the most diverse and fractious crowd against them. In the case of the proposed legislation, intervening against crowds even in the absence of disruptive behaviour is likely to have such an effect.

Second, by providing the police with both the power and the discretion to disrupt protests, then they become the enemy – [the “system” made flesh and blood](#). Whatever a protest might originally have been about, and whatever its initial targets – say oil companies or government in the case of environmental protest – the police will become a more tangible target. The fact that they might intervene at any moment means that their mere presence will be enough to invoke suspicion and resentment.

Third, the more the police are given discretion as to when to apply draconian powers, the greater the space for [stereotypes and prejudices](#) to affect their judgments. Certain groups will be seen more likely to be potentially disruptive. Hence, intervention is more likely against these groups, and those who already have a troubled relationship with the police are likely to be further alienated.

Fourth, once you make protest more conflictual many people – especially families, disabled people, older people, members of vulnerable groups – will be deterred from joining in. Gradually, participation will be reduced to those who are comfortable with a fight. Not only is this at odds with the [democratic \(and human rights\) imperative](#) to make protests a safe space in which all sections of community feel able to participate, it also constitutes another path to making conflict more likely.

It is clear that these powers will not help the police, but rather undermine their relationships with the communities they serve, expose them to more hostility, and make disruption more likely. That is why in public they ask for more clarity about when to intervene, not more discretion. In private,

many of the senior officers I have spoken to react to the government's “muscular” tone in terms verging on despair.

Protesters and police alike recognise that this legislation will not reduce disruption. And perhaps it is not designed to do so. As the Monty Python team realised a half century ago, such performative assertions of strength are generally an attempt to distract from an underlying vulnerability. “No longer need you feel WEAK, helpless, INDECISIVE.. No more need you be out-manoeuvred in political debate!!”, they wrote.

Always beware the show of strength by weak governments.

- Stephen Reicher is a professor of psychology at the University of St Andrews

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OpinionJacinda Ardern

Jacinda Ardern's graceful departure is the personification of modern democratic ideals

Van Badham



The New Zealand prime minister's bold and resolute leadership neutralised hoary stereotypes that insisted female power is soft or weak



New Zealand prime minister Jacinda Ardern announces her resignation.
Photograph: Kerry Marshall/Getty Images

Thu 19 Jan 2023 00.48 ESTLast modified on Thu 19 Jan 2023 09.55 EST

Jacinda Ardern [has resigned as prime minister of New Zealand](#) and will be leaving office on 7 February.

World leadership has rarely seen anything like her. The dignity and integrity of her departure strikes a paradoxically powerful note, especially at a time when political transition in democracies from the United States to Brazil has been marred by violence and insurrection.

The childhood Mormon who became the world leader of the International Union of Socialist Youth was elected leader of NZ Labour in 2017. Ardern subsequently became the world's then-[youngest elected national leader at the age of 37](#).

She returned to government a Labour party who many thought was condemned to an ongoing political wilderness by using “Jacindamania” to boost the Labour vote in 2017 into a politically adroit coalition with minor parties. She maintained elements of that coalition by grace even when she

provided her party with a thumping outright majority in the “Jacindaslide” of 2020.

Over her five years of leadership she shepherded New Zealanders through the [tragedy and aftermath of the Christchurch massacre](#), managed a pandemic that not only threatened lives but devastated key local industries and reckoned with the climate crisis in country already susceptible to natural disasters. Domestically, her leadership faced a housing crunch, the need to rebuild a tattered industrial relations system, eroded services and post-pandemic inflationary pressure. She also [had a child while in office](#). In her resignation statement, Ardern said she had “nothing left in the tank”.

Jacinda Ardern resigns as prime minister of New Zealand in shock announcement – video

Unsurprising. Even though Ardern’s poll numbers had taken a recent battering, with complex domestic problems unresolved and a new leader of the opposition conservative National party with more charisma than the last, her political capacity to recover her party’s fortunes before New Zealand’s October election should not be discounted.

Beyond the image of the empathic, cosmopolitan leader who wore a deferent scarf to weep with the survivors of Christchurch, [made jokes on the Late Show with Stephen Colbert](#) and turned up to Buckingham Palace in a Māori feathered cloak, Ardern was a shrewd political operator rumoured to dispatch rivals internal and external with a smiling blade.



Prime minister Jacinda Ardern met Islamic community leaders at Kilbirnie mosque in Christchurch after the massacres on 15 March 2019. Photograph: Hagen Hopkins/Getty Images

She may have led New Zealand's famous "wellbeing budgets" and praised kindness as a policy virtue but the ruthlessness required to ascend power anywhere was on rare display when a health minister from her own cabinet defied their government's own pandemic restrictions during lockdown to go on a bicycle ride. Not only did Ardern publicly end his ministry, but kept him in representative purgatory, obliging him to do his job and complete immediate ministerial tasks before his fall from seniority.

[Alt](#)

The Harvard Political Review identified the rare leadership character of Ardern as "authentic, empathetic and bold", and a powerful mash of political attributes once understood in gendered terms. "Throughout the 20th century, leaders rose to power by projecting traditionally masculine qualities like aggression and stubbornness to dominate their opposition," it wrote, explaining the sexist paradigm Ardern deftly upended with wit. So powerful were the images of Ardern at home with partner and baby, talking through her own frustrations with [harsh lockdown restrictions](#) even though

it was her own directive that enforced them, that many Australians chose to tune into them rather than the statements of our own national leadership.

Indeed, it's not beyond possibility Ardern's position in the Australian political imagination had an impact on our last election. First, she reaffirmed a traditional western Labour brand of pragmatic, unchaotic empathy that – despite the best efforts of her opposition – remained unscary and undemonisable. The clear example she exported of female capacity for bold and resolute leadership neutralised the hoary stereotypes that insisted female power was soft or weak. You can see her influence across Australia's political spectrum – most deferentially, perhaps, in the ideologically unlike yet all-female Teals.

Australian Labor owes Ardern a debt, too. Her conspicuously polite visual horror in response to an uninvited hug from Australia's former prime minister, Scott Morrison, affirmed that man's image of arrogance and inauthenticity in the electorate in ways more devastating than the most skewering propaganda campaign or editorial.

Any leader's political life is defined by its inevitable end. The times shift, the people's demands change, the reality of unforeseen events overcomes even the most reasonable expectations of the future. It is the graceful reckoning that power will, can, must and – really – should be lost that is the robustness of our systems.

With her resignation, and the respectful manner of it, Jacinda Ardern's departure from office crowns the political contribution she has made to her country and cements her personification of modern democratic ideals in our shared west and beyond.

Her moment of political power may be fading, but her status as an icon of democratic leadership is indelible.

- Van Badham is a Guardian Australia columnist
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[Opinion](#) **Women's health**

The ‘virgin speculum’: proof that medicine is still rife with outrageous myths about women

[Jenny Halpern Prince](#)



No wonder fewer British women are attending cervical screenings when some in the medical profession have such outdated views



‘All women are reliant on medical professionals to make us feel safe and to spot anything abnormal.’ A doctor holds a speculum. Photograph: ittipon2002/Getty Images/iStockphoto

Thu 19 Jan 2023 02.00 EST Last modified on Thu 19 Jan 2023 09.05 EST

An invitation to a cervical screening test upon your 25th birthday has become a necessary but often unwanted coming-of-age present. Despite years of education and advocacy from the Lady Garden Foundation and others about the benefits of screening, many women still do not attend. About 16 million women in the UK aged 25-64 are eligible for testing, but only [11.2 million took a test in 2022](#), the lowest level in a decade.

There unfortunately remains a false narrative that there are good reasons to be nervous about cervical screening tests. In reality, the test is not physically painful for the vast majority of women, although it can be a bit uncomfortable. However, the test can be needlessly emotionally painful, and for no good reason. This is in part because some women go through the experience of sitting with legs spread apart and “private parts” out, and then hear the nurse call for “the virgin speculum” to be used.

This is the archaic and unnecessarily sexualised term for the extra-small speculum. It should have no place being used in 2023, and it clearly creates

feelings of vulnerability.

The Lady Garden Foundation, a charity that I co-founded and chair, is calling for this instrument to be renamed the “extra-small speculum” or at least its medical term, the Pederson speculum; the term virgin speculum should be removed from use by medical device advertisers and the medical profession (it is currently taught in medical schools).

This horrific term came into play in the 1800s, an age when misogyny was rife, yet is still present at the height of feminist achievement in 2023. All women, including me, are reliant on medical professionals to make us feel safe and to spot anything abnormal, yet the blatant labelling of sexual status makes us feel like the medical profession and industry are not in line with contemporary culture.

Our campaign to end the use of the term virgin speculum follows [Vice UK's finding](#) that some British women are being denied proper healthcare because they are virgins. In some cases people were denied scans or probes in the interest of “preserving” their virginity. Dr Ranee Thakar, president of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, told the outlet that “healthcare professionals must not perpetuate harmful myths regarding ‘virginity’ when talking to women about their sexual and reproductive health care”.

Yet it feels that women being confronted by the virgin speculum plays right into this. Moreover, with the passing of the [Health and Care Act](#), “virginity testing” is banned, and can lead to a five-year custodial sentence for anyone convicted of carrying out the practice. Therefore we look forward to the prospect of seeing any mention of virginity removed across the whole NHS.

Next week it is Cervical Cancer Awareness week, and we hope to shine a light on barriers to cervical screening testing that must be removed. This is especially true as a significant number of [cervical cancer symptoms](#) may go unnoticed, including bleeding from the vagina at times other than when you are having your period, unpleasant-smelling vaginal discharge and pain during sex. It is terrifying that fewer women are being screened than a decade ago, and we must reverse this trend.

By creating feelings of vulnerability around testing, we are allowing cervical cancer to continue to go undetected. All women should be aware of the importance of attending their cervical screening test and do so with confidence, regardless of their sexual status. This will play a valuable role in reducing the mortality rate.

Fundamentally, virginity is a social construct with no biological reality. Many medical associations already recognise this. It is time the rest of the medical profession and advertisers caught up. The small change of name to the extra-small speculum will have huge effects on eliminating psychological anxiety around cervical screening tests, just as we have reduced concerns over physical pain.

- Jenny Halpern Prince is a co-founder of the Lady Garden Foundation
- ***Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please click here.***

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- ['Obi understands' Young Nigerians swell support of presidential hopeful](#)
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- [Year of the Rabbit Fears holiday could bring about a wave of abandoned pets](#)

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Dover-Calais ferries suspended due to strike in France

Travel between Dover and Calais disrupted by 24-hour National Day of Action



The Port of Dover advised travellers to expect delays around the port and town. Photograph: Martin Godwin/The Guardian

PA Media

Thu 19 Jan 2023 02.21 ESTLast modified on Thu 19 Jan 2023 03.54 EST

Ferry services to and from Calais have been suspended due to a national strike in [France](#), the Port of Dover has said.

P&O Ferries said it had produced an “optimised” sailing schedule in light of the 24-hour strike, known as the National Day of Action, which began at 7am on Thursday.

The ferry company also said owing to a lack of details it could not anticipate the level of disruption to its sailing schedule.

The Port of Dover said it was still open, with services to Dunkirk running as normal, but travellers should expect the port, and the local road network around Dover, to be busier than usual.

“Please plan ahead, allowing extra time for your journey and traffic systems that are in place to minimise delays,” it added. “Calais sailings are expected to resume at approximately 2pm UTC from Dover.”

P&O Ferries said: “We will attempt to limit disruption wherever possible. However, if your journey is not essential, we do advise that you rearrange your travel to an alternative date.”

Eurostar said its services would also be affected and it would be running a revised timetable on Thursday and Friday. Passengers have been told to check if their train has been cancelled.

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[China](#)

China announces lunar new year censorship crackdown to silence Covid ‘rumours’

Plan to target ‘gloomy sentiments’ across festival period comes as independent health forecasters estimate over 600,000 deaths from Covid



Police wear face masks outside the entrance to the Beijing Railway Station. Chinese authorities have announced an online crack down on Covid “rumours” across lunar new year Photograph: Mark Schiefelbein/AP

[*Helen Davidson*](#) in Taipei

[@heldavidson](#)

Thu 19 Jan 2023 00.19 ESTLast modified on Thu 19 Jan 2023 16.06 EST

Chinese cyber authorities have announced an internet censorship crackdown to ensure there are no “gloomy sentiments” caused by pandemic “rumours” during the lunar new year festival.

It comes as health forecasting firm Airfinity estimated more than 600,000 people have likely died since zero-Covid restrictions were lifted in December – 10 times more than Chinese authorities have officially declared.

The month-long “Spring Festival online improvement” program will target those spreading what authorities deem to be “rumours” about the spread of Covid and patient experiences.

The national cyber administration specified “in-depth rectification of false information and other issues to prevent gloomy sentiments”.

It specifically cited the investigation and punishment of “online rumours related to the epidemic” and “fabricating patient experiences”, as well as producing or sharing fake virus treatments. The announcement said the work would “prevent misleading the public and causing social panic”.

Online, social media has been awash with personal stories of people contracting Covid, struggling to source medication or healthcare, and losing elderly relatives to the disease. The personal experiences of many jarred with the official narrative that the outbreak was under control and the response “science led”, prompting unusual levels of online criticism against the government.

On Saturday health officials announced an [updated death toll of almost 60,000](#) people. The figure included only those who had died in hospital. Previously, the government had only reported about 5,000 Covid deaths since the pandemic began, including just a few dozen since [the zero Covid policy was abandoned](#) in early December. It was at odds with widespread reports of fatalities, with some major cities reporting infection rates of up to 90% of their populations.

The ruling Communist party government is hypersensitive to foreign criticism of its Covid response and accusations that it is not being transparent with data. Early warnings about the outbreak by Chinese doctor Li Wenliang were [initially dismissed and punished](#) as rumour. More recent

reporting on the mass outbreak following the lifting of restrictions was branded a “China-bashing carnival” in state media.

Health officials have claimed the current wave of infections has peaked, but it followed warnings of further infections spread across [lunar new year as hundreds of millions of people](#) travel across the country. People were urged not to visit elderly relatives unless necessary.

On Thursday, independent forecaster Airfinity said their [new modelling](#) had raised estimates of case numbers and fatalities in China. It said the number of deaths since December was now estimated at 608,000, up from the previous estimate of 437,000.

The organisation also changed its forecast of two successive infection waves to one, which was “larger and more severe”, bringing as many as 62m new cases over the 14-day holiday period.

“Deaths are forecast to peak at 36,000 a day on the 26th of January during the Lunar New Year Festival. This is up from our previous estimate of deaths peaking at 25,000 a day,” it said.

“The implication of one larger wave as opposed to two smaller ones is increased pressure on hospitals and crematoriums and therefore also potentially a higher case fatality ratio.”

China’s censors have appeared to struggle to control critical social media commentary in the wake of the zero Covid policy reversal. The new program shows a renewed effort to stamp out dissent, and ensure China’s online environment reflects the Party’s image and ideals.

“After all this, they will say you have to be happy, it will be politically incorrect if you are not happy,” said one Chinese Twitter user in response.

“It seems that the best way to solve the problem is to ‘cover your mouth’.” said another. “I can’t say anything but praise.”

The Spring festival program also continues an ongoing crackdown on excessive fan culture and illegal gambling, and targets online glorification

of excessive consumption and wealth.

As examples, it cited people deliberately showing off their “luxury life” with excessive dinners, year-end bonuses, large red envelopes of cash (a traditional New Years gift) and expensive gifts.

The administration said it would also “investigate and deal with the deliberate displaying of images of overeating and drinking during the Spring Festival, and promoting extravagant and wasteful information.”

Additional reporting by Chi Hui Lin

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[Nigeria](#)

‘Obi understands’: young Nigerians swell support of presidential hopeful



Obi is running for the formerly fringe Labour party, where his grassroots campaign has gained momentum. Photograph: Pius Utomi

Ekpei/AFP/Getty

The popularity of Peter Obi's message of change with younger voters fed up with the status quo makes him a real contender

Ope Adetayo in Lagos

Thu 19 Jan 2023 03.00 ESTLast modified on Thu 19 Jan 2023 05.46 EST

At a recent campaign stop, Peter Obi responded to a regular criticism. Bola Tinubu, a rival candidate in next month's presidential elections in [Nigeria](#), had called him stingy. Obi told a crowd of supporters that yes, he has been stingy with public funds, and that made him a better fit for the country's top job.

Nigerians go to the polls on 25 February to choose a replacement for Muhammadu Buhari, whose eight-year rule has been sharply criticised for failing to get to grips with rampant insecurity and a cost of living crisis.

A former state governor running for the Labour party, Obi is the first third-party candidate to present a real challenge to the dominance of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) and its main opposition, the People's Democratic Party (PDP), since the end of military dictatorship in 1999.

The 61-year-old has appealed to younger voters with a message that he is different from his old-guard rivals and wants to bring real change to Nigeria.

Weyimi Lube, a voiceover artist, had just turned 24 when terrorists struck a Catholic church in the southern city of Owo in June last year, killing at least 40 worshippers. She said the trauma of the attack pushed her into Obi's camp.

"I told myself if we don't push hard for Obi, I don't think there will be a Nigeria in the future for me and the people I care about," Lube said.

Analysts say some younger people have turned towards Obi out of a sense of desperation with the status quo in Nigeria and continued anger over the

brutal suppression two years ago of the #EndSars movement – named after a hated police unit – which demanded better governance.

“The youth are disillusioned with the APC and PDP. Their hopes have been squandered,” said Stephen Lafenwa, a senior lecturer at the department of political science at the University of Ibadan.

Obi is no stranger to presidential elections. In the 2019 vote he ran as the vice-presidential candidate for the PDP, whose losing presidential candidate Atiku Abubakar is running again this year.

Last year Obi challenged Abubakar to be the PDP’s candidate but resigned just before the primaries and moved to the formerly fringe Labour party, where his grassroots campaign touting his experience as governor and his outsider status has gained momentum, with a vibrant social media following.



Obi faces an uphill battle against Abubakar and Tinubu. Photograph: Kin Cheung/AP

“It is really interesting because we now get to see competition beyond the two parties [and] we have an expansion of choice,” said Dengiyefa Angalapu, a research analyst at the Centre for Democracy and

Development. “It is no longer a situation of the devil and the deep blue sea, now it is the devil, deep blue sea and perhaps the Red Sea.”

Despite the excitement around Obi’s candidature, he faces an uphill battle against Abubakar and Tinubu, a two-term governor of Lagos state and veteran of Nigerian politics running for the ruling APC. Known as the “godfather of Lagos” for his political clout, Tinubu will benefit from the ruling party’s national network.

Whoever wins will have to grapple with a dire economic outlook – record inflation is running at 21.47% and the naira’s value has rapidly depreciated – and an insecurity crisis that has seen a proliferation of terror attacks and attacks for ransom around the country.

“Nigeria is on the brink,” said Chinua Ubabuko, a recently graduated university student and Obi supporter. “Ethnic militias have become forces to reckon with in basically every part of the country and so it is a no-brainer that the next president must be one who can attack the situation and bring peace.”

Security forces are fighting a 13-year-old war against jihadists in the country’s north-east, bandit militias in the north-west and separatist tensions in the country’s south-east.

Gunmen have repeatedly targeted local offices of the independent national electoral commission, known as INEC, which has warned that it may have to cancel or postpone the vote.

Several online polls have placed Obi as the likely winner, but they are being treated with extreme caution by observers, who say their results have been skewed by the youthful profile of Obi voters.



Some online polls have placed Obi as the likely winner, but they are being treated with caution by observers. Photograph: Pius Utomi Ekpei/AFP/Getty

Experts say displacing the APC and PDP would be nothing short of revolutionary, but that regardless of the final result, Obi's candidature for the Labour party will leave a mark by showing a serious challenge to the big two's dominance is possible.

“[Previously] when we had those third forces, the people did not have trust in them. As soon as they [candidates] become strong, they join the ruling party. In Obi, they see someone who is willing to fight until the end,” Angalapu said.

Another possibility is that Obi will take enough votes to prevent Abubakar or Tinubu winning in the first round, which requires a simple majority of all votes and 25% of votes in at least two-thirds of the country's 36 states. A second-round runoff would be a first in Nigerian electoral history.

Lube and Ubabuko said young voters like themselves face a clear choice between a brighter future and the continued mismanagement of the country.

“Obi speaks the language of our problems,” said Lube. “He understands what Nigeria should look like, sound like and feel like.”

Agence France-Presse contributed to this report

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/19/obi-understands-young-nigerians-swell-support-of-presidential-hopeful>

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[India](#)

Three children among six killed during Indian kite-flying festival

Victims reportedly bled to death when glass-coated strings were entangled around their necks



Hundreds flock to terraces and rooftops to unfurl their kites in Gujarat in the Uttarayan kite-flying festival.

Photograph: Saurabh Sirohiya/Zuma/Rex/Shutterstock

[Samantha Lock](#)

[@Samantha_Lock](#)

Thu 19 Jan 2023 04.09 ESTFirst published on Thu 19 Jan 2023 03.56 EST

Six people, including three children, have died after their throats were cut by glass-coated kite strings during an annual kite-flying festival in [India](#).

Hundreds flocked to terraces and rooftops to unfurl their kites towards the sky at the Uttarayan festival in the western Indian state of Gujarat over the

weekend.

The victims reportedly bled to death when the razor-sharp kite strings became entangled around their necks, officials told the [Press Trust of India](#) (PTI). At least another 176 people were injured due to cuts and falls.

Some participants are known to coat their kite strings with powdered glass in order to slice their opponent's cords while in the air. Although the practice has been banned since 2016, critics say it is rarely enforced.

A two-year-old girl reportedly died after a kite string struck her neck while riding on a scooter with her father, PTI cited an official from Bortalav police station as saying.



A man coats strings for flying kites with coloured glass powder before the Uttarayan kite festival in Ahmedabad. Photograph: Sam Panthaky/AFP/Getty Images

The girl, known only as Kirti, is said to have died during treatment at a hospital on Sunday.

Another girl, aged three, was walking home with her mother in Visnagar town on Saturday when a string cut her neck. She was taken to hospital but was declared dead on arrival, a Visnagar police official said.

Rishabh Verma, a seven-year-old boy riding on a scooter with his parents, was also struck by a string in Rajkot, an official from Aji Dam police station said.

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[#Uttayan](#) [#Gujarat](#) pic.twitter.com/adVHjenAyH

— DD News Gujarati (@DDNewsGujarati) [January 14, 2023](#)

According to police, similar incidents were reported in Vadodara, Kutch and Gandhinagar districts, where three men were killed in similar circumstances.

Nikunj Sharma, a campaigner for People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (Peta) India, previously told the Guardian the use of *manja*, the nylon string used to fly kites instead of cotton, could make injuries severe. “Unlike cotton strings these are non-biodegradable, don’t break easily and continue to cause injuries months after the festival,” Sharma said.



A kite trader in a backstreet in Ahmedabad sells colourful kites. Some participants use strings coated with glue and mixed with powdered glass to enable flyers to cut those of rivals. Photograph: Saurabh Sirohiya/Zuma/Rex/Shutterstock

In Ahmedabad, Gujarat's largest city, the police department warned against using the coated kites at the festival.

“Do not use deadly Chinese manja to fly kites,” it [said](#). Police urged participants to be careful while flying kites during the festival, saying the “momentary fun” of cutting another kite could come at the cost of someone's life.

However, Jayesh Shinde, an activist campaigning against the use of manja, said the government had failed to uphold the ban and should compensate victims for their treatment.

“Citizens should not have to pay for the lackadaisical attitude of the government machinery. If the official ban is not being implemented, then the government should offer compensation to victims,” the [Times of India](#) quoted Shinde as saying.

The popular festival marks the onset of spring where kite-flying is often used during celebrations across the country.

Hundreds of birds also fly into the kite strings or are entangled in them, causing deep cuts to their wings, nerve injuries, fractures, dislocations and, in many cases, death.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/19/three-children-among-six-killed-during-indian-kite-flying-festival>

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[Malaysia](#)

Fears the Year of the Rabbit could bring about a wave of abandoned pets

Animal welfare groups in Malaysia and Singapore have urged consumers to not buy rabbits on an ‘impulse’ and to look into what it takes to care for them



A pet store in Wuhan, China, has seen an increase in Rabbit purchases as lunar new year approaches. Rights groups are warning there could be a wave of abandonments. Photograph: Getty Images

[Rebecca Root](#) in Bangkok

Thu 19 Jan 2023 01.54 ESTLast modified on Thu 19 Jan 2023 16.06 EST

Pet welfare groups in Malaysia and [Singapore](#) have warned consumers not to buy rabbits to mark lunar new year, fearing a plethora of abandoned animals could follow.

High demand for the small mammals is expected as 22 January marks the start of the Year of the Rabbit. Mohideen Abdul Kader, president of the Consumers' Association of Penang in [Malaysia](#), said it was inevitable considering "the belief that it will bring good luck".

"However, as with other past zodiacal hype, many rabbits will be left to their fate once the novelty dies off," he said.

The Singapore Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to [Animals](#) told local media it received about 60 reports of abandonment annually, despite the fact that failure to care for pets was a criminal offence in the country, carrying a fine up to \$100,000 as well as a potential three-year prison sentence.

House Rabbit Society Singapore, according to its president Betty Tan, said it had taken in 21 rabbits since the start of December and usually received more "surrender requests" around festive seasons.

"This upcoming year of the rabbit will be a challenging year for the rabbit rescue groups as we anticipate there will be more surrender cases as a result of impulse [buying] of rabbits", she said. The society was urging people to understand the commitment before acquiring on.

According to RSPCA Australia, there is a misconception that rabbits are "easy" first pets to have when in fact they have "specific needs", and have a lifespan of up to 12 years.

"Despite their popularity, rabbits are among the most neglected animals that humans have domesticated, insensitive to the suffering such domestication often entails", Kader said.

He suggested people opt for a toy rabbit as an alternative this lunar new year.

Headlines saturday 21 january 2023

- [NHS Sajid Javid calls for patients to pay for GP and A&E visits](#)
- [Amanda Pritchard Health staff strikes making workload 'more challenging', says NHS chief](#)
- [Rishi Sunak Seatbelt fine from police not a resigning matter, says Raab](#)
- [Live Russia-Ukraine war: both sides 'massing significant forces' in Zaporizhzhia](#)

[NHS](#)

Sajid Javid calls for patients to pay for GP and A&E visits

Radical reforms needed to tackle waiting times, says former health secretary



Sajid Javid cited schemes in Ireland, Norway and Sweden as possible charging models. Photograph: Peter Nicholls/Reuters

PA Media

Fri 20 Jan 2023 18.42 EST Last modified on Fri 20 Jan 2023 18.53 EST

Patients should be charged for GP appointments and A&E visits, [Sajid Javid](#) has said, as he called the present model of the NHS “unsustainable”.

The former health secretary said “extending the contributory principle” should be part of radical reforms to tackle growing waiting times.

In an opinion piece for the Times, he called for a “grown-up, hard-headed conversation” about revamping the health service, noting that “too often the appreciation for the [NHS](#) has become a religious fervour and a barrier to reform”.

The prime minister, Rishi Sunak, is not “currently” considering the proposals, Downing Street told the newspaper.

During his campaign for the Tory leadership, Sunak set out plans to issue £10 fines to patients who miss GP or hospital appointments.

[But he backtracked on the pledge](#) after it was widely criticised by health leaders, signalling the controversy surrounding any reforms that could threaten the principle of free NHS care at the point of need.

Javid said the NHS’s only rationing mechanism – to make people wait – should be replaced by means-tested fees, while “protecting those on low incomes”.

“We should look, on a cross-party basis, at extending the contributory principle,” he wrote.

“This conversation will not be easy, but it can help the NHS ration its finite supply more effectively.”

He pointed to Ireland’s “nominal” €75 (£66) fee for attending an injury unit without a referral, and £20 fees charged for GP appointments in Norway and Sweden as possible models.

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“Too often the appreciation for the NHS has become a religious fervour and a barrier to reform,” the Bromsgrove MP also said.

“We need to shake off the constraints of political discourse and start having a grown-up, hard-headed conversation about alternatives.”

Javid, who will not stand at the next election, argued that “the 75-year-old model of the NHS is unsustainable”.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2023/jan/20/sajid-javid-calls-for-patients-to-pay-for-gp-and-a-e-visits>

Industrial action

Health staff strikes making workload ‘more challenging’, says NHS chief

Amanda Pritchard says ongoing action over pay is having impact but parties are trying to resolve dispute



Nurses on the picket line outside University College hospital in London on the second day of a 48-hour strike this week. Photograph: Vuk Valcic/Sopa Images/Rex/Shutterstock

PA Media

Sat 21 Jan 2023 04.08 EST Last modified on Sat 21 Jan 2023 05.17 EST

Repeated strikes by health staff are making workloads more challenging, the chief executive of [NHS](#) England has said.

Amanda Pritchard said the strike action was “clearly having an impact”.

Thousands of nurses across England will go on strike on Wednesday and Thursday this week, and about 1,000 ambulance workers in Wales will stop work on Thursday.

There are expectations that thousands of operations and appointments will need to be cancelled over the next few months, but Pritchard expressed hope that the industrial action could be resolved.

“As the strike action is extended over long periods of time, and as those dates start coming closer together, it does get more challenging, there is absolutely no doubt,” she told BBC Radio 4’s Today programme on Saturday. “It is clearly having an impact. I think that’s obvious.”

She added: “My sense is that everybody is looking to try and reach a resolution.”

Health leaders have said emergency services were facing “alarming levels of stress” and that more hospital beds were “desperately needed”.

Delayed discharge is one of a number of pressures the NHS is facing this winter, along with bed shortages, a fresh wave of Covid-19 infections, the worst flu season for a decade and ongoing strikes.

Monday 6 February is likely to be the biggest strike action the NHS has ever experienced after the [Unite](#) union announced fresh stoppages by ambulance workers.

Thousands of nurses from the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) were already scheduled to strike on 6 and 7 February, and the [GMB union](#) announced earlier this week that its ambulance workers would join them on 6 February.

On Friday, Unite said staff from five ambulance trusts in England and Wales [would also join the 6 February strike](#).

Downing Street said the government was still open to facilitating talks with trade unions, while acknowledging that the planned strike would cause

further disruption for patients.

Speaking to broadcasters during a hospital visit earlier this week, the health secretary, [Steve Barclay](#), appeared to rule out a 10% pay rise for nurses.

“Well, 10% is not affordable, it would be an extra £3.6bn a year and obviously that would take money away from patient services, essential services that we need to invest in given the backlogs from the pandemic,” he said.

“Now, within government we take a whole government approach – of course I have discussions with the Treasury, as do other secretaries of state, and these things need to be balanced not just with the needs of teachers, with the education secretary, or train drivers, with the transport secretary, but also what’s affordable for [the public] in terms of their own cost-of-living pressures.”

He said he was working “constructively” with unions but that he was “disappointed” in the strikes.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/jan/21/health-staff-strikes-making-workload-more-challenging-says-nhs-chief>

[Rishi Sunak](#)

Rishi Sunak seatbelt fine not a resigning matter, says Raab

Deputy prime minister says leader's apology for not wearing seatbelt shows integrity and accountability

Rishi Sunak uploads video to Instagram sitting in moving car without seatbelt – video

[Tom Ambrose](#)

Sat 21 Jan 2023 04.53 ESTLast modified on Sat 21 Jan 2023 07.14 EST

Dominic Raab has said the prime minister should not have to resign after receiving a fine for not wearing a seatbelt in a moving car.

The deputy prime minister said Rishi Sunak had the “highest standards of integrity” and had shown “accountability” by apologising for not wearing his seatbelt, which resulted in the police issuing a [fixed-penalty notice](#) – his second in nine months after his Covid lockdown breach.

Senior figures in the Labour party joined critics accusing the prime minister of showing “the same disregard for the rules” as his predecessor, Boris Johnson.

Raab told Sky News on Saturday morning that the issue was not a resigning matter.

“Of course it shouldn't have happened,” he said. “I think, look, given the circumstances, I don't think it's something which would result in his resignation.”

Dominic Raab says Rishi Sunak's seatbelt fine is not a resigning matter – video

Speaking later to BBC Radio 4's Today programme, Raab said of Sunak: "He is someone with the highest standards of integrity. He has made a mistake on the seatbelt issue, he put his hand straight up, he said: 'Look, this is wrong, I apologise'. He's going to pay the fixed-penalty notice.

"He's a human being doing an incredibly demanding job. But that's no excuse, as he's made clear, and he's put his hand up and said: 'This is wrong and I'm apologising for it'. I think that's the accountability and that's the transparency."

The incident has been described by Downing Street as "an error of judgment". Asked how many such errors Sunak was allowed, Raab said: "Ultimately, that will be for the people of this country to decide at the next election.

"There's not some algorithm, you know, human nature doesn't work that way."

Lancashire constabulary announced on Friday it was fining the prime minister after he was spotted not wearing his seatbelt in an Instagram video filmed to promote levelling up funding a day earlier.

Labour's deputy leader, Angela Rayner, accused Sunak of displaying a "lack of judgment" having received his second fixed-penalty notice in less than a year.

She told BBC Breakfast: "The fact that he's had two fixed-penalty notices in nine months, I think, shows a lack of judgment on his behalf, especially as chancellor and then as the prime minister.

"And I think he should use this opportunity to highlight that safety does matter in vehicles."

Asked if she had ever got in a taxi and not put a seatbelt on, she told BBC Breakfast: "I can't say categorically I haven't.

"But one thing I will say – let me be positive on this and then serious – positively, this has shone a light on why those seatbelts are necessary, and

the safety of people in the back of taxis, in the back of cars and the importance of that.”

Sunak is the second prime minister in history, after Johnson, to receive a police fine while in the top job.

The incident, which happened at the same time as it was revealed the Tory party chair, [Nadhim Zahawi](#), [agreed to pay a penalty to HMRC](#) as part of a seven-figure settlement over his tax affairs, prompted the Labour MP Chris Bryant to call for a general election.

“Sunak promised honesty, integrity and accountability on the steps of Number 10,” he [tweeted](#). “Not only has he been fined again for breaking the law, but Zahawi has been fined as well. It’s time they all went. It’s time for a general election.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2023/jan/21/rishi-sunak-seatbelt-fine-not-a-resigning-matter-says-dominic-raab>

[Ukraine war live](#)[Ukraine](#)

Russian army announces new offensive in Zaporizhzhia – as it happened

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2023.01.21 - Spotlight

- 'If I'd had a therapist, do you think any of this would have happened?' Pamela Anderson on being chewed up and spat out by fame
- 'Better than finding gold' Towers' remains may rewrite history of English civil war
- Blind date 'Did we kiss? You'd need to torture me to get me to answer that'
- Tim Dowling I found a secret loft in our house. Foolishly, I also told my wife about it

‘If I’d had a therapist, do you think any of this would have happened?’: Pamela Anderson on being chewed up and spat out by fame

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English civil war

‘Better than finding gold’: towers’ remains may rewrite history of English civil war

Archaeologists say finding medieval gatehouse at Coleshill was ‘real shock’ and ‘highlight of our careers’



The excavations at Coleshill Manor, east of Birmingham, Warwickshire, revealed the stone bases of two towers from a late medieval fortified gatehouse. Photograph: HS2

[Esther Addley](#)

Sat 21 Jan 2023 01.00 EST

When [archaeologists](#) working on the route of [HS2](#) began excavating a stretch of pasture in Warwickshire, they were not expecting to uncover what one of them calls “the highlight of our careers”. Their excavations revealed

the monumental stone bases of two towers from a late medieval fortified gatehouse, the existence of which had been completely lost to history.

While that find was remarkable in itself, the ruins were even more significant than they first appeared – and might even rewrite the history of the [English civil war](#).

Peppering the sandstone walls were hundreds of pockmarks made by musket balls and pistol shot, showing that the building had come under heavy fire. Experts think this may be evidence that the gatehouse was shot at by parliamentarian troops heading to the nearby [Battle of Curdworth Bridge](#) in August 1642, which would make this the scene of the very first skirmish of the civil war.

The finds were “a real shock”, said Stuart Pierson of Wessex [Archaeology](#), who led excavations on the site. “The best way to describe it is that we were just in awe of this tower.

“People always say that you want to find gold in archaeology, but I think for a lot of us finding that tower will always be better than finding gold. I think it’s the highlight of our careers finding that, and I don’t think we’re going to find anything like that again.”



Musket ball impact marks on the outside wall of Coleshill gatehouse.
Photograph: HS2/PA

The team knew that a [large Tudor manor house](#) had stood somewhere near the site at Coleshill, east of Birmingham, but its location had been lost. As they started excavating, they were astonished at the state of preservation of its vast ornamental gardens – larger in scale than at Hampton Court.

Pierson had said to colleagues that he expected there might be the remains of a gatehouse, “but we figured a small box structure. We weren’t thinking anything involving towers.” He was on holiday when the first walls were uncovered. “My colleagues say their favourite memory from the site was my expression when I [returned and] saw this complete tower,” he said.

Taken together, the finds make the site “nationally significant – and a bit more”, he added.

In the lead up to the civil war, which pitched forces loyal to King Charles I against parliamentary soldiers seeking to topple him, Coleshill Manor was in the hands of a royalist, Simon Digby. The position of his grand home, next to a key strategic crossing of the River Cole, would have put it directly in the path of parliamentarians on the march to Curdworth Bridge. While it is impossible to prove, experts think it is highly likely that it is their musket

balls – dozens of which were recovered from the site – which struck the gatehouse on this journey.

While the discovery potentially rewrites the history of the start of the civil war, Pierson said, it can also tell us more about the experience of those living through it. “What it gives us is a more personal [insight] to the civil war. There are always stories about royalty and the lead parliamentarians, but there’s not so much focus given to the people themselves, even the upper classes who found themselves involved but weren’t necessarily really part of it.”

The discovery features on [Digging for Britain](#) on BBC Two at 8pm on Sunday 22 January.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/jan/21/coleshill-towers-remains-history-english-civil-war>

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Blind date: ‘Did we kiss? You’d need to torture me to get me to answer that’



Photograph: John Robertson/The Guardian

Juliet, 74, volunteer with Extinction Rebellion, meets Dennis, 73, retired service engineer

Sat 21 Jan 2023 01.00 EST



Juliet on Dennis

What were you hoping for?

An enjoyable and interesting evening with someone new.

First impressions?

A friendly guy who put me at ease straight away.

What did you talk about?

Our families. Motorbikes. The state the country is in.

Most awkward moment?

The selfie.

Good table manners?

We shared our starters, which seemed a perfectly natural thing to do.

Best thing about Dennis?

He is a good talker *and* a good listener.

Would you introduce Dennis to your friends?

Yes, because he seems to be so easygoing and chatty.

Describe Dennis in three words.

Family-minded and adventurous.

What do you think Dennis made of you?

He must have noticed that I'm passionate about politics.

Did you go on somewhere?

No, the restaurant was in the middle of the countryside and on that night it was -4C.

And ... did you kiss?

Yes, we had a little kiss on the lips.

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

Can't think of one thing.

Marks out of 10?

8.

Would you meet again?

I wouldn't mind seeing his narrowboat and riding pillion on his motorbike. But don't tell my children. They are already worried that I might glue myself to a building and get arrested.



Dennis and Juliet on their date.

Q&A

Want to be in Blind date?

Show

Blind date is Saturday's dating column: every week, two strangers are paired up for dinner and drinks, and then spill the beans to us, answering a set of questions. This runs, with a photograph we take of each dater before the date, in Saturday magazine (in the UK) and online at theguardian.com every Saturday. It's been running since 2009 – you can [read all about how we put it together here](#).

What questions will I be asked?

We ask about age, location, occupation, hobbies, interests and the type of person you are looking to meet. If you do not think these questions cover everything you would like to know, tell us what's on your mind.

Can I choose who I match with?

No, it's a blind date! But we do ask you a bit about your interests, preferences, etc – the more you tell us, the better the match is likely to be.

Can I pick the photograph?

No, but don't worry: we'll choose the nicest ones.

What personal details will appear?

Your first name, job and age.

How should I answer?

Honestly but respectfully. Be mindful of how it will read to your date, and that Blind date reaches a large audience, in print and online.

Will I see the other person's answers?

No. We may edit yours and theirs for a range of reasons, including length, and we may ask you for more details.

Will you find me The One?

We'll try! Marriage! Babies!

Can I do it in my home town?

Only if it's in the UK. Many of our applicants live in London, but we would love to hear from people living elsewhere.

How to apply

Email blind.date@theguardian.com

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.



Dennis on Juliet

What were you hoping for?

Some lively conversation about current affairs and social unrest.

First impressions?

She seemed a very confident lady.

What did you talk about?

Velocette motorcycles! Her father owned one, as did I. From then on we covered so much. How lovely Ireland is. A turtle who lives on the Coventry canal. The suffragette movement. The Jarrow march.

Most awkward moment?

Taking the selfies.

Good table manners?

Excellent: we agreed to share but were so busy talking we almost forgot.

Best thing about Juliet?

Very open and a great conversationalist.

Would you introduce Juliet to your friends?

Absolutely, Juliet will go down a storm.

Describe Juliet in three words.

Confident, attractive, talkative.

What do you think Juliet made of you?

I think I managed to leave a favourable impression.

Did you go on somewhere?

No, it was too late.

And ... did you kiss?

You would need to torture me to get me to answer that.

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

It to have been a lunchtime date, which would have given us more time together.

Marks out of 10?

10.

Would you meet again?

Definitely. We have tentative plans for a pillion ride on one of my classic motorcycles, and a trip aboard my narrowboat.

Dennis and Juliet ate at [The George, Great Oxenden](#), Leicestershire. Fancy a blind date? Email blind.date@theguardian.com

[The Tim Dowling column](#)Life and style

Tim Dowling: I found a secret loft in our house. Foolishly, I also told my wife about it

The new mystery room has rekindled her craving for more storage space



Composite: Getty Images, Linda Nyland/The Guardian



[Tim Dowling](#)

[@IAmTimDowling](#)

Sat 21 Jan 2023 01.00 EST Last modified on Sat 21 Jan 2023 15.17 EST

Our house contains a secret mystery room I didn't even know was there until almost a year after we moved in. One day I was sitting alone in the garden looking up at the little round window near the peak of the back roof, when it occurred to me that I had never seen the view out of that window.

I went into the house and up the stairs, only to discover that the window didn't exist from the inside. I made the trip to the garden and back a few times, the final time leading my wife outside by the wrist.

“What room does that window look out from?” I said, pointing up.

“Huh,” she said. “I’ve never noticed that window.”

After a while it became clear – sort of – that the window belonged to a little loft above the oldest one's bedroom, although there was no access to it: the ceiling of the bedroom below is completely plastered over.

Sometimes I reflect on what might be up there – some gold bars perhaps, or a colony of protected bats. But I mostly don't think about it because it gives me the creeps. The mystery of the secret room hadn't crossed my mind in at least a year, until my wife started making plans.

"I'm going to have a big cupboard here," she says, spreading her arms along a section of kitchen wall.

I reflect on what might be up there – some gold bars perhaps, or a colony of protected bats

"There's already a cupboard there," I say. "Aren't we looking right at it?"

"That's freestanding," she says. "I want built-in, and all the way along."

"Won't it block the door?" I say.

"Halfway then," she says.

"Won't that look weird?" I say.

"I knew you'd be like this," she says.

"I'm just worried it will make the space seem smaller," I say.

"We have no storage!" she shouts. "No place to put anything! What do you suggest?"

"I suggest we throw away half our stuff," I say.

"Or we could just throw away all your stuff," she says.

"If it prevents this cupboard, I will consider it," I say.

A lot of my wife's improvement proposals are predicated on the fond hope that our children will finally leave home in 2023. This is why the sudden need for extra kitchen storage perplexes me.

“Seriously,” I say. “When they’re gone we’ll only need, like, a frying pan and two forks. We can share a mug.”

“You understand nothing,” she says.

My wife’s plans also include moving us into the oldest one’s former bedroom, which was instantly colonised by the middle one when the oldest one moved out, and will probably be commandeered by the youngest one eventually.

“But if they both go this year, we should probably be in there,” my wife says. “It’s the biggest room.”

“It could be even bigger,” I say. “Don’t forget about the mystery room above it.”

“I hadn’t thought of that,” my wife says. Little lights go on behind her eyes, and I realise I have inadvertently rekindled her lust for additional storage space once more.

I am sitting in my office shed when I suddenly notice something: our neighbour’s rear extension has an identical round window in the same spot.

Two days later my wife returns from next door with a load of pictures on her phone, of a dimly lit space filled with junk.

“She’s got folding stairs going up there, and you can just about stand up in the middle,” she says.

“Does it have a floor?” I say. My wife stops scrolling through the photos to stare at me.

“Of course it has a fucking floor,” she says.

“I mean, did she have to put a floor in, or was there already one?”

“Oh,” my wife says. “I didn’t ask.”

“Because we don’t really know what we’ll find until we get up there,” I say, thinking about the possibilities: a mummified cat; a skeleton in an Edwardian wedding dress.

“She said the folding stairs were expensive, but you shouldn’t skimp.”

The next day I find myself browsing through high-end folding loft ladders, wondering how much we’re going to end up spending, or how many evil spirits we’re going to unleash, in order to have somewhere to keep our Christmas lights.

Then I think: this is all your fault, because you saw that little round window, and you couldn’t leave well enough alone.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2023/jan/21/tim-dowling-i-found-a-secret-loft-in-our-house-foolishly-i-also-told-my-wife>

2023.01.21 - Opinion

- Could simply calling myself a 'lucky girl' like a Gen Z Tik Tokker really transform me into one?
- This is levelling up Sunak-style – he's first among the equally useless
- Cartoon Martin Rowson on a rough ride for Rishi Sunak
- Women suffer guilt, abuse and disapproval. No wonder Jacinda Ardern is knackered

OpinionTikTok

Could simply calling myself a ‘lucky girl’ like a Gen Z Tik Tokker really transform me into one?

[Hannah Ewens](#)



The craze is little more than a rehash of new age manifestation, but January’s bleakness made me desperate enough to give it a go



‘It’s not surprising that videos have gone viral on TikTok ... in a month sodden with bleak weather.’ Photograph: Philip Hartley/Alamy

Sat 21 Jan 2023 03.00 EST Last modified on Sat 21 Jan 2023 05.33 EST

Something strange happened to me last year. On five or six occasions, I needed the money for something – a plane ticket to see someone I love, a daunting credit card bill, a vital item that needed replacing – and I’d think, “If only I could afford this, everything would work out.” Then, within a day or two, I’d be offered a piece of work that would pay that exact amount to the pound, or I’d be able to travel with work to exactly the place I wanted to go. It was a lucky and auspicious 12 months.

Fast forward to this cold, hard January, and nothing is unbearably bad, but I wouldn’t quite say anything is going especially “well” either. Living and working alone, when your major social interaction of the day is bitching about your problems with the nicest man at the coffee shop who always gives you extra stamps on your loyalty card, disappointments can begin to cut rather than scratch.

All of which is to say that I am the ideal candidate for the latest social media trend promising to improve your life: [“lucky_girl_syndrome”](#). In reality, it’s not new at all – it’s generation Z girls repackaging the new age

concept of manifestation, in which you think about something you want as if you already have it or have achieved it, and then it supposedly happens. “Great things are always happening to me,” you say, and then great things happen to you. In a way, it’s similar to what I was doing last year without realising it. And it’s not surprising that videos about this have gone viral on TikTok at the beginning of 2023 – in a month defined by bleak weather and the feeling that the year hasn’t yet taken shape.

Most of the videos are uncommonly smug. A lucky woman tells an out-there tale of how she and her boyfriend manifested a house (they had money for a deposit, and put it down on a house). Her advice is that we should “be fucking delusional and believe in yourself”. I can be delusional – I’m a romantic and a writer, two of the most mad and unrealistic things to be – so I decide to give it a try in a bid for a lucky 2023.

But manifestation can also be damaging – it promotes a relentless focus on the self and self-actualisation

I’m well-versed in manifestation. In my teens and 20s I used to make “vision boards” and try manifesting specific things. I’m not sure how deeply I believed in it, but I do think that manifestation can work, in its way – not through mystical forces, but because it means you’ll be looking for the positives, you’ll notice them more and maybe even begin to shape your life around the good things within it. Science agrees: people who have clear goals are more likely to achieve them. Being optimistic: generally good for you.

But manifestation is probably also damaging – it promotes a relentless focus on the self and self-actualisation. When people are seeking luck, it’s luck for money, fame and romantic relationships, for me, myself and I. It joins a host of spiritual activities that younger generations are reinventing as a form of “wellness” – we now have random teenagers and girls in their early 20s with handles such as “hotdopepriestess” who read Rhonda Byrne’s [The Secret](#) and are now doing tarot card readings and selling workshops on how to manifest wealth. These are the same businesses that people within the spiritual community have run for decades but they are now marketed by and to a younger generation. Perhaps this was the natural

progression for the wellness industry in a declining economy: lacking the financial means to make ourselves happy, we're now turning to the supernatural for help.

As I tell myself that I am a lucky girl, I too begin to feel smug. It's simple, low effort – I don't even have to think about what exactly I want, it's just great things. I hope that if I keep saying it to myself something notable will happen between the time I am commissioned to write about the syndrome and filing the article. The hours are passing and nothing. Maybe I will manifest missing my deadline. I look at the view outside, across a purple sky and then through some usual windows to see the same people I always see, fussing about their families. There's a couple hugging in their kitchen. A shadow of loneliness falls across my chest and I think how awful England feels at this time of year. But: great things are always happening to me.

So I message a friend and we joke about the mantra that great things are always happening to me and I check my email. A piece of work has been confirmed, which means I will be able to leave the country imminently. What if another strange, lucky year really could happen?

- Hannah Ewens is features editor at Vice UK and author of *Fangirls: Scenes From Modern Music Culture*
- ***Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please click here.***

[Opinion](#)Rishi Sunak

This is levelling up Sunak-style – he's first among the equally useless

[Marina Hyde](#)



Pity a PM trying to sell a flagship policy he never liked, flanked by ‘idiot’ colleagues who don’t much like him



Jeremy Hunt and Rishi Sunak during a community project visit to Accrington Market Hall in Lancashire, 19 January 2023. Photograph: Christopher Furlong/PA

Fri 20 Jan 2023 07.57 ESTLast modified on Fri 20 Jan 2023 14.00 EST

More than three years after malign fun-fur mascot Boris Johnson first gibbered out the catchphrase, we finally have incontrovertible evidence of what “levelling up” actually is. For its duration, Johnson’s government had a flagship policy that it couldn’t have defined even if it hadn’t been drunk on the contents of a wheelee suitcase. Levelling up now turns out to be a sort of inter-constituency [Squid Game](#), in which MPs who voted for various stripes of self-harm are now forced into trial-by-combat against each other in the hope of appealing to the caprices of shadowy gamesmaster Michael Gove. Arguably there’s an ironic wit to the format – a sort of handout for the anti-handout party, designed solely to inadequately mitigate the effects of cuts made largely by that same party. The players seem quite upset about it now, but are of course free to terminate the game if the majority votes to do so.

Or as one Conservative MP who missed out [fumed yesterday](#): “I’ve got shops without roofs and whole streets of boarded-up houses and some people are getting cash for adventure golf.” Which is, by coincidence,

exactly the picture in the political glossary next to the phrase “sunlit uplands”. Another Tory MP [described the policy delivery](#) as “a fuck-up of epic proportions”, casting it as the Stalingrad of not securing a planetarium for your northern marginal.

Having attempted to sell this policy round the country during a somewhat excruciating day yesterday, luxury menswear influencer Rishi Sunak faced a law enforcement probe for [removing his seatbelt](#) to film a video for his Insta, as part of the police’s ruthless commitment to rooting out trivial wrongdoing so that people mind less when another one of them is revealed to be a rapist. I haven’t got a huge amount to add to that sentence as an indicator of where we are on various fronts. Still, now that Sunak has picked up his second penalty notice inside a year, the suggestion must be that he is on a pathway of reoffending and should submit to personal rehabilitation lessons with justice secretary Dominic Raab, who is himself facing an investigation on [eight formal complaints](#) of bullying. Again, we are where we are.

You have to wonder if Sunak makes the most credible salesman for the specific allocation of cash in this second round of disbursement, given that he took the sensationally odd decision to be filmed during the leadership campaign in July last year [telling Tory members in Tunbridge Wells](#): “I managed to start changing the funding formulas to make sure areas like this are getting the funding they deserved. We inherited a bunch of formulas from Labour that shoved all the funding into deprived urban areas and that needed to be undone. I started the work of undoing that.”

Yesterday found Sunak in only marginally less politically imbecilic mode. I can’t personally get over-exercised about senior politicians making travel time-savings that the rest of us should obviously avoid. But Sunak’s [private jet usage](#) has got plenty of backs up, and on a political level feeds unfortunately into the impression that he is what he is: a man who can use private jets. Labour accused the prime minister of behaving “[like an A-list celeb](#)” for flying to Blackpool – something A-list celebs are forever doing, of course. I believe Sunak’s RAF flight was kept in a holding pattern while [The Rock](#) was given runway priority to hasten his latest trip to play the coin pushers on the Central Pier.

“I travel around so I can do lots of things in one day,” [Sunak shot back](#) when pushed on his arrangements. “I’m not travelling around just for my own enjoyment, although this is very enjoyable, of course.” Mm. Spoken like a man whose [high-end Santa Monica residence](#) is located in a complex that includes a pet spa. (I haven’t fully checked the levelling-up fund payouts for pet spas, but assume Guildford was successful in its bid for one.)

'You're not idiots': Sunak says people understand why he can't cut taxes now – video

In general, though, do you care for Sunak’s tone? He seems to have just the two speeds: dewy-eyed prefect delivering a supposedly inspirational speech to much, much younger children; and high-financier unable to fully hide his impatience that he should be required to answer questions from lesser mortals. Neither seems immediately obviously likely to endear him to the British public. Perhaps he’s slightly helped by being up against Keir Starmer, who delivers every statement like his next one is going to be “And had you thought of a preferred wood for the casket?”

Any more pratfalls left in the tank on the PM’s day out and about? At least one, with the PM explaining he wanted to cut taxes but couldn’t, as his audience knew. “You’re not idiots,” [he breezed](#). “You know what’s happened.” “Besides,” he went on, “when I was chancellor I also really preferred it when the prime minister didn’t comment on tax policy.”

Unfortunately for the “idiots”, the chancellor isn’t talking about tax cuts either. Instead, Jeremy Hunt could be found this week leaning fully into the latte-sipping insult his side have long weaponised, by making his own [painful social media video](#) in which he explained inflation to the masses via the medium of him ordering a flat white. Is this necessary? I know Jeremy likes to think of himself as one of Britain’s most advanced entrepreneurial brains – he ran a course-listing directory in civilian life – but we must at least consider the possibility that British people currently get a hard lesson in inflation every time they do a shop.

Anyway: on to the idiots. Only in this climate of palpable executive inadequacy could we be reading seemingly bi-weekly stories that

comebacks are being planned not just by Boris Johnson, but also Liz Truss – or at least by what we’ll kindly call Liz Truss’s “ideas”, with a [parliamentary group](#) established this week with the express aim of the advancement thereof. Truss herself and her former chancellor Kwasi Kwarteng have both [set up firms](#) to manage their next steps, while Jacob Rees-Mogg is said to be [joining GB News](#) to host his own show. Johnson is being Johnson, and seems well on the way to persuading far too many MPs to give their abusive relationship with him another chance.

Behold, the architects of some of the most short-termist and self-harming policies of recent times (tough field), somehow sailing on regardless to further enrichment while everyone else lives in their mess. As for their various supporters, you have to marvel mirthlessly at the capacity for some serially imploding factions of the Conservative party to believe that their destructive ideas have simply not been done properly yet. The Tory tankies are on the march; do batten your hatches accordingly.

- Marina Hyde is a Guardian columnist

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[Guardian Opinion cartoon](#)
[Rishi Sunak](#)

Martin Rowson on a rough ride for Rishi Sunak – cartoon

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[Opinion](#) **Women in politics**

Women suffer guilt, abuse and disapproval. No wonder Jacinda Ardern is knackered

[Jess Phillips](#)



We worry about our families, ourselves, the threats and society's expectations. When it leads to burnout, can anyone be surprised?



Jacinda Ardern announcing her resignation in Napier, New Zealand yesterday. Photograph: Kerry Marshall/Getty Images
Fri 20 Jan 2023 09.36 EST Last modified on Sat 21 Jan 2023 06.12 EST

Jacinda Ardern has no gas left in the tank to continue as the prime minister of New Zealand. Her [resignation speech](#) was the sort of rare and dignified moment that we have come to expect from her, as a woman who presented the world with the kind of leadership that uniquely lent on her emotional intelligence. I'll miss her tone and grace. She leaves a legacy she can be proud of.

I have been thinking about what burned the fuel that she relied on to govern.

Firstly I have no doubt that she felt the constant guilt that pretty much every woman in the world feels the moment they evacuate their womb of a child. Even the Mary Poppins-style perfect, Instagram-polished mothers of the world fret that something they do will harm their child in some way. I asked my husband, who has always been our son's primary carer, if he ever felt guilty for missing a school play or staying late at work. He looked at me baffled; the concept was lost on him. He just thinks, "I had to go to work," and that's the beginning and end of that moral maze for him. For me, there

is a constant torture and self-loathing about how my choices might affect them. No matter how I try to push away the societal grooming, it is always there. For Ardern there will have been column inches aplenty to keep the torture prickling her skin.

This is not to say that most working women don't just push through this: they do so every single day in every single workforce in the country. It just burns up fuel, fuel that others don't need to spend. It is tiring and saps our bandwidth.

The pressure pushed on to working women is tiring enough without it being amped up by being a public woman – and the worst of all offences, to some, a political woman. The thing that burns my fuel to the point of a flashing emergency light and a blaring alarm is the abuse and threat of violence that has become par for the course for political women. Jacinda Ardern will have suffered this mercilessly. Today, [colleagues and admirers](#) discussed the extent to which that constant threat of abuse contributed to her burnout.

Those threats came from many sources, too: people who hate progressive women and believe they are damning masculinity; anti-vaxxers outraged by her tough Covid stance; those with a general loathing of all politicians.

Combine the two fuel burners and what you end up with is the terrible guilt, fear and shame that decisions you have made in your career, or your political stances (no matter how much you believe in them), put your children, loved ones and employees in danger.

Moments before I started writing this, I spoke to a woman who works for me who told me she wouldn't be in work on a particular day because she had to give evidence in court after an incident in my office. She was not the target: it was me. When my children at school have to answer questions from their classmates about stances I have taken, or are told hateful and untrue things that have been published about me, or when they act hyper-vigilantly in public crowds, aware of the threat to us, my heart breaks and more fuel burns up.

No doubt this is something all men and women in political life experience. However, [studies show](#) that the level of violence – often sexualised violence – and the threat that female politicians face is incomparable. I am used to it. I wish I wasn't; but I also wish I was a size 10. But I will also never get used to the effect it has on other people; it is so very tiring. It's just something else I have to consider on top of worrying about policy and details, and fallout, and loyalties. It burns fuel.

What can we do about it? Like Jacinda, I believe the answer is being honest about the fact that politics is an emotional not a bureaucratic game. And constantly pushing for a more empathetic political environment, which will be brought about by having more female leaders and politicians, not fewer.

I am not so idealistic as to think politics is going to change its stripes in my time. But we must build the structures into our politics and our media that damn and criminalise the perpetrators of this abuse, and those who make massive profits from spreading it. We must create support structures female politicians and activists can lean on without being seen negatively or as weak.

Alas, even as I pen my suggestions for change, I know that it is women who will have to do the labour to achieve it, just like we always do. This work takes more fuel – fuel others don't have to use up in the pursuit of a political life. No wonder Jacinda's knackered.

Jess Phillips is Labour MP for Birmingham Yardley

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

2023.01.21 - Around the world

- [Peru Dozens injured and police stations attacked as protests continue](#)
- [New Zealand Chris Hipkins to become prime minister](#)
- [Chris Hipkins profile Who is New Zealand's next prime minister after Jacinda Ardern?](#)
- [Tesla takeover trial Musk: 'Just because I tweet, doesn't mean people believe it'](#)

Peru

Dozens injured and police stations attacked as protests continue in Peru

Police in Lima use teargas on demonstrators, with authorities claiming massive fire at historic building was ‘duly planned’



A man waves a flag of the indigenous peoples in front police in Lima as anti-government protests continued across Peru. Photograph: Hugo Curotto/EPA

Staff and agencies

Sat 21 Jan 2023 00.47 ESTLast modified on Sat 21 Jan 2023 04.53 EST

Dozens of Peruvians were injured when tensions flared again on Friday night as police clashed with protesters in anti-government demonstrations that are spreading across the country.

In the capital, Lima, police officers used teargas to repel demonstrators throwing glass bottles and stones, as fires burned in the streets, TV footage

showed.

In the southern Puno region about 1,500 protesters attacked a police station in the town of Ilave, said the interior minister, Vicente Romero. A police station in Zepita, Puno, was also on fire, he said.

Health authorities in Ilave reported eight patients hospitalised with injuries, including broken arms and legs, eye contusions and punctured abdomens.

By late afternoon, 58 people had been injured nationwide in demonstrations, according to a report from Peru's ombudsman.

Teargas fired at Peru protesters as thousands try to 'take Lima' – video report

The unrest followed [a day of turmoil on Thursday](#), when one of Lima's most historic buildings burned to the ground, as President Dina Boluarte vowed to get tougher on “vandals”.

The destruction of the building, a near-century-old mansion in central Lima, was described by officials as the loss of a “monumental asset”. Authorities are investigating the causes.

Romero on Friday claimed the blaze was “duly planned and arranged”.

Thousands of protesters descended on Lima this week calling for change and angered by the protests' mounting death toll, which officially stood at 45 on Friday.

At the beginning of the Friday's protests, the demonstrators seemed more organised than the previous day and they took over key roads in downtown Lima.

Police appeared more combative than the day before and after standing watch over protesters that had been blocked into downtown streets, they started firing volleys of teargas.



Firefighters work outside a historic mansion devastated by fire during the protests in downtown Lima. Photograph: Paolo Aguilar/EPA

Protests have rocked Peru since Pedro Castillo was ousted as president in December after he attempted to dissolve the legislature to prevent an impeachment vote.

Boluarte has dismissed calls for her to resign and hold snap elections, instead calling for dialogue and promising to punish those involved in the unrest.

In the Cusco region, Glencore's major Antapaccay copper mine suspended operations on Friday after protesters attacked the premises – one of the largest in the country – for the third time this month.

With Reuters and Associated Press

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[New Zealand](#)

Chris Hipkins set to become next prime minister of New Zealand

Minister selected by Labour party to succeed Jacinda Ardern after her shock resignation on Thursday



Chris Hipkins was nominated uncontested by the caucus. Photograph: Mark Mitchell/AP

[Tess McClure](#) in Auckland

[@tessairini](#)

Fri 20 Jan 2023 19.40 ESTFirst published on Fri 20 Jan 2023 15.48 EST

A new prime minister for New Zealand has been chosen by the Labour party after the [shock resignation of Jacinda Ardern](#) on Thursday.

Chris Hipkins – the minister for education and policing, and one of the primary architects of the Covid response – was nominated uncontested by the party caucus on Saturday morning, after efforts by senior MPs to

achieve consensus and secure a smooth transition in Ardern's wake. The caucus is due to formally endorse his selection on Sunday.

Taking on the prime ministership would be "the biggest responsibility and the biggest privilege of my life", Hipkins said on Saturday, speaking to reporters on parliament's steps in his first appearance since the nomination. "The weight of that responsibility is still sinking in."

An experienced MP with a ruthless streak in the debating chamber and an intimate knowledge of the machinery of government, Hipkins will face perhaps the biggest challenge of his political career: persuading New Zealanders to grant Labour another term in government, without Ardern's star power at the helm.

Hipkins paid tribute to his predecessor, saying she had been "an incredible prime minister" who had "provided calm, stable, reassuring leadership, which I hope to continue to do".

He also spoke on some of the challenges Ardern had faced including threats and abuse, particularly in relation to the Covid pandemic. "There has been an escalation in vitriol, and I want to acknowledge that some politicians have been the subject of that more than others," he said. "Our current prime minister [Jacinda Ardern](#) has absolutely been on the receiving end of some absolutely intolerable and unacceptable behaviour."

How the world fell in love with Jacinda Ardern – video

Around New Zealand, Hipkins, 44, will be best known as the face and primary implementer of the Covid elimination strategy, a role that saw him taking the podium next to Ardern for weekly updates as the pandemic evolved.

That background may help and hinder him: it gave him a significant profile and made him a household name, but also gives him immediate associations with a chapter many New Zealanders are now hoping to put behind them,

and which has galvanised a small, radical and often vitriolic core of anti-vaccine opponents.

While his profile is lower than Ardern's, the MP has had a few moments of international virality.

In one Covid-era gaffe, he became a meme after encouraging New Zealanders to "[go outside and spread their legs](#)" in a national announcement.

Last year, he bemused internet observers with [a birthday cake constructed entirely of sausage rolls](#).

The question of Hipkins' deputy has not yet been decided – a vote will take place on Sunday. Hipkins would not comment on whether he would choose a woman to serve alongside him, except to say: "For the first time in New Zealand's history, we have a gender balanced parliament. Women are going to occupy senior roles in our parliament. That is good, that is fantastic, and we should be proud of that as a country."

A career politician who has held office since 2008, Hipkins was the safest choice for Labour. Of the candidates considered for the role, he is most capable of stepping immediately into the work of governance and carrying the government's legislative agenda through to the October election.

Over the last term, as well as meaty portfolios in education, Covid response and policing, he has been leader of the house and public service minister, two wonky roles that are deeply immersed in the nuts and bolts of governance and provide an intimate knowledge of the political process.

Speaking to the Guardian in 2021, he said one of his political strengths was "Understanding how the machinery of government operates, which is something that I've developed over about 20 years.

"I've watched people come into politics from outside, very talented people, very knowledgable, with a lot of subject matter expertise – but they've struggled to get the machinery of government to do what they wanted to do.

And I like to think that I've managed to – I'm not perfect – but that I've managed to kind of figure that out.”

While that makes him well-equipped to carry Labour's last sets of reforms through this term, his larger battle will be on the campaign trail. Curia polling released on Friday – drawn from before Ardern's resignation – placed her party at 32%, compared with National's 37%. Right- and leftwing coalition partners Act and the Greens were sitting at 11% apiece.

With an election approaching on 14 October, Hipkins faces a steep road ahead – to transform Labour's fortunes and gather the support to form a new government.

Asked by reporters “Can you win the election?” Hipkins responded simply: “Yes.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/20/chris-hipkins-set-to-become-next-prime-minister-of-new-zealand>

New Zealand

Chris Hipkins profile: who is New Zealand's next prime minister after Jacinda Ardern?

'Chippy' weathered Covid pandemic, now faces new storms and Labour's flagging popularity ahead of 2023 election



Chris Hipkins outside the New Zealand parliament in Wellington.
Photograph: Marty Melville/AFP/Getty Images

[Tess McClure](#) in Auckland

[@tessairini](#)

Fri 20 Jan 2023 22.08 ESTLast modified on Fri 20 Jan 2023 23.50 EST

New Zealand's incoming prime minister, Chris Hipkins, steered the country through the Covid pandemic. An experienced career politician with a "fixer" reputation, he has a new storm to navigate: reversing Labour's

months-long polling slide and recapturing voters in the wake of [Jacinda Ardern's shock departure](#).

Hipkins, 44, was the minister primarily charged with designing and implementing New Zealand's Covid response. It made him a household name for many New Zealanders – he was a regular fixture at daily press conferences alongside Ardern.

While the elimination strategy came under fire from some overseas commentators and spawned conspiracy theories and anti-vaccine campaigns, it did allow New Zealand to broadly protect its population until the vast majority were vaccinated, achieving record-low rates of death, serious illness and economic disruption. It is a period that Hipkins will be hoping New Zealanders still look on with pride, especially when the general election comes around on 14 October.

The pandemic period of high pressure, constant media appearances and intense public scrutiny will have helped prepare Hipkins for the role of prime minister.

Around the government halls he is known as “Chippy” – a nickname derived from his initials, but which may have stuck thanks to an upbeat, slightly schoolboyish demeanour. Hipkins has a reputation in parliament for a sense of humour, fast quips and self-deprecating streak – attributes that New Zealanders tend to favour in their political leaders.

Asked by reporters to introduce himself to the country, he said, “maybe I don't have the best fashion sense in parliament” – referencing an [unexpected television interview on Friday](#) where he appeared clad in a baseball cap, hoodie and reflective, wraparound glasses. Asked whether he was the first ginger-haired prime minister, he responded: “It's about time we had a ginger at the top.”

Over the years, a mixture of off-the-cuff moments and pastry-based culinary preferences have propelled him into viral moments and global headlines. He was named by then-speaker Trevor Mallard as the MP he'd least like to be

placed in lockdown with, as he “appears to eat nothing much more than sausage rolls and Diet Coke”. As police minister, he drew international attention for a birthday cake constructed entirely of sausage rolls – a creation he said was a product of “police intelligence-gathering reach[ing] new heights”.

During the Covid response, he became a meme after a televised national announcement in which he recommended New Zealanders go outside and “spread your legs”. The minister leaned into the gaffe, embracing the catchphrase “spread your legs, not the virus” as a pandemic health message.

Quips aside, in personality Hipkins is a very different politician from Ardern. Where she eschewed political mudwrestling to advocate “relentless positivity” and a “politics of kindness” on the campaign trail, Hipkins is known as a more cutthroat player, particularly in the debating chamber. Two terms spent on the opposition benches may serve him in the tight election campaign to come, where he will be required to take on Christopher Luxon, the leader of the National party.

Hipkins launched his involvement in politics as president of the Victoria University Students’ Association and was arrested on parliament grounds for a protest against education policy in 1997. A stickler for process, and unafraid of political battles, Hipkins fought the arrest in a 12-year legal battle, eventually securing an apology and compensation for protesters. He said the events of that day were “a defining moment for me” that spurred him into parliamentary politics.

“I’ve always enjoyed the cut and thrust of politics,” [he told the Guardian in a 2021 interview](#), admitting that in opposition he was likely “one of the more aggressive Labour MPs”. Leading the Covid response had tempered that, he said. “I’ve become a much more moderate, conciliatory person as a result of doing this. It forces you to recognise that no human beings are perfect, that in any system there are going to be weaknesses, people are going to make mistakes.

“I have become a bit more pragmatic than I maybe was previously – maybe even a bit kinder, to take a leaf out of the prime minister’s book.”

Since Ardern's leadership began, Hipkins has been widely regarded as a trusted member of her inner circle, and was handed meaty portfolios in education, policing, Covid response, public service, and as leader of the house. He and Ardern have worked closely together since the outset of their political careers: both were young operatives and advisers under the Clark government, and they entered parliament as opposition MPs in the same 2008 cohort. When he was married in 2020, it took place at Ardern's official residence, Premier House, and Hipkins said at the time that the prime minister had agreed to host the event. The finance minister, Grant Robertson, was best man.

Hipkins is unlikely to bring the star power that Ardern possessed. Instead he will hope to embody straight-talking, core Labour values: being born, raised in and now member of parliament for the Hutt Valley, a region outside Wellington with lower incomes, higher poverty rates and rougher edges than the capital.

He said on Saturday: "I'm a boy from the Hutt. My parents came from relatively humble beginnings and worked really hard to provide a good life for my brother and I, and my commitment and politics is to make sure that we provide opportunities for all Kiwis who want to work hard to be able to work hard and get ahead and provide a better life for themselves and for their families."

Hipkins married partner Jade in 2020 and has two children. Thanking his family and his team for their support, he said he was humbled and honoured to take on the role of prime minister. "It's a big day for a boy from the Hutt."

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[Elon Musk](#)

Musk tells Tesla trial: ‘Just because I tweet doesn’t mean people believe it’

The carmaker founder said Twitter was the most democratic way to communicate but tweets didn’t affect stock as he expected



Elon Musk, Tesla founder and CEO, is expected to testify on Friday. Photograph: NTB/Reuters

[Kari Paul](#) and agencies

Fri 20 Jan 2023 16.07 ESTLast modified on Fri 20 Jan 2023 18.42 EST

Elon Musk testified on Friday as part of a trial over a 2018 tweet in which he claimed to have “funding secured” to take Tesla private, a tweet that shareholders allege cost them millions in trading losses.

The Tesla CEO appeared in a [San Francisco](#) federal courtroom and defended himself by saying that “just because I tweet something does not mean people believe it or will act accordingly”.

Musk's testimony began with questions about his use of Twitter, the social media platform he bought in October. He called it the most democratic way to communicate but said his tweets did not always affect [Tesla](#) stock the way he expected.

The class-action trial in San Francisco federal court centers on allegations that the Tesla CEO lied when he sent the tweet, costing investors. Earlier on Friday morning, investor Timothy Fries told the jury how he lost \$5,000 buying Tesla stock after Musk sent the tweet at the center of the lawsuit.

The case is a [rare securities class-action](#) trial and the plaintiffs have already cleared high legal hurdles, with the US judge Edward Chen ruling last year that Musk's post was untruthful and reckless.

Fries told the jury that funding secured meant to him that "there had been some vetting, some critical review of those funding sources".

Musk, wearing a dark suit over a white button-down shirt, testified for less than 30 minutes before court adjourned until Monday. He spoke softly and in a sometimes bemused manner, a contrast to his occasional [combative testimony](#) in past trials.

Musk described the difficulties the company went through around the time he sent the "funding secured" tweet, including bets by short-sellers that the stock would fall.

"A bunch of sharks on Wall Street wanted Tesla to die, very badly," he said, describing short-sellers, who profit when a stock falls in price.

Musk's attorney, Alex Spiro, told the jury in his opening statement on Wednesday that Musk believed he had financing from Saudi backers and was taking steps to make the deal happen. Fearing leaks to the media, Musk tried to protect the "everyday shareholder" by sending the tweet, which contained "technical inaccuracies", Spiro said.

Guhan Subramanian, a Harvard Law School professor, told the jury that Musk's behavior in 2018 lacked the hallmarks of traditional corporate

dealmaking by tweeting his interest in Tesla without proper financial or legal analysis.

“Compared to the standard template it’s an extreme outlier,” said Subramanian, who called Musk’s approach “unprecedented” and “incoherent”.

A jury of nine will decide whether the tweet artificially inflated Tesla’s share price by playing up the status of funding for the deal, and if so, by how much.

The defendants include current and former Tesla directors, whom Spiro said had “pure” motives in their response to Musk’s plan.

Reuters contributed to this report

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Ex-victims' commissioner hits out at 'evil' in Met amid David Carrick fallout

Vera Baird questions police force's commitment to culture change after elite officer revealed as serial rapist

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Met commissioner admits there are officers force needs to 'identify and get rid of' – video

[Jamie Grierson](#)

[@JamieGrierson](#)

Tue 17 Jan 2023 05.14 ESTFirst published on Tue 17 Jan 2023 03.52 EST

The former victims' commissioner Vera Baird has said Scotland Yard seems incapable of not employing "some quite evil people" as she questioned its commitment to culture change after the case of the serial rapist and serving officer David Carrick.

Carrick, an elite [Metropolitan police](#) officer, waged a campaign of terror and humiliation against women for two decades, committing 48 rapes to become one of the worst sex offenders in modern history. The process of sacking him from the force starts on Tuesday.

The Met has admitted errors in failing to spot Carrick's escalating danger during his 20 years of service. Britain's biggest police force was told about nine incidents from 2000 to 2021, including eight alleged attacks or clashes Carrick had with women before the arrest that led to his convictions.



Vera Baird, a former victims' commissioner. Photograph: Graeme Robertson/the Guardian

Baird, who resigned as victims' commissioner in September after three years in the role, told BBC Radio 4's Today programme: "The Metropolitan police seem incapable of not employing – and furthermore retaining – some quite evil people.

"He appears to have been reassessed since the murder of [Sarah Everard](#), since the Charing Cross misogyny scandal came out.

"Where exactly is the change in culture that we have all been told would occur after that catastrophic death now a couple of years ago?"

She added that it was not the Met that exposed Carrick but one of the victims who "had the courage" to go to another police force.

Meanwhile, the head of the Metropolitan police has said some serving officers needed to be identified and removed.

As details of Carrick's convictions were revealed on Monday, it emerged a total of 1,633 cases of alleged sexual offences or domestic violence

involving 1,071 officers and other staff were being reviewed from the last 10 years to make sure the appropriate decisions were made.

The Met commissioner, Sir Mark Rowley, who assumed office in September, on Tuesday admitted the force has not dealt with its own integrity with “the ruthlessness and clarity” that it deals with criminals.

Rowley told ITV’s Good Morning Britain: “It’s not a good situation, that’s why we’re reviewing it. I came back to policing four months ago because I’m passionate about policing. Most of our men and women are great people but we have not been tough enough at guarding our own integrity.

“We haven’t dealt with these issues, day in and day out for years, with the ruthlessness and clarity that we deal with criminals. And that’s what we’re getting on top of.”

There were some officers serving in the Met who needed to be identified and removed from the force, he admitted.

Rowley was asked if he could guarantee that a woman visiting a police station to report a sexual offence would not meet a police officer whose past behaviour was now under review, or who was tolerating similar behaviour in their department.

“I can’t, I’m not going to make a promise that I can’t stick to,” he said. “I’m going to put in place ruthless systems to squeeze out those who shouldn’t be with us.

“Most of our officers are fantastic, the people who specialised in this area are great and they have the skills. But do I have some officers who shouldn’t be in the Met that I’ve got to identify and get rid of? Yes I do, and I’m completely frank about that.”

Appearing on broadcast media for the UK government on Tuesday, the education secretary, Gillian Keegan, said the police had “some work to do” in restoring trust.

Asked on Times Radio if the government could say that women could trust the police, she said: “It’s very important that we do trust the police. There’s no place in our police force for officers who fall seriously short of the standards required. It’s clear that action needs to be taken because it’s fundamental that we can trust our police.”

On Monday, Carrick pleaded guilty to the remaining charges against him at Southwark crown court in [London](#), bringing a total of 49 charges covering 85 serious offences.

No action was taken, with the women either refusing to formally complain or withdrawing their cooperation from the police investigation.

Alarm bells also failed to ring within the force, which promoted Carrick in 2009 from patrolling the streets to being a member of an elite armed unit, the parliamentary and diplomatic protection command, guarding embassies, Downing Street and the Houses of Parliament.

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[Metropolitan police](#)

Carrick conviction shows Met police's 'deeply rotten misogynistic culture'

Campaigner says fact that former officer got away with 'horrific crimes' for so long is terrifying

- [PC David Carrick revealed as serial rapist](#)
- [‘I can kill you’: officer terrorised women over two decades](#)



Harriet Wistrich of the Centre for Women's Justice said it was 'truly shocking' David Carrick was not suspended after a report of rape by a woman in July 2021. Photograph: James Manning/PA

[Vikram Dodd](#) *Police and crime correspondent*

Mon 16 Jan 2023 13.38 ESTLast modified on Tue 17 Jan 2023 05.14 EST

The scores of offences committed by the [Metropolitan police](#) firearms officer David Carrick expose “a deeply rotten misogynistic culture” within

Britain's largest police force, a leading campaigner has said.

The Metropolitan police were the focus of outrage, disbelief and sadness after the revelations that one of their armed officers who guarded parliament was a serial sex attacker.

The [conviction of Carrick](#), who pleaded guilty to 85 offences contained in 49 charges, came after the Met was informed of eight complaints over 20 years about alleged abusive behaviour towards women, but took no action. This including failing to suspend him in July 2021, when Carrick was first arrested for a rape allegation, which was not proceeded with after the victim changed her mind about her willingness to testify.

Harriet Wistrich, a solicitor and director of the Centre for Women's Justice, said: "That Carrick could have not only become a police officer, but remain a serving officer for so long whilst he perpetrated these horrific crimes against women, is terrifying.

"His crimes, along with a significant number of other Met police officers, reveals the deeply rotten misogynistic culture that has been allowed to exist within the Met.



David Carrick. Photograph: Hertfordshire police/PA

“The early reports of rape/serious violence against Carrick that were NFA’d [no further actioned] illustrate the woeful inadequacies of policing of these crimes.

“The failure to suspend Carrick from duty or investigate him for misconduct following reports by women and the threats Carrick made that they would not be believed because he is a police officer precisely mirror issues we [have] identified.”

She said it was “truly shocking” that Carrick was not suspended following the report by a woman in July 2021 in the wake of the arrest and investigations into the Metropolitan police officer later convicted of murdering Sarah Everard.

Ruth Davison, the chief executive of Refuge, which supports victims of domestic violence, said police had made repeated promises to change, but not kept them: “The crimes that David Carrick is accused of committing are utterly abhorrent, and his ability to be appointed and continue to serve as a police officer, while multiple allegations against him had been received by the force, will terrify women and girls up and down the country.

“What happens next must change the culture of policing for good. A force which breeds a culture of violent misogyny is not a force which can even begin to protect women and girls.”

Labour’s home affairs spokesperson, Yvette Cooper, criticised the failure to suspend Carrick and accused the government of failing to tackle key problems blighting policing: “Everyone who demanded change will feel badly let down today.”

Cooper added of the Carrick scandal: “It is further evidence of appalling failures in the police vetting and misconduct processes, still not addressed by government, that he was ever able to serve as a police officer.

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“The next Labour government will introduce new national compulsory standards on vetting, checks and misconduct. We urgently need action to raise standards and restore confidence in the vital work the police do.”

David Carrick: 'One of the most shocking cases involving a serving officer', say prosecutors – video

The [London](#) mayor, Sadiq Khan, who is also the police and crime commissioner for London, said in a statement: “Londoners will be rightly shocked that this man was able to work for the Met for so long, and serious questions must be answered about how he was able to abuse his position as an officer in this horrendous manner.

“The work to reform the culture and standards of the Met has already started ... But more can and must be done, including acting on the findings of the [forthcoming \[government ordered\] Angiolini inquiry](#), and I will continue to hold the Met to account as they work to implement the reforms needed.”

Rishi Sunak’s official spokesman said: “This is an appalling case and the prime minister’s thoughts are with all of his victims. We have been clear: there is no place in our police forces for officers who fall so seriously short of the acceptable standards of behaviour and are not fit to wear the uniform. [Police](#) forces must root out these officers to restore the public’s trust, which has been shattered by high-profile events such as this.

“The Home Office is pushing for improvement and has recently announced

a review of police dismissals to ensure the system is fair and effective at removing officers who are not fit to serve.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/jan/16/carrick-conviction-shows-met-polices-deeply-rotten-misogynistic-culture>

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How one woman's act of bravery exposed Met officer's abuse and police failures

Complaint revealed campaign of terror by David Carrick and repeated police inaction likely to further erode public trust

- **Warning: this article contains graphic descriptions of sexual violence**
- [PC David Carrick revealed as serial rapist](#)
- [‘I can kill you’: officer terrorised women over two decades](#)



David Carrick used his status as a police officer to put women at ease, perpetrate the abuse and then silence his victims. Photograph: REX/Shutterstock

[Vikram Dodd](#) *Police and crime correspondent*

Mon 16 Jan 2023 07.38 ESTLast modified on Mon 16 Jan 2023 16.37 EST

When the Metropolitan police constable David Carrick was arrested for rape in October 2021 by detectives from the Hertfordshire force, his demeanour during the interview was unusual for a suspect facing a serious criminal accusation.

“He was quite charming, as if he was talking to his friends who were police officers; just having a chat. It did not seem like he was concerned,” recalls Shilpa Shah, a lawyer from the Crown Prosecution Service, who built the case against him.

It would be revealed that accusations of abusive behaviour towards women were nothing new to Carrick. What was different this time, was that he would face justice. When arrested, his response was: “Not again.”

It would take 20 years from his first known offence, for him to be convicted, following an act of heroism by one of his victims. In October 2021 she told police Carrick had raped her – flashing his police warrant card to reassure her and boasting of his proximity to the powerful before attacking her.

That woman’s single act of bravery, came almost immediately after a serving Met officer was convicted of the kidnap, rape and murder of Sarah Everard and sentenced to a whole life term.

It set off a chain reaction that led to [Carrick’s conviction on Monday, with a long prison sentence in prospect](#). It rocked Britain’s largest police force and whatever public trust and confidence it retained after a series of scandals.

From that one complaint, Carrick admitted 49 counts covering 85 acts of serious offending, including 48 rapes.

Campaign of terror

From no later than 2003, Carrick waged a campaign of terror against women who fell for his initial charms. Sometimes in London, but mostly in Hertfordshire, he was a prolific predator looking for victims, police say.

Unlike other serial abusers, he had a unique item in the “toolkit” he would use on his victims – his status as a police officer. He exploited it to put women at ease, perpetrate the abuse and then silence his victims.

Shah said: “It enabled him to gain the trust of the victims at the beginning. Because he did say: ‘You’ll be safe with me because I’m a police officer.’ And I think that that then enabled him to gain their trust and then get into relationships with them.”



Carrick ‘would appear to be fun, loving, charming, charismatic, but he was very manipulative’. Photograph: Rex/Shutterstock

Shah said Carrick held a threat over women that if they complained, nobody would believe them. “They didn’t feel they would be believed because they were going up against a police officer, who obviously people believe and trust.”

DCI Iain Moor, who led the Hertfordshire police investigation, said it was “a common theme” among the victims that they feared complaining to

police about attacks by a fellow officer.

On meeting a woman, Carrick started out being pleasant, Shah said. “He would be very charming. He would appear to be fun, loving, charming, charismatic, but he was very manipulative, very self-confident, almost to the point of being cocky, and he knew what he was doing.”

It soon turned into a nightmare. Moor said of one victim’s ordeal: “She reports being orally raped whilst in his shower after being dragged in by her hair, being whipped with a belt, suffocated during oral sex and sexually assaulted with sex toys.”

His victims varied. Shah said: “A large number of these sexual offences were committed within three separate controlling and coercive relationships; others happened during one-off encounters. It didn’t matter to Carrick who the victim was – a new girlfriend, a long-term partner ... a school friend or a stranger – he would still abuse them.”

He used dating sites such as Badoo and Tinder. After his arrest in October 2021, searches of his electronic devices revealed 40 searches for pornography containing “anal sex” and “rough anal sex”, acts he later carried out on his victims.

David Carrick: 'One of the most shocking cases involving a serving officer', say prosecutors – video

Carrick would abuse women to hollow out their self-esteem, telling them: “You’re my slave. You’re a whore.”

The first rape charge against Carrick in October 2021 led other women to come forward. Soon detectives and prosecutors faced a sprawling case, with offending carried out over two decades.

What stood out was the common details of what the women suffered, Shah said. “There were striking similarities between what all the victims were saying, for example, that he would urinate in their mouth. Something ... you wouldn’t be able to make up and have a similar account to someone else that specific. He would force them to give him oral sex to the point

where they would be gagging. Again, another similar fact between many of the complainants.”

Moor added: “Over the years there were patterns to his offending ... forbidding [the women] to speak with other men or even their own children.”

Shah said Carrick viciously controlled his victims, financially and in other ways. “He would say: ‘You’re not allowed to eat today. You can eat tomorrow,’ for example, or: ‘You can eat this much of a piece of apple at this time of day’, that kind of behaviour of controlling how much they would eat. He would call them fat and lazy. He would tell them when they were allowed to sleep; when they were allowed to get up.”

As well as more than 40 convictions for rape, the Met officer was also guilty of false imprisonment. Shah said: “A couple of [the women] he would lock in the understairs cupboard and not give them food; make them clean the house while they were naked.” Moor added: “I’ve seen bigger dog kennels.”

Police say they believe there may be more victims. No offences are recorded from 2009 to 2016, and Shah said that when the attacks resumed in 2017 they had intensified and, if possible, became more severe. Perhaps by coincidence, but perhaps not, because 2017 is the year Carrick got good news from his employer, the Met.

Despite complaints from women of which the Met was aware, and having cleared him to join the force in 2001, the force entrusted him to carry a gun and guard sensitive sites in the parliamentary and diplomatic protection command in 2009. The force re-vetted and passed Carrick again in 2017.

Met police errors

Unlike other scandals to hit the Met, Carrick’s offending did not fall out of a clear blue sky. The Met has admitted that clue after clue fell into its lap about his abusive behaviour, with Carrick named in a string of complaints received by it and other forces.

The assistant commissioner, Barbara Gray, said: “There was an escalation of abusive behaviours that should have been identified. I would not expect anyone with that pattern of behaviour to be in the Met today.”

David Carrick: Met police 'truly sorry' for suffering of victims – video

The fact remains it was only 18 months ago, in July 2021, after the murder of Sarah Everard, that Carrick faced an earlier claim of rape. He was arrested, but the Met did not view it as sufficiently serious to suspend him from duty. Gray declined to say that the Met bore some responsibility for leaving Carrick in his police job.

Colleagues knew him as “Bastard Dave”. The Met insists the reference was not because of his treatment of women, but because his workmates thought he could be cruel and mean.

The Met has issued a list of the complaints received against Carrick from details gathered on police systems held by it and three other forces. In each report the woman did not wish to cooperate with an investigation, or one was not launched. The Met never joined the sizeable dots.

In 2000, a year before he joined the police, Carrick was alleged to have sent malicious communications to a partner who wanted to leave him, and also faced a claim of burglary. The next year, he passed vetting and joined the Met.



Carrick sitting on a child's playground ride. Photograph: Rex/Shutterstock

In 2002, he was accused of assaulting and harassing a former partner, which came during his probation period, when he would have been easier to dismiss. Two sources told the Guardian the assault included a bite to the woman's shoulder. Two years later, there was a "domestic incident", the Met says.

By the time of the next incident, in 2009, Carrick was living in Stevenage, Hertfordshire, when the local force received a report of a domestic incident involving the former beat officer who had earned a coveted place in the parliamentary and diplomatic protection command. In 2016, he was a suspect in a Hampshire police investigation of alleged harassment. In 2017, police spoke to him after he was ejected from a Reading nightclub for being drunk.

By 2019, he was alleged to have grabbed a woman by the neck, and again no action was taken, with Hertfordshire police insisting the Met was told. In July 2021, he was arrested for rape. The victim came forward shortly after another Met officer admitted to the murder of Everard.

Her complaint led to Carrick being placed on restricted duties, rather than being suspended, and having his gun taken away. But she soon withdrew

cooperation from the police investigation, and within weeks Carrick's gun was returned and restrictions were lifted. The woman was telling the truth and in December 2022 Carrick admitted attacks on her in a pre-trial hearing.

In the wake of Carrick's conviction, Gray said the force was reviewing every past claim of domestic abuse or sexual offence against Met officers and staff, and said the force was looking into about 1,000 of its 45,000 employees.

Gray said: "The duration and nature of Carrick's offending is unprecedented in policing. But regrettably he is not the only Met officer to have been charged with serious sexual offences in the recent past."

More to come

The scandal of David Carrick is the first of four chapters of intense pain for the Met that will play out between now and the summer. Met bosses fear that the cumulative result will be further damage of what is left of the Met's reputation, already suffering after a series of scandals, so severe that Dame Cressida Dick was ousted as commissioner, replaced by Sir Mark Rowley, who vowed to introduce sweeping changes.

The initial details of the Carrick case and the looming revelations of Met failings were enough to form part of the reason the London mayor, Sadiq Khan, decided to oust Dick in February 2022, the Guardian understands. The other chapters of pain for the Met include an upcoming criminal court case where legal restrictions currently apply.

Then Louise Casey's second report into the Met is due in March, and is expected to be as damning, if not more so, than the first report, [which found huge failings in how the force investigates officers](#). It led Rowley to admit that hundreds of racist, misogynist and corrupt officers have been allowed to continue to serve in the Met.

Next, by the summer, the government-commissioned inquiry following the Everard murder is expected to publish the first of two reports. One police source said the findings from Dame Elish Angiolini could be as devastating

and seismic as the 1999 Macpherson report, which castigated the Met especially, and policing generally, on their record on race after the murder of the black teenager Stephen Lawrence.

The Met says radical and rapid changes are under way, but altering the culture will take time. It has boosted its counter-corruption efforts and accepts it was too lax in the past.

The force's new leadership know it will be only a matter of weeks before fresh revelations about the force risk leading to a concerned public, along with the bulk of Met officers and the politicians who oversee it, saying "not again".

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‘I can kill you’: how Met police officer terrorised women over two decades

Victim tells of abuse, threats and rape, while mother, childhood friend and neighbours recall violent behaviour

- [PC David Carrick revealed as serial rapist](#)
- [One woman’s act of bravery exposed officer’s abuse and Met failures](#)



Carrick told a friend he joined the Met police’s armed unit because he missed having a weapon and ‘wanted a bit of authority’. Photograph: Exclusive handout



[Emine Sinmaz](#)

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Mon 16 Jan 2023 08.46 EST Last modified on Tue 17 Jan 2023 09.58 EST

A former girlfriend of the armed police officer David Carrick has told how he allegedly raped, strangled and threatened her, saying: “I can kill you without leaving any evidence.”

Carrick, 48, reportedly used his status to intimidate and control her, restraining her with his police-issue handcuffs and boasting that he was a powerful man who guarded the prime minister. He coerced the woman into staying in the relationship by convincing her he would plant drugs in her car, saying: “Who are they going to believe?”

The woman, who cannot be named for legal reasons, told the Guardian about Carrick’s year-long campaign of abuse as he [pleaded guilty to 49 counts against 12 women](#).

She was interviewed by detectives from Hertfordshire constabulary but chose not to make a formal complaint because she did not want to relive her agony in court. Her testimony comes as Carrick’s mother told the Guardian

she reported a concern about him when he was a teenager after a serious allegation was made against him.

The woman met Carrick, who served with the parliamentary and diplomatic protection command, on Tinder. She found him charming initially, saying: “In the beginning he was a really nice guy. He was very chatty, very polite. I thought I had found the right person.”

The couple went on romantic walks and holidays abroad and had dreams of buying a house together. “But then in front of people he started to put me down. He made me feel like an awful person,” she said.

Carrick allegedly became more controlling and tried to take charge of the woman’s finances and push her away from her family. “He did it in a nice way, [saying]: ‘Your family are grown up, you need to let them live their life,’” she said. He also tracked her using the Find My Friends app on her iPhone without her knowledge and monitored her online activity.

David Carrick: 'One of the most shocking cases involving a serving officer', say prosecutors – video

If she was active on social media at night he demanded that she stop using her phone.

“He used to say: ‘Who do you belong to? You belong to me.’ He said many, many times: ‘You have to obey me. You’re here to serve me.’” The woman described Carrick as a sex addict and alcoholic who started drinking at 7am after returning home from night shifts guarding Westminster VIPs.

She said his three-bedroom terrace house in Stevenage, Hertfordshire, was full of pornography and he became obsessed with emulating violent sexual acts. She said he would often text her pornographic videos while on duty, and if she said she was not interested he would send her “sad face” selfies.



Carrick posing for a 'sad face' selfie. Photograph: Exclusive handout

“Sex became really violent,” the woman said. “He wanted me to be the same as a prostitute but I didn’t want to do this kind of stuff. It was weird, crazy stuff and I didn’t accept it and that’s when the fights started.”

She alleges that Carrick would become violent if she refused, kicking her out of bed and strangling her. She recalled a harrowing experience on holiday in which he tried to force her to drink his urine. “We had a really bad fight because he wanted me to do that,” she said. Fighting back tears, she added: “One time he made me do it. We were having a shower together. You say no and he forces you. He forces you. You want to get away from that situation but you can’t. It’s awful.”

She accused Carrick of raping her on more than one occasion, saying: “I would say no and then wake up with him on top of me ... He’s not a normal person – but he used to call me frigid.”

Carrick also restrained her using his police-issue handcuffs, sometimes lashing her wrist to her ankle and leaving her immobile. She recalled once being handcuffed at his home for hours after he claimed to have lost the key. “I started crying, saying I was going to call my family and he said he had to go to his base in central London to get the key.”

Carrick would often apologise for his behaviour while blaming the woman. “I didn’t know how to get out of this situation because he’s abusive [and] he does bad stuff, but at the same time he says: ‘Sorry, but you made me do that’,” she said. “It took me a while to realise this was an abusive relationship.”

David Carrick: Met police 'truly sorry' for suffering of victims – video

When she did try to leave him, she said Carrick used his position as an armed officer to frighten her. “He told me: ‘I look after the prime minister so you better behave yourself. I am a powerful man. Look at the kind of job I do,’” she said. “One time he said to me: ‘I can kill you. I can kill you without leaving any evidence because I work in the police.’”

The woman said she ended the relationship a year later after Carrick handcuffed her before throwing her outside naked in the middle of the night. Carrick then blackmailed the woman in an attempt to make her stay with him, she claimed. “He told me: ‘I’ll put drugs in your car and call the police. Who are they going to believe?’” But she told Carrick she was going to report him to the police and he eventually stopped harassing her.

“He made me feel very small,” the woman said. “I blame myself. Why did I let him do this? Why did I let him talk to me like that? I should’ve straight away gone to the police but I thought, what if he does what he says, what if he kills me?”

Detectives from Hertfordshire constabulary interviewed the woman as part of their investigation but she said she began having flashbacks and anxiety attacks so decided not to make a formal complaint. She was also afraid Carrick would not get a long custodial sentence and was worried about any repercussions.

Her account bears striking similarities to the testimonies of other women whom Carrick admitted abusing over a 17-year period. Hertfordshire constabulary confirmed they interviewed the woman and that it was her decision not to participate in the case.

At a press briefing, DCI Iain Moor, from the Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire major crime unit, acknowledged there may be more victims. “Despite best efforts, there may be even more people who have fallen victim to Carrick and who haven’t yet made themselves known,” he said.

Born in Salisbury, Wiltshire, in January 1975, Carrick is the son of a Royal Artillery veteran and a cleaner. His parents married in 1974 and lived in Bulford Camp, an army base, before moving to the village of Durrington, near Amesbury, after his younger sister was born.

Carrick attended Durrington comprehensive school where he was known for his love of martial arts – he achieved a black belt in Taekwondo – and skateboarding. His parents separated when he was a teenager and his mother, Jean, started a relationship with another man who moved into the family home. The couple had a son, now 32, and daughter, now 29.

Speaking from her home in Salisbury, Jean told the Guardian that Carrick enjoyed family holidays in Spain and going on French exchange trips. She described him as “normal-ish” growing up, saying he did “fairly well” at school where he had many girlfriends. “He used to bring them home when we lived in Durrington. There were so many of them I didn’t bother asking about them in the end. He used to change them quite often,” she said.

Jean said she raised a concern about him when he was a teenager after a serious allegation was made against him.

“After that, he changed,” Jean said. “He just sort of kept himself to himself and away from the family. And that’s when I had my two other children. I didn’t know this until recently, but my other son told me: ‘He’s a horrible man. He used to kick me on the back of the legs.’”



David Carrick ‘always wanted to join the army’, his mother said. ‘I think he wanted to travel around. It could also be because he wanted to carry a weapon.’ Photograph: Exclusive family handout

After leaving home, Carrick worked in the local Co-op supermarket before joining the army, aged 19. Jean said he served in the Royal Gloucestershire, Berkshire and Wiltshire regiment – which he dubbed the “Great Big Willy Regiment” – and went on tours to Cyprus and the Falkland Islands in 1996. The Met said he served with the Royal Logistics corps from 1996-97. Jean said: “He always wanted to join the army. I think he wanted to travel around. It could also be because he wanted to carry a weapon,” Jean said.

Carrick joined the Metropolitan police in 2001, serving in Merton until 2005 and then Barnet. In 2009, he was promoted to the parliamentary and diplomatic protection command, an elite unit that guards embassies, Downing Street and the Houses of Parliament. Jean said her son cut off all contact with her about 15 years ago. “He just didn’t like my other kids. Maybe it’s jealousy or something, or maybe he blamed me for the break-up of our marriage,” she said.

Recalling their last encounter, Jean told how Carrick took her out for breakfast before becoming angry that his half-brother was “giving her grief” on the phone. “He took the phone off me and started shouting at my

son. He said: 'I'm Mr Plod. I'm a policeman so don't fuck me around.' He then ran out and I never saw him after that."

She said the allegations have devastated her. "He's still my boy, still my son," she said. "I just don't know why he's done it. You know, when he was doing well, and now he's lost everything. He's going to lose a lot – the Met police, everything."

Her partner of 18 years, Ernest Steele, 67, said: "The worst thing about it is that he had that kind of authority as a police officer and he abused that."

Carrick's former childhood best friend revealed that he fell out with Carrick because he exploited his position to intimidate people and "treated women like crap". The 47-year-old, who went to school with Carrick, said: "When we were younger I thought he was a cool lad. A lot of people liked him. He was one of those lads who was good at everything – I think he had good grades and he was very much a sports person. He was very popular with the women, he was a good-looking lad, he was a fit lad."

The pair reconnected in 2008, a year after Carrick bought a £160,000 two-storey house in Stevenage where he kept two pet snakes. "Quite quickly, I saw things I didn't like. He drank a lot and he was out of control. He could be quite nasty," said the man, who did not want to be named.

"He would use his being in the police and he would use his power to get his way. He would start arguments and then say he's in the police and throw his weight around a little bit too much. So I used to say to him: 'Look, Dave, you can't be doing that, you're a police officer.'" He said he also recalled Carrick flashing his warrant card at least three times to intimidate people he started fights with.

He said Carrick told him he joined the armed unit because he missed having a weapon and he "wanted a bit of authority". The friend said he was also put off by Carrick's treatment of women. "I experienced him treating women like crap more than once," he said. "He's a power freak. He has a few drinks and I don't think he treats women with any respect. They're just nothing to him."

He said he cut off contact with him after Carrick propositioned his then wife. “He tried it on with my ex-wife, which didn’t surprise me. It’s like when I found out what he was accused of, it didn’t surprise me at all,” he said. “He is a dangerous person. I know he could hurt someone if he really wanted to. He was capable of it at school. I saw him having a fight at school and that person didn’t stand a chance.”

Carrick’s neighbours in Stevenage also say they saw his violent side. One resident, who did not want to be named, said she recalled seeing Carrick throttling a woman in September 2019 before another neighbour called the police. She said: “The front door was wide open and he had no clothes on and he had a woman by the throat. She was hysterical, the whole street could hear. She was trying to escape.”

Hertfordshire constabulary confirmed they attended the incident but said no further action was taken because neither party wanted to make a complaint. The neighbour said Carrick would always be seen with different women, adding: “But when he went out it was like they were trying to get away from him.”

Carrick’s friend said he was shocked he was able to carry out almost two decades of abuse while maintaining a position of power. “I just don’t know how the police missed all this. I used to say to David: ‘How did you become a police officer, and how did you get to where you are, and still act the way you’re doing?’ And he would just smile.”

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‘Proud to be a disruptor’: GB News faces growing pains as it tries to clean up image

Right-leaning TV channel to cut costs, hire new talent and enforce ‘discipline’ as it aims for growth



Nigel Farage fronts GB News’s most popular show. Photograph: SOPA/LightRocket/Getty

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GB News has entered the new year with a new plan: cut costs, hire more major talent, get off an advertising blacklist – and force all producers and presenters to take training workshops brushing up on “[the law and Ofcom](#)”.

The controversy-prone, right-leaning TV channel, which has spent a turbulent first 18 months [weathering on and off-air turmoil](#) and trying to shake a reputation as the “British Fox News”, is apparently ready to grow up.

Alan McCormick, the [GB News](#) chairman, is aiming to make the operation more “disciplined” and none of the approximately 200 editorial staff will be exempt.

In a new year missive to staff outlining the priorities for the business in 2023, seen by the Guardian, McCormick said the first step will be a training schedule designed to help GB News avoid repeatedly falling foul of the media regulator Ofcom’s broadcasting code.

“This will ensure every producer and presenter has the most sophisticated knowledge at their fingertips,” McCormick said. “Initial workshops, on the law and Ofcom, are vital for all with no exceptions. Education is always a great investment.”

In its self-proclaimed mission to be an insurgent force and alternative to mainstream media, the channel continues to blunder into image-tarnishing controversies in the way its presenters and guests handle topics including culture war issues, [anti-vaccine conspiracies](#) and, most recently, antisemitism.

Ofcom completed 28 investigations across the broadcasting sector last year, finding 17 breaches of the UK broadcasting code, and it currently has two cases open relating to GB News presenter Mark Steyn’s show, which has repeatedly raised doubts over Covid vaccine safety.



Ofcom has two cases open relating to Mark Steyn's show, which has raised doubts over Covid vaccine safety. Photograph: GB News

However, while GB News is introducing measures to avoid getting on the wrong side of Ofcom, it will not be shying away from controversy entirely.

"We do have voices that explore topics and areas of discussion that are challenging," says Angelos Frangopoulos, the GB News chief executive. "We have a breadth of opinion and journalistic experience across the business that are here to challenge and push boundaries."

Getting one over on arch-rival TalkTV, Rupert Murdoch's channel built on a [£45m deal with Piers Morgan](#), is another top priority.

GB News is understood to have poached Ben Briscoe, the series editor for TalkTV's Piers Morgan Uncensored, who also worked on ITV's Good Morning Britain.

Building credibility is another key aim, particularly after the reputational blow of losing names such as the former lead presenter and chairman Andrew Neil, and the launch editorial director John McAndrew, the ex-Sky News senior executive who has gone to BBC News.



The GB News chief executive, Angelos Frangopoulos, says it has ‘a breadth of opinion’. Photograph: Dominic Lipinski/PA

Recent hires include Michael Portillo, the Daily Mail’s Andrew Pierce, and Camilla Tominey from the Telegraph, alongside the former ITV star Eamonn Holmes. They join an on-air lineup that includes the polarising figure of [Nigel Farage](#), who fronts GB News’s most popular show.

“GB News is proud to be a disruptor,” Frangopoulos says. “We have got the launch and early startup phase behind us. We started from scratch and have learned about the [UK broadcasting] landscape. This is a year of growth for GB News.”

Growth is a laudable aim. Achieving it with the UK economy forecast to be heading into recession is another matter. Loss-making GB News is set to make cuts this year – although not to staff headcount – as the macroeconomic downturn affects its already fragile revenues.

“The financial climate could not be tougher, so we must be tougher still,” McCormick told staff. “In almost every area of the company we need to be fitter, sharper, leaner and more disciplined.”



Recent GB News hires include the journalist, broadcaster and former politician Michael Portillo. Photograph: Mark Thomas/Rex/Shutterstock

Advertising is meant to be the primary source of income for GB News, which rebroadcasts audio from its TV output on its GB News Radio service.

However, the broadcaster has suffered from a widespread advertising boycott by brands that do not want to be associated with some of its output.

“It is a brand safety disaster zone, I’m afraid,” says Richard Wilson, a co-founder of the Stop Funding Hate campaign, which calls out advertisers on social media that run ads in media such as GB News and the Daily Mail. “I’m not surprised advertisers are staying away.”

However, Frangopoulos says that the company is starting to make inroads with media buying agencies and brands, some of whom it now approaches directly. GB News uses Sky’s TV sales arm to sell its on-air advertising space, the Kiss and Jazz FM owner, Bauer, handles its radio advertising and the Daily Mail’s commercial arm is responsible for digital advertising.

“We did have challenges at launch with advertisers but there has been a market shift,” Frangopoulos says. “Towards the end of last year and into

this one there has been a significant shift in the level of discussion we are having both at agency and at client level.

“That has been driven partly because we are now part of the broadcasting landscape in the UK. We have a sizeable audience that holds appeal to some advertisers and is worth a conversation.”

According to Guardian research, GB News attracted almost 170 advertisers or campaigns in the first half of last year, and more than 180 in the second half, including brands such as Camelot, Burger King, Jet2, TalkTalk and Weetabix.

While none of these were big spenders – Sky’s own advertising was among the biggest – it does indicate that the advertiser boycott of GB News is softening.



GB News reached 2.87 million viewers in December, comfortably ahead of TalkTV. Photograph: Finnbarr Webster/Getty

In December the TV channel reached 2.87 million viewers, comfortably ahead of TalkTV at 2 million, although average daily viewing is only 41 seconds. Sky News achieved a monthly reach of 8.5 million and the market leader, BBC News, clocked in at 11.4 million.

GB News Radio is also growing its audience, with weekly reach up 50% to 415,000 from the second to third quarter last year.

The world of traditional media is a notoriously difficult business to turn a profit, which begs the question of whether GB News can ever grow to a point that it is self-sustaining and no longer needs to turn to its backers for further cash injections.

The occasionally mooted potential merger with, or takeover by, TalkTV would not solve the problem – Sky News has not made a profit in more than three decades on air.

In January 2021, GB News revealed that it had secured £60m to launch into the UK market in what was touted at the time as a three-year pot of funding.

However, last August there was a shakeup among its backers, with the [founding investor Discovery selling up](#), and the existing shareholders Sir Paul Marshall, the Brexiter hedge fund tycoon, and Legatum, the Dubai-based investment company founded by the New Zealand billionaire Christopher Chandler, taking control.

Financial accounts for Discovery's UK business subsequently revealed that it sold its 25% stake for £8m, a 60% drop on the original £20m it paid, which would suggest the value of GB News has fallen from £80m at launch to £32m.

The latest £60m funding round, in which the co-founders Andrew Cole and Mark Schneider [resigned as directors and sold their stakes](#), could sustain GB News for a number of years if it chose to cut costs dramatically.

Frangopoulos declines to comment on “shareholder or valuation matters” but suggests that GB News is not at this point looking to cut back to a shoestring operation.

“GB News is competing with established, well-funded, big brand media and it is working,” Frangopoulos says. “We are an employer of more than 200 journalists and that is a net positive for British journalism. All companies

have a balancing act of investment to drive commercial growth and finding efficiencies.”

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Love cheese and hate tofu? 14 vegan obstacles – and how to push past them



‘After a few months of vegan experimentation, your cherished foodstuff may become less important to you than you thought.’ Illustration: Steven

Gregor/The Guardian

A few weeks into Veganuary, you may be wondering how to keep a plant-based lifestyle going. Whether you're worried about supplements, expense or food aversions, here's everything you need to know



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We all know why veganism is a good idea: it is better for the planet and can be better for our health, while animals shouldn't be exploited to feed and clothe us. Each step towards the invention of good vegan cheese makes it slightly easier to make the switch. But for many of us, going vegan still seems hard.

If you are a couple of weeks into [Veganuary](#), the campaign that encourages people to try being vegan for the month, you may be considering extending it – 23% become vegan and 43% reduce their consumption of animal products by at least half afterwards, according to the organisation – or perhaps you're struggling. Here are some of the most common sticking points, and some advice that might help you embrace a vegan life.

‘I can’t live without cheese/bacon/butter/steak’

“We hear that a lot, particularly with cheese,” says Toni Vernelli, head of communications at Veganuary. She advises starting by removing things that you won’t miss, or swapping them for alternatives where you probably won’t notice the difference. “A lot of people are happy having fake meat burgers and sausages.”

A vegan “chicken” nugget, she says, is virtually indistinguishable from a highly processed meat one. “If there’s something you really love, swap that last. It doesn’t have to be an overnight change.” She advises trying a variety of other options – even within the last year, there have been improvements in products such as vegan bacon and cheese.



Plant-based alternatives have come a long way – a vegan ‘chicken’ nugget is virtually indistinguishable from a meat one. Illustration: Steven Gregor/The Guardian

After a few months of vegan experimentation, your cherished foodstuff may become less important to you than you thought. “There’s nothing wrong with saying to yourself: ‘Four times a year, I’m going to have a bacon buttie because I can’t imagine life without it.’ You might find that the first time it

comes round, your taste buds have changed and you don't want something that greasy any more."

'I don't want to bother with supplements'

Chantal Tomlinson, dietitian for The Vegan Society, says that some supplements can benefit everyone, vegan or not – UK guidelines are that everyone should consider taking vitamin D in autumn and winter, and for some people it should be year-round.

"Fortified foods and supplementation of vitamin B12, vitamin D, iodine and selenium are important elements of a well-planned vegan diet, complementing a balanced and varied intake of plant foods," she says, adding that you can get specialist vegan supplements that contain these in one tablet.

'I exercise a lot'

The number of elite athletes that are vegan – tennis player Venus Williams and boxer David Haye among them – should convince you that your parkrun time won't suffer if you cut out the steak. "Active people need to ensure that they're consuming enough energy, most of which will come from carbohydrate found in starchy foods such as oats, potato, pasta and fruit," says Tomlinson. "Carbohydrate-rich options containing a moderate amount of protein are ideal."

She says the best sources of plant protein "contain good amounts of lysine. Lysine is one of the essential amino acids, meaning that the body can't make it. Good sources include beans, lentils, peas, soya, peanuts, quinoa, cashew nuts and pumpkin seeds. For those that are active, protein needs are higher, therefore having enough high-protein foods with higher amounts of lysine is crucial."

Tomlinson also recommends fortified soya milk, which "contains much more protein than other plant milks, and the quality of soya protein is similar to that of meat and dairy".

‘I’m pregnant or breastfeeding’

“Aim to eat at least two portions of calcium-rich foods every day, such as two glasses (400ml) of fortified plant milk,” says Tomlinson. “Make sure that your daily diet contains plenty of foods rich in iron, such as lentils, beans, raisins and fortified breakfast cereal. Optimise iron absorption by combining them with sources of vitamin C, such as orange juice, broccoli or bell pepper.”

She says it is important to “ensure you’re hitting your targets for vitamins B12 and D, iodine and selenium”, so take a supplement. “Before pregnancy and during the first trimester, you also need to take a folic acid supplement. Since vegans do not consume long-chain omega-3 fats from oily fish, a microalgae supplement can be considered.”

If breastfeeding, there are extra considerations, says Tomlinson. “This requires more protein and zinc than pregnancy. Make sure that your meals contain good sources, such as beans, chickpeas, lentils, soya products, cashew nuts, ground linseed, pumpkin seeds and quinoa. The calcium requirement for breastfeeding is nearly 80% higher, so it’s a good idea to eat rich sources throughout the day, such as calcium-fortified foods and calcium-set tofu.”

‘I don’t have enough time to cook elaborate meals’

There is no reason, says [Gena Hamshaw](#), dietitian and cookbook author, why your meals have to be that different from before. “You can take your existing preferences and ask: ‘What ingredients can I add that would make this plant-based?’”

A midweek dinner for her might be pasta with a jar of sauce and some frozen vegan meatballs, or a stir-fry. If she’s really busy, she might have a frozen vegan meal. “It’s great to cook things from scratch, but we all live in the real world and sometimes it’s helpful to take the semi-homemade approach. The good news about being vegan nowadays is that it’s entirely

possible to do that with a wide array of high-quality foods that make it easy.”

‘I don’t like tofu/mushrooms/aubergine’

“I would say none of those are necessary for living a happy vegan life,” says Hamshaw. “In the vegetable kingdom, there are always plenty of other options that will give you the same micronutrients. The one that I would have the most qualms about eliminating would be tofu, because it’s such a great protein source.”

She advises persevering with different ways of cooking it. “Get the firm kind and then press it – I usually [press the block between] two plates and stack a book or two on top. That removes some of the water, it makes it easier to have a nicer, chewy texture and it gets crispier on the surface. Use some sort of marinade that you love. Then you can either pan-fry it, bake it or grill it.”

She recommends olive oil, lemon and herbs. “It could be a marinade with soy sauce, toasted sesame oil, ginger, garlic. I like a balsamic marinade, and then I’ll roast it, and add it to salads and pasta dishes.”

‘My children are fussy eaters’

“It might not be the wisest approach to force a plant-based diet on your kids if they’re really reluctant to go there with you,” says Hamshaw.

However, if they are interested in being on a (well-planned, supplemented) vegan diet, but can be picky eaters, “think about what they already love and how you would make it plant-based. [Veganism](#) is a great way to encourage kids to eat more vegetables, wholegrains and legumes, but there might need to be a period where you serve them vegan options that are much more aligned with what they’re used to.”

Encourage them to try small amounts of new foods. “Children’s tastes do change. Just because there are some vegetables your children won’t try now, it doesn’t mean they’re never going to eat them.”

‘It will be too expensive’

This is a common myth, says Vernelli. Veganuary commissioned the market research company Kantar to look at this. “They found that for lunches and dinners, a plant-based meal on average cost 40% less than one that had meat or fish in it.”

Yes, meat and dairy alternatives can be expensive, but “when you balance that out with how cheap pulses, legumes and pasta are, a vegan diet still comes out cheaper overall,” says Vernelli. Prices of meat alternatives are coming down, she says, and now the cheaper supermarkets offer their own versions.

‘I don’t want to read labels all the time’

Standing and reading tiny ingredients labels can feel boring and overwhelming – but more retailers and brands are highlighting a product’s vegan status, says Vernelli. But if a product is not marked as vegan, concentrate on allergens – which include milk, eggs and seafood – that are often marked in bold and will stand out on the ingredients list. “If it has a vegetarian label on the front, and you flip it over, and it doesn’t highlight milk or eggs then you’re pretty safe.”

‘I’m a foodie and I love eating out’



‘If I go to a restaurant, and I see they make no effort for vegans, they should not be doing business.’ Illustration: Steven Gregor/The Guardian

He’s French, he’s a chef and he’s classically trained – nobody, says Alexis Gauthier, knows better than him how delicious animals and animal products are. “Roast beef, roast chicken, rich cream: of course I know,” says Gauthier who became vegan in 2016. His fine-dining London restaurant Gauthier Soho is now 100% vegan.

The reason many vegans go back to meat-eating, he says, “is always the deliciousness of food. Even if people want to become vegan because they believe that the planet is in an emergency, if the food is not delicious, there’ll be a point when they say: ‘I cannot live without ...’” His mission, then, is “to create delicious vegan food that you cannot live without”.

Even a few years ago, it would have been harder, he says, to find good vegan food when eating out. “Now, most restaurants want to use their creative skill to please vegans.” He recommends looking at the menu in advance to check you will be catered for, but if there is no option, he doesn’t advise calling ahead to ask them to make you something vegan, because it reinforces the idea that not eating animals is abnormal (you could cancel the booking instead, and tell them why). “If I go to a restaurant, and

I see they make no effort for vegans, they should not be doing business,” he says.

‘My partner would leave me’

“You do hear it,” Vernelli says. “I mean, do you want to be with someone who would leave you if you changed your diet?” At the less extreme end, your partner might grumble a bit. “I think it’s a case of making it clear that this isn’t something you’re inflicting on them – this is a personal choice, something that you believe in, that’s important to you. There are easy ways to work around it in the kitchen.” One simple example, she says, would be to batch cook base ingredients, such as a tomato sauce, for pasta and chilli recipes, and make one vegan and one with meat.

‘I want to wear my leather shoes and woolly jumpers’

Maybe just keep wearing them until they need replacing? “By being a vegan, you accept a philosophy which tells you that you need to exclude some products,” says activist Jordi Casamitjana. “If you are just experimenting to see whether you can do it, fine, that’s a good thing to do.” But you’re not yet vegan.

“Veganism is well defined by The Vegan Society, who created the word in 1944,” says Casamitjana. “It is a philosophy and a way of living which seeks to exclude all forms of exploitation and cruelty to animals for food, clothing, or any other purpose.”

Maybe you’ll start as a “plant-based diet” eater and eventually become vegan. “You’re incredibly lucky because you decided to be vegan in the 21st century when there’s so many options for you.” He thinks that, after some time, you will lose interest in all animal products, “and you won’t believe you haven’t done this before”.

‘It will make travel too hard’

Before, when she would travel to places where low-meat diets were not a staple, Vernelli would pack powdered soya milk, fruit and nut mixes and wholesome snack bars in case she couldn't find something to eat. Now, she praises the app HappyCow. "Anywhere you go in the world, the app will tell you the nearest place that serves vegan food. Even if there are no restaurants, it will point you towards shops that at least have vegan options."

The general spread of veganism means "it has got so much easier to get vegan food in even the most remote places now. The hotel you're staying in might not offer a milk alternative, for example, but you'll be able to buy it in a shop pretty much anywhere in the world."

'Humans evolved to eat meat'



'Our ancestors were not the voracious carnivores some stereotypes might have you believe.' Illustration: Steven Gregor/The Guardian

Well, yes, but our ancestors were not the voracious flesh-tearing, blood-sucking carnivores some stereotypes might have you believe. "Evidence from the fossil record indicates that our ancestors evolved the capacity to eat meat, and other animal tissues, such as bone marrow and organs, at least 2.5m years ago, after which time there is ample evidence for prehistoric

meat-eating,” says Briana Pobiner, paleoanthropologist at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History in Washington DC.

“However, different species and populations of early humans likely ate varied amounts of meat depending on what foods and tool-making materials were available in their local environments.” From the evidence, she says, we just don’t know how important or frequent meat was in early human diets.

Humans are omnivores and, luckily for us modern ones, even the discount supermarkets have good vegan alternatives to forage.

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Meditation

Meditation could have positive impact on gut and overall health

Practice may help regulate gut microbiome and lower risk of ill health, study of Buddhist monks finds



Monks meditate at the Borobudur Mahayana Buddhist in Indonesia
Photograph: Ulet Ifansasti/Getty Images

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It is a practice favoured by Lena Dunham, Tom Hanks and Lady Gaga to boost their focus and bring about calmness in an often busy, distracted world.

Now researchers have found evidence that frequent meditation over several years may help alter the human gut – boosting the body’s immune system

and reducing the risk of anxiety, depression and heart disease.

In a small study of Buddhist monks, researchers found deep meditation could help regulate the gut microbiome, and lower the risk of physical and mental ill health. [The findings feature in the journal General Psychiatry](#), which is published by the British Medical Journal.

“The microbiota enriched in monks was associated with a reduced risk of anxiety, depression and cardiovascular disease and could enhance immune function,” the researchers wrote. “Overall, these results suggest that meditation plays a positive role in psychosomatic conditions and wellbeing.”

Meditation is increasingly used to help treat substance abuse, traumatic stress, eating disorders and chronic pain. But until now it has not been clear whether it could also be able to alter the composition of the gut microbiome.

In an effort to find out, researchers led by the Shanghai Mental [Health](#) Centre at the Shanghai Jiao Tong University school of medicine analysed the stool and blood samples of 37 Tibetan Buddhist monks from three temples and 19 secular residents in the neighbouring areas.

Tibetan Buddhist meditation originates from the ancient Indian medical system known as Ayurveda, and is a form of psychological training, the researchers said. The monks in the study had practised it for at least two hours a day for between three and 30 years.

None of them had used agents that can alter the volume and diversity of gut microbes – antibiotics, probiotics, prebiotics or antifungal drugs – in the previous three months. Both groups were matched for age, blood pressure, heart rate and diet.

Stool sample analysis revealed significant differences in the diversity and volume of microbes between the monks and their neighbours.

“Bacteria enriched in the meditation group at the genus level had a positive effect on human physical and mental health,” the researchers wrote. “This altered intestinal microbiota composition could reduce the risk of anxiety and depression and improve immune function in the body.

“Collectively, several bacteria enriched in the meditation group [have been] associated with the alleviation of mental illness, suggesting that meditation can influence certain bacteria that may have a role in mental health.”

The researchers applied an advanced analytical technique to predict which chemical processes the microbes might be influencing. This indicated that several protective anti-inflammatory pathways, in addition to metabolism were enhanced in the monks practising meditation.

The findings also indicate meditation may reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease, the researchers said.

Blood sample analysis revealed levels of agents associated with a heightened risk of cardiovascular disease were significantly lower in the monks than in their secular neighbours.

The researchers cautioned that the study was observational and the number participating was small, all male and living at high altitude, making it difficult to draw any firm or general conclusions. The potential health implications could only be inferred from previously published research, they added.

However, based on their findings, the researchers said the role of meditation in helping to prevent or treat mental and physical illness merited further research.

“These results suggest that long-term deep meditation may have a beneficial effect on gut microbiota, enabling the body to maintain an optimal state of health,” the team concluded.

Earlier this month, Hanks, 66, revealed how he had the comedian Jerry Seinfeld to thank for his love of meditation. The two-time Academy award-

winning actor [told NBC's Today show how Seinfeld, 68, had first recommended the practice to him.](#)

“I said, ‘Oh, I’ve been working. I’m taking a year off [because] I’m just really tired. I’ve been working like six years,’” Hanks recalled before Seinfeld, 68, suggested meditation.

“He goes, ‘No, you’ve got to. I’ve been doing it since college. He put me together with his teacher, and it’s an odd, easy, life-changing thing.

“And should everybody do it [meditate]? Sure, why not?” Hanks added.

The image on this article was changed on 18 January 2023 to better reflect the story.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2023/jan/17/meditation-could-have-positive-impact-on-gut-overall-health-microbiome>

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‘I get handed joints all the time’: why everyone wants to party with topless comic Bert Kreischer

[Rob Walker](#)



‘I rip off my shirt and kill a beer’ ... Bert Kreischer. Photograph: Todd Rosenberg. Hair and makeup by Tara Nery. Styling: Jennifer May Nickel

He’s the wild frat boy turned middle-aged dad who loves guns, is friends with Joe Rogan and once helped rob a Russian train. Is Britain ready for the standup who was America’s official No 1 hellraiser?

Tue 17 Jan 2023 03.00 ESTLast modified on Tue 17 Jan 2023 04.08 EST

We are half an hour into the interview when the US comic Bert Kreischer starts telling me about his recent panic attacks, the worst he’s ever had. The type where he is locked in the bathroom all night, doing breathing exercises on the toilet, trying in vain to calm himself down. He’s been riddled with them, he says, and he’s pretty sure it’s down to travelling so much, spending most of the past year away from his family and drinking more than he should.

“Then I go on stage and it disappears so I’m like: ‘Why is this the one place where I’m comfortable?’ I didn’t want to get off stage last night because I knew, the second I got off, I was going to go back to feeling shit,” he says.

The 50-year-old standup is in Toronto, and in a few hours' time he'll be performing to a huge sell-out crowd. That's par for the course these days; Kreischer has been breaking ticket-sale records at arenas and baseball stadiums all over North America.

My demographic is overweight dudes with beards who like smoking weed and whose wives are hotter than they deserve

He's the frat boy turned middle-aged dad that everyone wants to party with: a throwback to his days at Florida State University in the 1990s, when [Rolling Stone magazine singled him out](#) as the No 1 hellraiser in the US's No 1 party school – a story that inspired the 2002 movie National Lampoon's Van Wilder, starring Ryan Reynolds as the Kreischer character.

Kreischer has been milking it ever since. “That article was the catalyst to everything happening,” he says, from doing standup in New York to signing a deal with Will Smith and making TV shows, to [Netflix specials](#) in Los Angeles.

He's not being funny now, though. As he leans into the camera of our Zoom call, his big, bearded face looks ashen. He admits he is hungover. “Man, I've got to find a way to get the anxiety out of my regular life,” he sighs.



‘Everyone’s like: if you lose weight, you’ll lose your fans’ ... Kreischer on stage. Photograph: Todd Rosenberg/Bert Kreischer

But then Kreischer’s regular life and his onstage persona are, by his own admission, difficult to separate. “I’ve been such a fucking open book about my life in my standup that the audience knows me really intimately,” he says. “They bring me drinks and I get handed joints all the time.” There’s an expectation, not only to be funny but to be their buddy – and he rarely disappoints. “I don’t want to let anyone down”, he says. “So I rip off my shirt and kill a beer!”

It’s this sense of familiarity at the heart of Kreischer’s comedy that has helped him emerge as one of the US’s top standups over the past decade. It earned him Variety magazine’s coveted [creative impact in comedy award in 2021](#). More than anything, his shows are characterised not by quick-witted one-liners but by storytelling. Jokes often unfold over five- or six-minute intervals, with Kreischer talking to the audience as if he is in their front room.

He’s part of a set of middle-aged comics who have stormed the US – a cultural phenomenon fuelled as much by podcasts as by the stage – including the likes of Bill Burr, Tom Segura and [Joe Rogan](#). And while he’s

sometimes seen as the least naturally talented of that group, he's also the most likable.

He performs all his shows naked from the waist-up. It's something he started doing initially just to amuse himself, he says. "To remind myself that it should be fun." On one occasion, he'd left his shirt off for 20 minutes and forgotten about it. "I was like 'I should put that back on,' and this lady in the audience shouts: 'Keep it off! So I was like: OK."



'My dad would shut me down, tell me I was wrong' ... Kreischer plays Detroit. Photograph: Scott Legato/Getty Images

These days he's shocked when he sees the size of his belly on billboards. "That's what I fucking look like! But everyone's like: 'If you lose weight you'll lose your fans.'" Now Kreischer's bringing his brash, no-holds barred show to Britain, making his debut at Manchester's O2 Apollo on 18 January. He's looking forward to it not least because "You guys have a pint in the middle of the day – we call that day drinking. I like anyone who parties!" he roars.

For all the laddish exuberance though, there's an insecure streak, too, that keeps finding its way into our conversation. One minute he is talking about how good life is. "I'm a very happy man, I have two kids, I tour around the

country, I've just finished my own movie." The next, he's telling me about the way his dad stopped him having opinions as a kid. "He'd shut me down and tell me I was wrong – and explain to me why I was wrong. I don't know what that does to a person, but I know for a fact that I'm never confident in my opinion."

It's why his shows aren't edgy or political, he says. It's not because he doesn't have opinions, he's just afraid to air them. The closest he gets to political, perhaps, is during a skit about guns, which Kreischer admits he "loves". He tells the story of how he originally got turned down for a gun because his paperwork didn't check out. "I started laughing hysterically because I thought, 'How great is it that our system actually works! I feel safer knowing that I *can't* get a gun.'" But then the gun dealer looked at him seriously and said: "'Oh, you're getting your fucking gun!' I didn't feel so good about that any more," Kreischer says. But, in a US at boiling point in its conflicting views on guns, Kreischer is careful not to upset anyone. "I try to paint both sides of the fence equally with the same brush," he says.

There's a macho vulnerability to Kreischer that may explain why he has connected so successfully with male audiences. Another possible reason is his friendship with Rogan, the podcast host whose show was so successful that Spotify paid him \$100m to have it exclusively on their platform – but who was also accused of spreading misinformation about the Covid vaccine, a controversy that led to Neil Young and Joni Mitchell [pulling their music from the streaming service](#) in protest.

Kreischer won't be drawn on the Rogan backlash (you get the sense he is all too aware of how powerful Rogan is). "I have to credit Joe with sharing me with his fans," he says, a bit sheepishly, adding that his appearances on Rogan's podcast gave his own act a "big pop". Rogan's audience is overwhelmingly male but Kreischer's keen to stress that his own audience is different, with more married couples than "straight-up dudes".

"My demographic is overweight dudes with beards who like smoking weed, with wives that are a tad bit hotter than they deserve," he quips.

On Rogan's advice, Kreischer started telling a story on stage about the time that he unwittingly helped two Russian gangsters rob a sleeper train

travelling between St Petersburg and Moscow. The story has become so popular that his audiences cry out for him to retell it, and he obliges.

He swears it's true – that when he was 22 he really did befriend two Russian banditti named Igor and Igor, drink vodka with them all night and then help them hold-up a buffet car. They took to him, he says, because he went shot for shot with them until 4am. It's how he earned the nickname “The Machine”.

Frat boys all want to party with my daughter but she's not that kid

Then there are the stories of how he had a bare-knuckle fistfight with a 10ft grizzly bear, jumped off the 1,149ft Stratosphere tower in Las Vegas and got fired from a human slingshot. These are some of the zany yarns that Kreischer intersperses on stage with stories about raising his two daughters, and the mundane reality of married life. (“My wife farts during oral sex” – you get the idea.)

Again though, he has his regrets. His two daughters are now famous among Kreischer's fans because he has talked so much about them, yet they hate people knowing who they are. “If they could trade all my success for anonymity, they would in a heartbeat.” One has just started college, he says, and now every frat boy is knocking on her door. “They're like: Do you wanna party, we gotta party, I wanna party with the Machine's daughter! But she is not that kid,” he says.

He gets anxious, too, that both his daughters have confessed to smoking cannabis – and thinks in part it's because he has made such light of it in his shows and podcasts. “I remember they told me as if we were friends. I was like: I'm your fucking dad! I wish I could put the toothpaste back in the tube.”

[Bert Kreischer plays o2 Apollo, Manchester, 18 January, then tours the UK, US and Australia.](#)

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2023.01.17 - Opinion

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OpinionImmigration and asylum

I confronted Suella Braverman because as a Holocaust survivor I know what words of hate can do

[Joan Salter](#)

By demonising refugees, the home secretary causes divisions that can lead to tragedy. We must not forget the lessons of the past



Suella Braverman has blamed migrants for Britain's problems. Photograph: Jessica Taylor/UK PARLIAMENT/AFP/Getty Images

Tue 17 Jan 2023 01.00 ESTLast modified on Thu 19 Jan 2023 08.57 EST

At 83 years old, my going viral on the internet is the last thing I would have expected, but a video of me confronting the UK home secretary, Suella Braverman, at an event on Friday has so far been viewed more than 5m times. For a long time, I have listened in horror to the language used by

many politicians to demonise certain groups in this country. As a child survivor of the Holocaust, [I had to speak out](#).

Let me tell you why. Next week, on 27 January, we commemorate one of the worst atrocities committed in human history. The theme for this year's [Holocaust Memorial Day](#) is “ordinary people”. This might seem a strange choice; after all, most of us would assume that it would require a population of inhuman monsters to enact a genocide. But in reality, these horrific acts were carried out by one group of ordinary people against another.

The [Holocaust](#) began in a country where Jews and non-Jews had lived together in peace for generations. The small Jewish population – less than 1% – was so integrated into German culture that the majority looked upon themselves as Germans, with a variety of degrees of adherence to Jewish culture and traditions. So how did this relative harmony turn to hatred in such a short period of time? Through the use of language. The language of hate and division.

This was the method used by the Nazis to turn ordinary people, who went home each night to their wives and children, into the monsters capable of marching millions of Jews and other minorities – people just like them – into the gas chambers. It is what enabled ordinary soldiers to return to their wives and children, satisfied that they were protecting their country from social problems caused by people whom their government had convinced them were less than human.

BREAKING: a Holocaust survivor just confronted Suella Braverman to say: your hateful language has consequences
pic.twitter.com/o8EjIkrLRA

— Freedom from Torture  (@FreefromTorture) [January 14, 2023](#)

I am an educator, not a political activist. I speak about my family's experiences during the Holocaust to remind the world how easily propaganda and words of division can create such hatred that ordinary people can then turn on their neighbours.

So when I hear the kind of rhetoric being used by our politicians against desperate refugees trying to make their way to safety here because they see the UK as a welcoming place for them to settle and bring up their children, I am concerned by how quickly we have forgotten the lessons of the past.

During the event on Friday in Braverman's constituency, she spoke eloquently about the role of the Home Office in keeping this country safe. Her audience listened attentively as she told them that so many problems facing our country, from housing shortages to NHS waiting times, were caused by illegal migrants. It was up to her government, she claimed, to resolve this by deporting the problem.

Whether Braverman believes this to be the only solution, I cannot say, but it was obvious from questions asked by those listening that this was the message they had absorbed. Comments criticising the Royal National Lifeboat Institution for saving these desperate boat people, instead of leaving them to drown, were shared openly and to applause from others in the audience. Is it really less than a year since hundreds of thousands of Britons opened their homes to those fleeing the violence in Ukraine? Such is the power of words; such is the fragility of civilisation.

This is why I challenged Braverman about her use of language. I am not naive enough to think there are simple answers to the social and financial problems we are experiencing, and I can understand why the ordinary people of this country – often having to face a choice between food and heat – hope for a simple solution.

But I feel strongly that there are alternative reasons for the difficulties being endured beyond the 100,000 or so refugees waiting to be processed before they can rebuild their lives. I also believe that it is important to remind the government of the wise words [commonly attributed](#) to Abraham Lincoln: "You can fool some people all the time and you can fool all people some of the time, but you cannot fool all people all the time."

So, Ms Braverman, stop your dangerous rhetoric and find other solutions, or history will not forgive you – and the ordinary people who have swallowed your words will eventually regret it.

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

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OpinionPolice

The police don't need powers to further curtail our right to protest. Just teach them the law

[Simon Jenkins](#)



These measures are born of culture wars, rather than the need to balance the freedom to disrupt with maintenance of order



‘The police have considerable power already to prevent disruption and public nuisance, and there is increasing evidence of it being used.’
Photograph: Tolga Akmen/AFP/Getty Images

Tue 17 Jan 2023 03.00 EST Last modified on Tue 17 Jan 2023 08.54 EST

John Stuart Mill on liberty is a famous cop-out. Everybody has rights, he said, [except the right to harm](#) the interests of others. That exception had to be policed by authority. Welcome to philosophy’s most celebrated can of worms.

The government’s attempt this week to [strengthen police powers](#) in England and Wales over disruptive protest is a classic of Mill’s cop-out. It is the result of recent actions taken by Extinction Rebellion and Just Stop Oil, not against fossil-fuel companies or their supplies, but against people in general, blocking access to city streets and motorways. The intention has been not to curb carbon emissions – the congestion probably increased them – but to generate publicity and thus headlines in the media.

The police were originally criticised for in effect colluding with the protesters, for standing by when [Oxford Street](#) and the M25 were jammed. They faced motorists starting to take direct action against protesters, with public demands that they should protect ambulances, fire engines, police

cars and those with personal crises who have a right of access to the highway. Freedom of movement in one's country is as fundamental a right as could be imagined.

It seems likely this is a crisis that has passed. The police in England and Wales have considerable power already to prevent disruption and public nuisance, and there is [increasing evidence](#) of it being used. Indeed, in the case of the Sarah Everard protests two years ago, a harmless demonstration in south London was suppressed with much ruthlessness, police action being [condemned](#) by a court as “not in accordance with the law”.

The issue of stop and search in a public street continues to be controversial, with argument over the degree of suspicion needed to justify it. What used to be confined to weapons and drugs is now to be extended to glue, chains and tunnelling equipment. The previous home secretary, Priti Patel, even regarded making a [loud noise](#) as justification for protest suppression.

The [Metropolitan police](#) chief, Mark Rowley, argues not so much that he needs wider powers as that he needs existing powers to be adjusted to meet conspiracy to gridlock. He can at present impede “serious disruption” only once it has occurred, which is like waiting for a crime to take place before trying to stop it. He feels he needs wider discretion to ban a protest on “reasonable suspicion of conspiracy” to cause nuisance. Any new powers with such a vague remit deserve the most stringent scrutiny.



Police and demonstrators at an Extinction Rebellion protest in central London, April 2022. Photograph: Rebecca Speare-Cole/PA

Decades of casual lawmaking in this field boil down to legislators leaving it to frontline commanders to judge the “balance of rights”. But such a balance must be understood by those wielding the right to harm and their victims who expect the police to protect them. The police are required by law to make often snap judgments, without the scope to sit down on the M25 and debate philosophy with drivers and protesters.

The devil is in the linguistic detail. What precise meaning do we attach to words such as serious, reasonable, nuisance and minor disruption? What may have seemed plausible to a police officer on the spur of the moment can seem woefully misguided in the calm of a subsequent court of law.

Police have taken a public relations beating in recent years for want of judgment. They, and particularly the Met, have suffered accusations of wrongful detention, discriminatory behaviour and unnecessary violence. Criticism from London’s mayor, Sadiq Khan, forced the resignation of Rowley’s predecessor, Cressida Dick, for her failure to eliminate “[bad ’uns](#)” from the force. Yesterday, another scandal: guilty pleas from Met officer David Carrick, a serial rapist who committed more than 71 serious sexual offences.

Advance details of the government's present bill suggests some police officers may now pose a serious risk to the right to protest. Rather than wider powers, it might be more suitable to offer better training and great specificity in the law's interpretation. The government's amendment should be scrutinised for its practicality as much as its potency.

That said, it must be wrong for Britons to feel they must do harm to their fellow citizens to win an argument, however seismic its implications; indeed, particularly if they are seismic. They should not need to do so, nor should the law facilitate them in doing so. But this battle is not going away. Britain is awash with Mill cop-outs. The government wants to prevent nurses, doctors and teachers from harming a public to whom they owe a duty of public service. But the right to withdraw labour is a fundamental liberty against which this duty must be balanced.

The same applies to freedoms online, particularly on social media. But what value is a freedom that harms teenagers, disseminates falsehood, breeds conflict and wrecks lives, apparently beyond the power of governments to arbitrate? The answer has to be not much, yet it is still a freedom. Never have the arguments of political philosophy seemed so practical and so urgent.

The lesson of these debates is that neither the right to free protest nor the right to be protected from it is absolute. But these freedoms must be fought out not on the M25 but on the floor of a democratic legislature. It is uncomfortable that a protest control bill is now being introduced and debated not in an elected House of Commons, but in a chamber of lords and ladies. What testament to democracy is that?

- Simon Jenkins is a Guardian columnist

[Opinion](#) [Sam Bankman-Fried](#)

What's the true value of crypto? It lays bare the lies of libertarians

[Zoe Williams](#)



The downfall of the FTX cryptocurrency exchange proves how much markets need rules



Markets have never been free; they are social spaces ... Former FTX CEO Sam Bankman-Fried leaving a Manhattan court hearing for fraud charges, on 3 January. Photograph: David Dee Delgado/Reuters

Tue 17 Jan 2023 02.00 ESTLast modified on Tue 17 Jan 2023 12.24 EST

I've laboured hard not to engage with [cryptocurrency](#), to turn the page on its scandals and file its many bin fires under "fools and their money being easily parted". But this has been a mistake, because the story is just getting good.

The PayPal cofounder Peter Thiel said in 2020 that crypto was one of two poles of technological conflict, the other being artificial intelligence. AI could "theoretically make it possible to centrally control an entire economy" while crypto "holds out the prospect of a decentralised and individualised world". He concluded that AI is communist and crypto is libertarian; it was unnecessary to add which of those he thought was better.

Parking for the time being how communist AI is, let's take that last bit as read. Naturally, if you unshackle a currency from the state and don't regulate it, that's a pretty libertarian proposition. You might even call it the ultimate free market. So how's that panning out for you, lads? Or should I say bros?

Three years after Thiel's prophecy, [Sam Bankman-Fried has resigned](#) from the cryptocurrency exchange he founded and FTX has filed for bankruptcy. As Bankman-Fried continues to proclaim his innocence, investigators point in court to [a \\$65bn \(£53bn\) backdoor between his two companies](#); they've also identified tens of millions of dollars of spending on hotels, travel, food and luxury items in under a year.

No question, there will be technical details in here that are hard to understand, but there is a principle that is very easily grasped, that is as universal and intuitive as time itself. Markets have never been free: they are social spaces and, as such, have always been governed by rules, which – since the first time a snake-eyed trader tried to cut flour with chalk – work because they are formally determined. Take away those rules and soon a greedy, clever person might take advantage. He won't be able to help himself. He needs the rules as much as anyone else, if not more.

I think Thiel is right: crypto is the ultimate technology of libertarianism, the final frontier of discovery. He just missed the second footfall, which is that, through crypto, we will discover that libertarianism is bullshit.

- Zoe Williams is a Guardian columnist

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/jan/17/whats-the-true-value-of-crypto-it-lays-bare-the-lies-of-libertarians-ftx>

[Opinion](#)[Industrial action](#)

We've forgotten that strikes are about winning disputes, not courting public opinion

[Polly Smythe](#)

It's workers' ability to maximise disruption that determines industrial power, rather than keeping people happy



'My members are the public.' Mick Lynch, general secretary of the RMT, on the picket line outside Euston train station. Photograph: Stefan Rousseau/PA

Tue 17 Jan 2023 04.00 ESTLast modified on Tue 17 Jan 2023 07.13 EST

On Boxing Day, I was informed by a relative that the sympathy he'd once had for the RMT union had evaporated after its decision to hold rail strikes over Christmas. My relative understood his change of heart to be of grave

significance for the trade union. Prolonged disruption had turned people like him away, he warned, and that would cost the union dearly.

His position – that the outcome of an industrial dispute is in large part determined by the presence or absence of public support – is repeated [throughout coverage](#) of the current wave of strikes. Sky News [recently asked](#) the Aslef general secretary, Mick Whelan, if the fact that nurses are paid less than train drivers made it difficult “to get the public on board when you’re talking about pay”. The [Financial Times](#) reported that senior Conservatives believe teachers, who are currently being balloted, aren’t likely to gain widespread public support after the disruption to children’s learning during the pandemic.

In each case, the role played by public support is assumed: the alignment of public sentiment with the strikers moves them [toward a victory](#), while [backlash](#) against the unions risks their defeat. However, the relative levels of sympathy drawn by different workers doesn’t suddenly translate into leverage.

Instead, it’s workers’ ability to maximise disruption that determines their industrial power. Rather than trade unions needing to keep the public on side, the necessary and intended consequence of disruptive strike action is often the frustration of the public. This is particularly true in public sector disputes, which can’t use lost profits as leverage. Indeed, if industrial action doesn’t hurt the public, then it’s arguably only hurting striking workers through lost wages.

In disputes where strike action doesn’t cause sufficient damage to an employer, Unite hasn’t looked to change public opinion. Instead, the trade union picks a company apart, with analysts and accountants examining its directors, shareholders, suppliers, clients and possible future clients in order to hurt the parent company’s bottom line or cause it reputational damage by associating global headquarters with the toxic decisions made by UK-based executives.



Protest over Go North West's decision to dismiss a driver after 34 years service. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

When battling the [fire and rehire of 500 bus drivers](#) in Manchester by Go-Ahead, it was ultimately the discovery of the transport company's simultaneous bid for a £3.8bn rail contract in Norway that won the union its campaign. Following the money, Unite informed Norwegian politicians of the bus company's conduct in England, which soon prompted a signed statement from the CEO of the parent company that fire and rehire would not be used.

That's not to say organised labour isn't affected by public opinion. Many workers I've met on picket lines are understandably anxious about how they're perceived by the public, emphasising their mixed feelings over withdrawing their labour. These fears are then compounded by irresponsible statements from ministers, such as the health secretary, Steve Barclay, accusing striking ambulance unions of making a "conscious choice to inflict harm on patients". This can affect worker morale, in turn dampening turnout and general commitment.

Nurses' chants of "[claps don't pay the bills](#)" are testament to the fact that public support gets workers nowhere unless it's mobilised. The task for unions has been to broaden the scope of their disputes beyond their own

sectoral struggles, connecting members' grievances to those of the public, thereby redirecting dissatisfaction away from workers and towards employers and the government.

For instance, opposition from transport unions to driver-only operations that eliminate the need for a train guard have been made not only on the grounds of job losses, but on passenger safety and accessibility. In a recent video, released by the [National Federation of the Blind of the UK](#) and shared by the RMT, a blind man named Kevin calls the insertion of driver-only operation as a precondition in the rail dispute negotiations by the transport secretary, Mark Harper, as deciding “who can and cannot travel”. In building these alliances, trade unions can wield their collective power for more than just their members.

What is often overlooked in the discourse is who union members are. In the face of questioning over “draining” public support, Mick Lynch, the RMT general secretary, is right to point out that his members “[are the public](#)”, pushing back on the framing that sees striking workers as inherently apart from, or opposed to, ordinary people. A recent [Telegraph](#) article that sought to present RMT members as greedy by claiming that “rail workers are far better paid than the average Briton” acted instead as an inadvertent advert for unionisation.

- Polly Smythe is labour movement correspondent at Novara Media

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2023.01.17 - Around the world

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- [France Far-right activists go on trial accused of plot to assassinate Macron](#)
- [China Population falls for first time in more than 60 years](#)
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[Nepal](#)

Nepal plane crash co-pilot was married to pilot who died in Yeti Airlines accident in 2006

Anju Khatiwada joined Yeti Airlines in 2010, four years after her husband died while piloting a plane for the same airline



Rescuers inspect the site of the Yeti Airlines plane crash in Nepal. Photograph: Skanda Gautam/SOPA Images/REX/Shutterstock

Reuters

Mon 16 Jan 2023 19.55 ESTLast modified on Mon 16 Jan 2023 19.56 EST

The co-pilot of the Yeti Airlines flight that crashed on Sunday in [Nepal](#) was the widow of a pilot who flew for the same airline, and also died in a plane crash 16 years ago.

In 2010, Anju Khatiwada joined Yeti Airlines, following in the footsteps of her husband. Dipak Pokhrel also flew for the Nepali airline, but died when a small passenger plane he was flying went down minutes before landing.

Khatiwada was the co-pilot of the flight from Kathmandu that crashed as it approached the city of Pokhara on Sunday, killing at least 68 people in the Himalayan nation's deadliest plane accident in three decades.

No survivors have been found so far among the 72 people on board.

“Her husband, Dipak Pokhrel, died in 2006 in a crash of a Twin Otter plane of Yeti Airlines in Jumla,” airline spokesperson Sudarshan Bartaula told Reuters, referring to Khatiwada. “She got her pilot training with the money she got from the insurance after her husband's death.”

A pilot with more than 6,400 hours of flying time, Khatiwada had previously flown the popular tourist route from the capital, Kathmandu, to the country's second-largest city, Pokhara, Bartaula said.

The body of Kamal KC, the captain of the flight, who had more than 21,900 hours of flight time, has been recovered and identified.

Kathiwada has not been identified but she is feared dead, Bartaula said.

“On Sunday, she was flying the plane with an instructor pilot, which is the standard procedure of the airline,” said a Yeti Airlines official, who knew Khatiwada personally.

“She was always ready to take up any duty and had flown to Pokhara earlier,” said the official, who asked not to be named because he isn't authorised to speak to media.

Reuters was unable to immediately reach any of her family members.

The ATR-72 aircraft that Khatiwada was co-piloting [rolled from side to side before crashing in a gorge near Pokhara airport](#) and catching fire, according to eyewitness accounts and a [video of the crash posted on social media](#).

The cockpit voice recorder and flight data recorder from the aircraft, which may help investigators determine what caused it to crash in clear weather, [were recovered on Monday](#).

Nearly 350 people have died in plane or helicopter crashes in Nepal since 2000. The country is home to eight of the world's 14 highest mountains, including Everest, and sudden weather changes can make for hazardous conditions.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/17/nepal-plane-crash-co-pilot-was-married-to-pilot-who-died-in-yeti-airlines-accident-in-2006>

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[France](#)

Far-right activists go on trial accused of plot to assassinate Macron

Alleged plotters planned to attack president during visit to north-east France in 2018, say prosecutors



Emmanuel Macron. Defence lawyers say the group's threats were just talk and there was no concrete or imminent threat to the president. Photograph: Blondet Eliot-Pool/SIPA/Rex/Shutterstock

[Kim Willsher](#) in Paris

Tue 17 Jan 2023 04.09 EST Last modified on Thu 19 Jan 2023 09.03 EST

Members of a far-right group went on trial in Paris on Tuesday, accused of plotting to assassinate [Emmanuel Macron](#) as part of an attempted coup.

Prosecutors say members of a group called *Les Barjols* planned to attack the president with a knife during an official visit to north-east [France](#) in November 2018.

Detectives, who bugged telephone conversations during the four-year investigation, claim there were also plans to kill migrants and attack mosques as well as evidence of antisemitism, but none of the alleged plots was carried out.

Defence lawyers say the group's threats were just talk and there was no concrete or imminent threat to Macron.

The absence of any criminal actions led prosecutors to downgrade the charges against those on trial – 12 men and a woman aged between 26 and 66 – to conspiring to commit a terrorist act. The defendants, who face a maximum 10-year jail term if found guilty, have denied any wrongdoing.

Lucile Collot, a defence lawyer, said the prosecution's case was based "on the fiction that a violent act was going to happen".

Les Barjols, a nationalist and anti-immigration group using the nickname locals in Mali gave soldiers taking part in France's 2013-14 *Serval* military operation, was formed on Facebook around the beginning of 2017.

Arrests followed a tipoff to France's interior security services suggesting a far-right activist based in the Alps region was planning to attack Macron in November 2018 during a first world war Armistice Day commemoration at Verdun in north-east France. Its presumed leader, Denis Collinet, an unemployed man in his 60s and a former activist for the far-right Front National, now the Rassemblement National (RN – National Rally), was arrested in 2020.

Prosecutors claimed the group, which had 5,000 members at one point, also conspired to kidnap members of parliament and overthrow the government. Some meetings included paramilitary-style shooting practice and training in first aid.

The woman in the dock, who has not been named, is a 53-year-old former military secretary from the Dordogne, who held one *Les Barjols* meeting at her home.

During raids on members' property, officers say they found firearms, including an M16 assault rifle and instructions on how to make explosives. Police allegedly found a knife in the home of *Les Barjols* member Jean-Pierre Bouyer, 66, when they arrested him days before Macron's visit. However, during questioning Bouyer insisted it was all just angry talk.

"He admits there were discussions but they never went any further," Bouyer's lawyer, Olivia Ronen, told Agence France-Presse. She accused the prosecution of failing to place his hostile remarks towards Macron "in the context of the time", when there was widespread anger in France over rising fuel prices that led to the emergence of the *gilets jaunes* (yellow vests) movement.

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"What was presented to us as a planned attack on the president of the Republic is in fact the beginnings of the yellow vests", Ronen added.

One group member held "dissenting views on government" and made comments that were "sometimes extreme", the defence lawyer, Gabriel Dumenil, said. "But does that mean that they meant to take action, and make an attempt on the life of the head of state? The answer is no."

Prosecutors will argue the group's plans were "entirely aimed at seriously disrupting public order through intimidation and terror" and that it existed well before the yellow vests.

The trial will run until 3 February.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/17/far-right-activists-go-on-trial-accused-of-plot-to-assassinate-macron>

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China

China's first population fall since 1961 creates 'bleaker' outlook for country

Shift occurring nearly a decade ahead of forecasts heightens concerns over demographic time bomb



A woman holds a baby at a local park in Beijing, China. China's population has shrunk for the first time since 1961. Photograph: Kevin Frayer/Getty Images

[Helen Davidson](#) in Taipei and agencies

Mon 16 Jan 2023 21.15 EST Last modified on Tue 17 Jan 2023 16.52 EST

China has entered an “era of negative population growth”, after figures revealed a historic drop in the number of people for the first time since 1961.

The country had 1.41175 billion people at the end of 2022, compared with 1.41260 billion a year earlier, the National Bureau of Statistics said on

Tuesday, a drop of 850,000. It marked the beginning of what is expected to be a [long period of population decline](#), despite major government efforts to reverse the trend.

Speaking on the eve of the data's release, Cai Fang, vice-chairman of the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee of the National People's Congress, said China's population had reached its peak in 2022, much earlier than expected. "Experts in the fields of population and economics have predicted that by 2022 or no later than 2023, my country will enter an era of negative population growth," Cai said.

China's government has for several years been scrambling to encourage people to have more children, and stave off the looming demographic crisis caused by an ageing population. [New policies have sought to ease the financial and social burdens](#) of child rearing, or to actively incentivise having children via subsidies and tax breaks. Some provinces or cities have announced cash payments to parents who have a second or third child. Last week the city of Shenzhen [announced financial incentives](#) that translate into a total of 37,500 yuan (\$5,550) for a three-child family.

However after decades of a one-child policy that punitively discouraged having multiple children, and rising costs of modern living, resistance remains among couples.

At a press conference on Tuesday, Kang Yi, head of the National Bureau of Statistics, said China's overall labor supply still exceeded demand, and people should not worry about the population decline.

China is on track to be [overtaken by India](#) as the world's most populous nation.

[Chart comparing India and China's populations](#)

Last year's birthrate was 6.77 births per 1,000 people, down from a rate of 7.52 births in 2021, marking the lowest birthrate on record. In real numbers,

there were more than one million fewer registered births in 2022 than the previous year's total of 10.62 million.

The country also logged its highest death rate since 1976, registering 7.37 deaths per 1,000 people compared with a rate of 7.18 deaths in 2021.

Cai said China's social policies needed to be adjusted, including aged care and pensions, a national financial burden which would worsen in the future and impact China's economic growth.

[Graphic](#)

Online, some Chinese people were unsurprised by the announcement, saying the social pressures which were driving the low birthrate still remained.

“Housing prices, welfare, education, healthcare – reasons why people can't afford to have children,” said one commenter on Weibo.

“Now who dares to have children, housing prices are so expensive, no one wants to get married and even fall in love, let alone have children,” said another.

“Not talking about raising social security, only talking about raising the fertility rate, it's all just crap.”

On Tuesday China's government [also announced the GDP had grown 3% in 2022](#). That figure would mark one of the slowest periods of growth in decades, but was still higher than predicted, prompting some scepticism among analysts given the incredibly stringent zero-Covid restrictions in place during the fourth quarter.

China's stringent zero-Covid policies that were in place for three years before an abrupt reversal which has overwhelmed medical facilities, have caused further damage to the country's bleak demographic outlook, population experts have said.

Yi Fuxian, an obstetrics and gynaecology researcher at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and expert on China's population changes, said the decline in population was occurring almost a decade earlier than the country's government and the United Nations had projected.

[Graphic](#)

“Meaning that China’s real demographic crisis is beyond imagination and that all of China’s past economic, social, defence, and foreign policies were based on faulty demographic data,” Yi said on Twitter.

“China’s demographic and economic outlook is much bleaker than expected. China will have to undergo a strategic contraction and adjust its social, economic, defence, and foreign policies. China will improve relations with the West.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/17/chinas-population-falls-for-first-time-in-more-than-60-years>

China

China's economy slows sharply with GDP growth among worst on record

The economy grew 3% in 2022, exceeding some forecasts, but still well below China's official target for the year



China's zero-Covid strategy and sudden reopening to the world are being blamed for the slowdown in GDP growth Photograph: AFP/Getty Images

[Peter Hannam](#)

Mon 16 Jan 2023 22.00 EST Last modified on Thu 19 Jan 2023 08.58 EST

China's GDP expanded at its slowest pace since the mid-1970s bar the Covid-hit 2020 year, as the world's second-largest economy struggled under tight pandemic restrictions that were abruptly ditched late in 2022.

The economy grew 3% last year, well shy of the 5.5% pace the government had targeted at the start of the year and the 8.1% recorded for 2021. The

actual rate though, was better than the 2.7% predicted by the World Bank earlier this month.

Analysts will focus on the December quarter growth tally of 2.9%, which exceeded market forecasts of 1.8%, according to Reuters. The economy was roughly static compared with the previous three month, dodging the 0.8% retreat pundits had tipped.

The figures meant China's GDP rose at the slowest pace in about half a century if the 2.2% expansion in the first Covid year of 2020 is excluded.

For most of the last three years, the Chinese government persisted with rolling lockdowns and mass testing under its Zero-Covid strategy to stop the virus spreading. It abandoned the policy early last month with little warning and without preparations for vaccination campaigns or other medical measures.

Still, the policy shift has been widely interpreted as likely to help spur economic growth in China in 2023 and beyond. The World Bank forecasts GDP growth will quicken to 4.3% this year and 5% the next, expectations that are now being exceeded by many private economists.

China's GDP had been slowing for a decade before reaching 2.24% in 2020, its slowest pace since the mid-1970s. Before that, growth sharply amid political campaigns such as the 'Great Leap Forward' and the Cultural Revolution. (Source: Macrotrends) pic.twitter.com/CiSIg!gofD

— @phannam@mastodon.green (@p_hannam) [January 17, 2023](#)

Uncertainties include how the soaring death toll – officially [60,000 in the past month or so alone](#) – will affect wider confidence among consumers. Disruptions to supply chains as workers call in sick may dent the recovery and affect economies reliant on Chinese imports.

The health of the giant property market will be another threat to an economic revival with real estate prices continuing to fall in the final months of 2022. New government support packages to encourage buyers are likely in coming months.

China's growth has a big influence on its neighbours – and nations such as Australia – with its voracious demand for iron ore, gas and other commodities. In the wake of the GDP release, shares in BHP, Rio Tinto and Fortescue – Australia's three largest iron ore miners – were down 1.1%-1.7% compared with a 0.1% decline for the overall market.

David Bassanese, chief economist for Betashares, said that while official statistics always needed “to be taken with a grain of salt”, the GDP figures were “much better than feared in the final months of 2022”.

Retail spending and industrial production were also stronger than market expectations in the month of December alone, he said.

“This suggests the economy may have already begun to benefit from the partial reduction in Covid restrictions last month and is well placed to rebound even more strongly in the first few months of this year,” Bassanese said.

Shares of commodity producers should benefit from any acceleration of growth, he said, adding: “it also suggests this could be a banner year for the Chinese stock market”.

Some critics, though, raised doubts about the veracity of annual data that are released early in the new year – despite the size and complexity of the economy – and typically don't get revised until years later, if at all.

Bloomberg cited Kang Yi, director of the national bureau of Statistics, as saying consumption contributed one-third, or one percentage point of China's annual growth rate. Higher consumption appeared at odds, though, with the scale of the country's lockdowns during 2022.

Here was the Covid situation for the final quarter of 2021, which had lockdowns in Xian and restrictions in the north and east. While the

measures back then were tighter, the outbreaks paled in comparison to final quarter of 2022. Yet the econ, officially, grew 2.9% yoy in Q4...
pic.twitter.com/1QucK0FADE

— Bill Birtles (@billbirtles) [January 17, 2023](#)

In December alone, retail sales were down 1.8%, a much better result than the 9% slump economists surveyed by Bloomberg had predicted.

After the dismantling of the zero-Covid policy, the virus spread rapidly through the economy, with millions of people catching it, leaving many sick off work.

The retail figure for December “jars with the turmoil and fear reported across major cities as Covid-zero was abandoned, but the survey detail makes sense of the situation,” said Elliot Clarke, Westpac’s senior economist.

Services such as catering came under substantial pressure as fears over the virus spread, with annual growth in the sector sinking from a minus 8.4% annual rate in November to minus 14.1% in December, he said.

This decline in activity was offset by precautionary purchases of medicine – which quickened 39.8% year on year in December, from an 8.3% rate in November – and food spending jumped to an annual pace of 10.5% in December, almost tripling the 3.9% rate in November.

Capital investment contributed 1.5 percentage points of growth last year as authorities continued to pour funds into new rail lines, bridges and other infrastructure. Resource exporters will be banking on further expansion in 2023 particularly as net export growth will be harder to achieve as rich economies in Europe and North America slow with some headed for recession.

“Overall, the December data round supports our long-held view that China’s economy is well positioned to not only rebound from Covid-zero,

but also to grow strongly into the medium-term, averaging growth of 5% or more through 2022-2024,” Clarke said.

With Reuters

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Headlines monday 16 january 2023

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- [Matteo Messina Denaro Italy's most-wanted mafia boss arrested](#)
- [Nepal plane crash Data recorders found as day of mourning begins](#)
- [Nepal Last moments inside cabin before crash caught on passenger's Facebook live video](#)

Police

Nearly 1,000 police officers operating in UK schools, figures show

Analysis shows police more likely to be in schools with higher numbers of pupils of colour and those eligible for free meals



The Runnymede Trust report also found there were plans to increase the number of school-based officers by 7%. Photograph: Mike Goldwater/Alamy

[*Tobi Thomas*](#) and [*Aamna Mohdin*](#)

Mon 16 Jan 2023 02.40 EST Last modified on Mon 16 Jan 2023 04.02 EST

Nearly 1,000 police officers are operating within UK schools, figures show, with these officers being more likely to be based in areas with higher numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals.

Analysis by the Runnymede Trust shows that of the 979 police officers operating in UK schools, half are based in London.

The report, *Over-policed and under-protected: police in schools*, also found there were plans to increase the number of school-based officers by 7%.

The research suggests that not only are police officers more likely to be based in schools in areas with higher numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals, but that this correlates with higher numbers of black and minority ethnic students.

The role of school police officers, often known as SSOs, ranges from being a point of contact for teachers to more intensive interventions such as stop and search and surveillance of children suspected of being gang members.

While police forces say SSOs help keep children safe, campaigners and experts warn that the increasing prevalence of police officers in British schools poses a “serious safeguarding risk” to students of colour.

Officers within schools have faced increasing scrutiny in recent years, especially after a black teenage girl, referred to as Child Q, was [strip-searched by Metropolitan police officers in a Hackney school](#) in 2020 after she was wrongly accused of possessing cannabis. Four Met officers are being investigated for gross misconduct over the incident.

In 2021, [the Guardian revealed](#) that more than 650 police officers were working in British schools, with many assigned to sites in areas of high deprivation. The figure from the Runnymede Trust includes police staff based at schools who may not have the job title SSO, which may explain some of the rise in this figure.

Dr Shabana Begum, the head of research at the Runnymede Trust, said the normalised presence of police officers within schools was “deeply concerning”, and that there was “no question over the highly racialised and damaging impact excessive force can have inside a school setting”.

Begum added: “As the mother of teenage children and someone who taught in a neighbouring school to Child Q’s, I find that school’s negligence unforgivable. But, sadly, this is the predictable outcome when schools and policing are allowed to integrate in such intimate and unaccountable ways.

We know that Child Q is not alone and that similar accounts happen daily across the UK disproportionately to young, black children.”

Rachel Harger, a solicitor at Bindmans, who works in the law firm’s actions against police and state department, said: “This latest data presents us with an opportunity to urgently consider what we really want the role of schools to be in our communities in juxtaposition to how many of our working-class, racialised children now experience state-run schools, spaces where they are increasingly subjected to surveillance.”

She added that whether through [counter-terrorism strategy] Prevent or police officers, “racialised children are under constant watch in an educational setting which should be a safe and nurturing learning environment where all children have the freedom to learn from mistakes, not just a privileged few in grammar and private schools”.

“The increasing prevalence of police officers in our schools should be considered a serious safeguarding risk, particularly for racialised children who often feel unable to discuss or disclose information to teaching staff out of fear of criminalisation precisely because many have already experienced being over-policed in their wider communities.”

Dr Remi Joseph-Salisbury, a senior lecturer at the University of Manchester, whose research focuses on racism in education and policing, said: “These figures show that the presence of police in schools is far greater than many thought. This is deeply concerning given the mounting evidence showing that police in schools have a negative impact on school environments, feeding the stigmatisation of schools, creating a culture of low expectations and risking the escalation of minor disciplinary issues into criminal justice issues, particularly for those from minoritised backgrounds.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/jan/16/police-officers-operating-uk-schools>

[Mafia](#)

Italy's most-wanted mafia boss Matteo Messina Denaro arrested

Cosa Nostra 'godfather' arrested at a private clinic in Palermo after going on run for 30 years

Italian mafia boss Matteo Messina Denaro arrested in Palermo – video

[Lorenzo Tondo](#) in Palermo

[@lorenzo_tondo](#)

Mon 16 Jan 2023 04.51 ESTFirst published on Mon 16 Jan 2023 03.52 EST

Matteo Messina Denaro, the last “godfather” of the Sicilian mafia and one of the world’s most-wanted criminals, has been arrested in Palermo after 30 years on the run.

Denaro, 60, who has been in hiding since 1993, was apprehended in a private clinic in the Sicilian city, where, according to sources, he had been periodically receiving treatment for about a year under the false name of “Andrea Bonafede”.

He was taken away at about 9.35am to the applause of other patients in the clinic and moved to the San Lorenzo barracks in the Sicilian capital. According to police sources, Denaro tried to escape from the clinic when he saw police arriving but once surrounded he did not put up resistance.

The mobster was once considered a candidate to be the Sicilian mafia’s boss of bosses, after the deaths of Bernardo Provenzano in 2016 and Salvatore Riina in 2017.

People on the streets cheer as Italy's most-wanted mafia boss is arrested – video report

Nicknamed *Diabolik* or *U Siccu* (the skinny one), Denaro was born in Castelvetro, Sicily, in 1962. His father was a powerful Cosa Nostra boss, and Denaro thrived in the family business, building an illicit multibillion euro empire in the waste, wind energy and retail sectors.

According to mafia informers and prosecutors, he holds the key to some of the most heinous crimes perpetrated by the Sicilian mafia, including the bomb attacks that killed the legendary anti-mafia magistrates Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino. In 2002, he was convicted and sentenced in absentia to life in jail for having personally killed or ordered the murder of dozens of people.



A composite picture showing a computer-generated image of Matteo Messina Denaro released by the Italian police (right), with a real picture of Denaro. Photograph: AP

Italy's prime minister, Giorgia Meloni, said: "This is a great victory for the Italian state, which shows we should never surrender to the mafia. My warmest thanks and those of the entire government go to the police forces ... and the Palermo prosecutor's office, for the capture of the most significant figure in the mafia."

The mobster, who once infamously claimed, “I filled a cemetery, all by myself”, has apparently kept up his luxurious lifestyle, thanks to several bankrollers who, according to prosecutors, include politicians and businessmen. He was known for wearing expensive suits, a Rolex and Ray-Ban sunglasses.

Maurizio De Lucia, the Palermo chief prosecutor, said: “The arrest of Matteo Messina Denaro is the result of long and difficult investigations. The dedication of the Carabinieri and, in general, of all the police forces have been fundamental. They have never ceased to look for him.”

The quest to locate Denaro was complicated by the near-complete absence of recent photographs. With only a few identity pictures taken in the late 1980s and early 90s, the Italian authorities reconstructed his appearance digitally, using the latest computer technology and information provided by [Mafia](#) turncoats. Some informants revealed that Denaro underwent facial plastic surgery to conceal his identity, while others stated he had had his fingerprints removed.



Matteo Messina Denaro. Photograph: Studio Camera di Lannino/Rex

Over the years, dozens of people have been arrested in his place in cases of mistaken identity. In 2019, the Carabinieri military police raided a Sicilian

hospital to arrest a man from Castelvetro who was recovering in the neurology unit.

In September 2021, a 54-year-old Briton from Liverpool [was handcuffed at a restaurant in The Hague](#) in the Netherlands by heavily armed police who pulled a hood over his head and dragged him out in front of dozens of terrified customers. The arrest came after Italy allegedly asked the Dutch authorities for the execution of an international arrest warrant, believing that the man was Denaro. He was released a few days later.

Despite his powerful protection network, Denaro had become increasingly isolated in recent years, according to mafia informants. Year after year, Italian police investigators relentlessly seized his businesses and arrested more than 100 of his confederates, including cousins, nephews and his sister. Little by little, Italian prosecutors scorched the earth around Denaro, cutting off all his contact with his family and his supporters who protected him in hiding.

In August 2021, the Italian public TV broadcaster Rai [released a recording](#), dating back to March 1993, in which the voice of Denaro was identified for the first time during a trial in which he was called to testify before going into hiding. On 30 September that year, Italian police [released a video from 2009](#) in which his face can be glimpsed from afar. In the clip, recorded from a closed circuit security camera on a gravel road in the province of Agrigento, in Sicily, two men can be seen in an SUV. According to investigators, the balding passenger with glasses was Denaro.

But every time investigators seemed to get closer to their target, Denaro would once again fade away. Like a ghost, he would disappear and reappear around the world. Former mobsters claimed to have seen him in Spain, England, Germany and South America. Others said he had never left his stronghold in Castelvetro, in the province of Trapani.

Now Denaro is no longer a free man, investigators will attempt to piece together his long period in hiding, including where he was sheltered and the network of people who protected him.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/16/italy-most-wanted-mafia-boss-matteo-messina-denaro-arrested>

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[Nepal](#)

Nepal plane crash: data recorders found as day of mourning begins

So-called ‘black boxes’ are in good condition, says official investigating deaths of at least 68 people when Yeti Airlines flight plummeted into a gorge



The Yeti aircraft carrying 72 people crashed in Pokhara, western Nepal. Photograph: Reuters

Guardian staff and agencies

Mon 16 Jan 2023 01.48 ESTFirst published on Mon 16 Jan 2023 00.45 EST

The black box and cockpit voice recorder from the Yeti Airlines plane that crashed in [Nepal](#) have been located, as the country observed a day of mourning on Monday for the victims of its deadliest aviation disaster in three decades.

Teknath Sitaula, a Kathmandu Airport official, said the so-called black boxes were “in a good condition now. They look good from outside.”

The development came after [68 people were confirmed to have been killed](#) in the plane crash and police said they did not expect to find any more survivors.

The Yeti Airlines ATR 72 plummeted into a steep gorge, smashed into pieces and burst into flames with 72 people onboard as it approached the central city of Pokhara on Sunday, police said.

Soldiers used ropes and stretchers to retrieve bodies from the 300-metre (1,000-foot) deep ravine late into the night, with recovery efforts continuing on Monday.

Video appears to show plane moments before Nepal crash – video report

“We have so far sent 63 bodies to the hospital,” police officer AK Chhetri said on Monday. “Due to fog, the search has been paused. We will continue the search after one or two hours when the weather clears.”

Authorities said bodies would be handed over to families after identification and examination.

Debris from the twin-engine turboprop airliner was strewn across the crash site, including the mangled remains of its wings and passenger seats.

Rescue workers were rushed there after the crash, and tried to put out the raging fires that were sending thick black smoke into the sky.

There were 15 foreigners onboard, including five Indians, four Russians, two South Koreans and one passenger each from Argentina, Australia, France and Ireland, Yeti spokesperson Sudarshan Bartaula told AFP. The rest were Nepalis.

“Incredibly sad news out of Nepal of a plane crashing with many passengers onboard,” the Australian prime minister, Anthony Albanese,

said on Monday, adding that his government was seeking information about the Australian national onboard.

[The plane's route before crashing](#)

The ATR 72 was on a flight from the capital, Kathmandu, and plunged into the gorge between Pokhara's brand-new international airport and the old domestic one shortly before 11am (0515 GMT) on Sunday.

"I was walking when I heard a loud blast, like a bomb went off," said witness Arun Tamu, 44, who was about 500 metres away and who livestreamed video of the blazing wreckage on social media.

"A few of us rushed to see if we can rescue anybody. I saw at least two women were breathing. The fire was getting very intense and it made it difficult for us to approach closer," the former soldier told AFP.

It was unclear if anyone on the ground was injured.

"Our first thoughts are with all the individuals affected by this," the plane's France-based manufacturer ATR said in a statement on Sunday. "ATR specialists are fully engaged to support both the investigation and the customer."

Nepal's air industry has boomed in recent years, carrying goods and people between hard-to-reach areas, as well as ferrying foreign mountain climbers. But it has been plagued by poor safety due to insufficient training and maintenance. The European Union has banned all Nepali carriers from its airspace over safety concerns.

Nepal also has some of the world's most remote and trickiest runways, flanked by snow-capped peaks with approaches that pose a challenge for even accomplished pilots.

The weather is also notoriously capricious and hard to forecast, particularly in the mountains, where thick fog can suddenly obscure whole mountains from view.

Nepal's deadliest aviation accident was in 1992, when all 167 people on a Pakistan International Airlines jet died when it crashed on approach to Kathmandu.

Nearly 350 people have died since 2000 in plane or helicopter crashes in Nepal, home to eight of the world's 14 highest mountains, including Everest.

With Agence France-Presse and Reuters

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/16/nepal-plane-crash-day-of-mourning-announced-as-recovery-effort-restarts>

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Nepal

Nepal plane crash: last moments inside cabin caught on passenger's Facebook live video

Harrowing footage shows passengers had no idea plane was in danger before crash



The Yeti Airlines plane carrying 68 passengers and four crew members crashed in Pokhara, Nepal Photograph: Reuters

[*Hannah Ellis-Petersen*](#) and [*Aakash Hassan*](#) in Delhi

Mon 16 Jan 2023 03.29 ESTFirst published on Mon 16 Jan 2023 03.02 EST

In the moments before [Nepal's deadliest air crash in decades](#) on Sunday, four friends from India who were onboard began excitedly recording the descent on a Facebook live video.

They were heading to Pokhara for the trip of a lifetime, intending to visit temples and paraglide in Nepal's famed Annapurna mountain range. "It's really fun," one of the men can be heard on the video surveying the city

below as the plane began its descent. The friends can be heard laughing and joking as the camera is turned on a smiling Sonu Jaiswal, a 29-year-old father-of-three, who ran a small business back home in India.

All appears calm in the plane, with no emergency announcements or warnings from the pilot or staff. But suddenly, the plane appears to veer off with a loud roar, and the sounds of it crashing to the ground are captured on the phone camera, before the screen is filled with flames. The burning debris of the aircraft is momentarily visible on the screen before it goes black. No voices can be heard after that.

The harrowing video indicates that the 68 passengers and four staff onboard the Yeti Airlines flight had no idea the plane was in danger before an explosion just as it was landing.

Vishal Koswal, 21, a close friend of the four men heard in the video, confirmed the authenticity of the video.

He identified the four men, all from Ghazipur district in the state of Uttar Pradesh, as 29-year-old Jaiswal, 28-year-old Anil Rajbhar, 23-year-old Vishal Sharma and Abhishek Singh Kushwaha, 23, who had left for Nepal on 12 January. Local police also confirmed their identities.

Koswal said he had meant to join his four friends on the trip to Nepal but had to stay home after the death of a relative. During their trip, he had spoken to them many times over video call, including a couple of hours before the crash.

“Sonu was showing us the mountains around on the call and was clearly excited, so were we,” said Koswal. “He told me on that call that after landing in Pokhara, they would visit some temples there and then in the evening take a train back home.”

He described the four friends as like “brothers” and said everyone in the area was “very emotional”. “This all seems like a nightmare, I still cannot believe we have lost all of them,” he added. “I can’t watch that crash video again, it is very hard and painful. A big tragedy has fallen over us.”



A still from a Facebook video posed by a passenger on the crashed Yeti Airlines flight. Photograph: supplied

On Monday, rescuers continued the search to recover the final four bodies from the wreckage. There was no hope for survivors, said the authorities. The prime minister of Nepal [declared a national day of mourning](#) on Monday.

The group of friends from India were among 15 foreign nationals who were onboard the plane. The flight was carrying 57 Nepalis, five Indians, four Russians, two South Koreans, and one person each from Argentina, Britain, Australia and France. It plunged into a gorge moments before it was due to land at Pokhara's new international airport.

It was Nepal's worst aviation disaster since 1992, when 167 people died onboard a Pakistan International Airlines flight that crashed on approach to Kathmandu.

The fire and thick smoke, as well as the treacherous terrain, made the rescue efforts by police and army officers challenging. Soldiers used ropes and stretchers to retrieve bodies from the 300-metre (1,000ft) deep ravine late into the night on Sunday. "We have so far sent 63 bodies to the hospital," said police officer AK Chhetri on Monday.

Arun Tamu, 44, who was about 500 metres away from the site where the plane crashed, told AFP news agency he was among those who ran to the site to try to help. “A few of us rushed to see if we can rescue anybody. I saw at least two women were breathing. The fire was getting very intense and it made it difficult for us to approach closer,” he said.

Video appears to show plane moments before Nepal crash – video report

Nepal’s air industry has boomed in recent years, carrying goods and people between hard-to-reach areas, as well as foreign trekkers and climbers. But it has also been plagued by [poor safety due to insufficient training and maintenance](#). In May 2022, all 22 people onboard a plane operated by Nepali carrier Tara Air [died when it crashed](#), and in March 2018, 51 people died when a [US-Bangla Airlines plane crashed near Kathmandu](#).

The European Union has banned all Nepal airlines from its airspace over safety concerns.

This article was updated on 19 January 2023 to record that one passenger initially listed as Irish, [proved to be British](#).

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2023.01.16 - Spotlight

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Fitness

The five-minute fix: how to improve your fitness, strength and posture at super-quick speed

In the time it takes to make a cup of tea, you can build your core muscles, increase hip flexibility and stave off the effects of sitting at your desk all day



Side planks can easily be slotted into your daily routine at home. Photograph: Antonio_Diaz/Getty Images/iStockphoto/posed by model



[Joel Snape](#)

Mon 16 Jan 2023 01.00 ESTLast modified on Fri 20 Jan 2023 08.39 EST

One of the toughest aspects of building a new year fitness habit is finding the time. Even in our hybrid-working world, it can feel like carving out just 30 minutes a couple of times a week is an impossible ask. But everyone has five minutes: it's about a [third as long](#) as people spend looking for something to watch on Netflix. And although five minutes might not seem like much, if you keep your efforts focused, you will start to see results – as well as building the foundations of a longer-term habit. So pick an area to work on and get the egg timer going.

Posture

Desk jobs tend to build bad posture, and not everything you do in the gym will help – the typical “bench bro” routine can lead to a forward hunch that will set you up for problems down the line. “Posture is really about back strength,” says [Helen O’Leary](#), a physiotherapist and clinical pilates instructor. “The more the muscles in the back of your body work, the more they will hold you up against gravity.” Use these three movements in a circuit, doing each once.

Prone press

“[A great mobility and prep exercise](#) to start with at the end of your day,” says O’Leary. “Lie on your stomach with your hands by your chest and your nose hovering above the floor. “Press your pubic bone into the floor to create a stable base. Press down into your hands and imagine you are pressing the floor away – this will start to send your upper back off the floor. Pause with your lowest ribs on the floor, take a breath and then lower back down. As you improve, try lifting your hands at the top of the movement to see if you can hold yourself up.”



Pilates swimming. Photograph: авtop/Getty Images/iStockphoto/posed by model

Pilates swimming

“Very much a progression of the prone press – this will test your endurance as well as your core control,” says O’Leary. “Start as before, this time reaching your arms and legs away from each other as if you’re being pulled apart in a tug of war. You should end up with both feet and hands off the floor. Pause when you are here, and make sure you are breathing – then [start to ‘paddle’ the arms and legs from the shoulder and hip socket](#). Your body will rotate a little and this is totally fine. Ideally, build the length of time you are up towards 60 seconds.”

Single leg kick

“It’s great for posture, but this movement also includes strength work around your shoulders, and will mobilise your spine,” says O’Leary. “Plus, your legs get involved, making it an all-in exercise. Lie on your front and press yourself up on to your elbows to make a triangle shape with your forearms, with your hands still slightly apart. Press down into your pubic bone and extend and raise one leg away from you so that it starts to hover off the floor from your lower thigh onwards. Now try to keep that leg off the floor as you start to draw a long arc upwards and outwards with your toes, bending the knee as you do. Again, keep the thigh off the floor and extend the leg out behind you before lowering it to the floor. Repeat five times on each leg, if you can.”

Core strength



Sit-ups. Photograph: Westend61/Getty Images/posed by model

This is important for everyday life, but tackling it the old-school way – with hundreds of momentum-heavy sit-ups – isn’t efficient. Instead, remember that the real purpose of your core muscles is to keep you braced, whether you are carrying the shopping or doing a parallel turn on the ski slopes – so you need to focus on slow, controlled movements that will help them do

their job. Do each of the three exercises below for 40 seconds, rest for 10-20 seconds, and repeat.

Crunch

“Although it’s an old exercise, when performed with correct form, the standard crunch is great, as it activates nearly all the muscles of the core,” says the personal trainer [Jacqui Ward](#). “[Lie on your back, keeping your knees bent and feet flat on the floor](#), making sure your lower back is also pressed into the floor. Engage your abdominal muscles to lift your head and shoulders off the floor. I like to increase the time under tension, while at the top part of the crunch, by pausing for a second, and then slowly lowering back to the floor with control, keeping those abs contracted. If you really must put your hands behind your head, don’t pull on your head or neck.”



Bicycle crunches. Photograph: undrey/Getty Images/iStockphoto/posed by model

Bicycle crunch

“Again, technique is everything on this movement,” says Ward. “Get into a regular crunch position, then lift both legs off the ground. [Lift your right shoulder toward your left knee](#) and simultaneously extend your right leg, then repeat on the opposite side without pausing. Make sure to move slowly and emphasise muscle contraction to get the most out of the exercise.” This

emphasises your obliques more than the standard crunch, so it's worth doing both.



Side plank. Photograph: Prostock-Studio/GettyImages/iStockphoto/ posed by model

Side plank raise

“A side plank is a great movement, as it will show up any imbalances between your two sides,” says Ward. “To start, [lie on your side with one forearm on the ground](#), your hand slightly in front of your shoulder. Put your top leg either in front or on top of the ‘grounded’ leg. As you exhale, push into your hand and feet, and lift your hips up until you are in a diagonal line. Drop your hips down, then press into your hand and feet and lift your hips back up so that they are almost in line with your shoulder. Repeat this movement, slow and controlled rather than bouncing, for 20 seconds on each side – if it’s tough on your wrist, press your fingers into the floor and create a little dome in your palm.”

Mobility



Burpees. Photograph: vadiar/Getty Images/iStockphoto/posed by model

Whether you're a runner who doesn't do much else, or an avid gamer who only has time to stretch during the loading screens, a little goes a long way when it comes to mobility exercises. For an all-round hit, try the "slow burpee", which engages almost every muscle you have. Start standing with your feet just outside shoulder width apart, then squat down, placing your hands between your legs. Walk your hands out into a push-up position, directly under your shoulders. Do one push up, then reverse the movement, stand up, breathe and repeat. Do them ladder-style: one rep, one breath, two reps, two breaths ... up to five or 10.



Cobra pose. Photograph: f9photos/Getty Images/iStockphoto/posed by model

Strength

It's tough to build real strength doing five minutes a day – Olympic weightlifters will often rest for up to five minutes between heavy sets – but if you want to make a start in the time you have, try staying still. “In that kind of time frame with no equipment, isometrics [the tightening of a specific muscle or group of muscles] aren't a bad option,” says strength coach [Joseph Lightfoot](#). “You don't need to warm up much, and there's basically no risk of injury.” Pair the movements below a couple of times a week.

Press-up hold

Starting from a high plank (ie as if you were at the top of a press-up), [lower yourself until your elbows are bent to a roughly 90-degree angle](#), then hold for 30-60 seconds. Keep your elbows tucked to your body and your body plank-straight – this will also build core strength.



Squats. Photograph: Morsa Images/Getty Images/ posed by model

Squat holds

Squat down until your upper thighs are parallel to the floor and hold the position for 30-60 seconds, keeping your torso upright and head high. Too easy? Move on to the single leg squat hold by putting one leg behind you, keeping your trailing knee hovering just above the floor, without putting the foot to the ground.

Hip flexibility

For anyone who is not particularly active, building flexibility and mobility around the hips is key: it's the biggest bang for your buck in terms of improving overall quality of life. "Just a few simple hip-openers can improve the external rotation of the femur bone in the hip socket and improve your flexibility," says [Helen Gaunt](#), an elite runner and personal trainer. "Use these three for 45-60 seconds each – or on each side – and try to do them a few times a week."



Bound angle pose. Photograph: Prostock-Studio/Getty Images/iStockphoto/posed by model

Bound angle pose

You may also know this one as the butterfly stretch: it's great for the inner thigh muscles, or adductors. In a seated position, [bring the flats of the feet together](#), holding them in your hands with your knees out to the sides. Inhale and then exhale, dropping your shoulders as you push your knees downwards towards the ground, keeping your head tall, and back straight. This can also be done against a wall for support – or leaning forwards, pushing the elbows down on to your thighs.

Figure of four

Lie on the floor facing upwards, [lift both legs and bend them](#), keeping one foot on the floor and bringing the other ankle across to rest against the opposite knee – you should feel a slight stretch in that leg. Lace your hands behind the thigh of the non-stretching leg and pull it towards you to increase the stretch, but not so much that it's uncomfortable. Hold, then repeat on the other side.



Child's pose. Photograph: PeopleImages/Getty Images/iStockphoto/posed by model

Child's pose

Finish with this relaxing hip-opener position. [Kneeling with your knees open and your feet together, hinge at the hips, lowering your upper body forwards](#), bringing your head down towards the floor and reaching your arms forwards to stretch out the upper back. Hold for at least 60 seconds, inhaling and exhaling slowly and deeply, releasing and loosening the hips and pelvis to improve range of movement.

Fat loss

The four-minute [Tabata intervals](#) workout programme beloved of gym classes is slightly overrated: in the [studies that showed its effectiveness](#), professional athletes warmed up for 20 minutes before even starting the protocol, and did their sets at 170% of [VO2 max](#) (100% of VO2 max is often [“associated with complete exhaustion and/or vomiting”](#)). Still, if time is short and you're aiming to burn some fat, one move beats all the others: [a Louisiana University study](#) that compared kettlebell swings, cleans and deadlifts to a more traditional sprint training programme found that calorie expenditure was biggest with the bells.



Kettle bell swings. Photograph: jacoblund/Getty Images/iStockphoto/posed by model

To master [the kettlebell swing](#), stand with your feet just outside shoulder-width and the kettlebell hanging from both hands. Bend your knees and hinge your hips slightly, then snap your hips forward, using the momentum to [swing the bell upward](#). Weight-wise, don't go too light; if you can use your arms to do the reps, you can go heavier.

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Comedy Q&A Jon Richardson

Jon Richardson: ‘My personal decline is much funnier than that of the country’

The comedian on supermarket petrol stations, working with his wife Lucy Beaumont and the comedy heroes he fell in love with in the 90s



‘My deaths have been many and are not funny in the least’ ... Jon Richardson

Interview by [Liam Pape](#)

Mon 16 Jan 2023 04.13 EST Last modified on Mon 16 Jan 2023 06.58 EST

How did you get into standup?

Sadly, by leaving the town I grew up in [Lancaster] and my family. I hope things are different now, though I suspect they are not. But the opportunity to perform regularly, to learn from the best and to meet people who could

help me forge a career came only when I moved down south. Level up shmevel up.

Who did you admire when you were starting out?

The 90s was an insanely good time to be a teenager falling in love with comedy. [Rik Mayall](#) and [Ade Edmondson](#), French and Saunders, [The Fast Show](#), Harry Enfield, Men Behaving Badly, [Desmond's](#), Lee Evans, Jack Dee. I loved all of it and would go to school and recreate sketches and scenes with my friends. Comedy was huge and the quality was so high. Then there were people like [Linda Smith](#) and [Felix Dexter](#), who would crop up much less often but were always amazingly funny. I consider myself very lucky to have had that education.

Can you recall a gig so bad it's now funny?

Absolutely loads, and the memories keep me laughing to this day. Sadly they are all other people's bad gigs and recounting them would be in poor taste and make me look like the small and bitter man I really am. My own deaths have been many and are not funny in the least.

You're in the back of a black cab. The driver asks, "What do you do?" You say, "Comedian." They say, "Tell me a joke then." What do you say?

"I had an interview once to become a taxi driver. I turned up 20 minutes late and they gave me the job straight away." I don't know whose joke that is, someone funnier than me.

You're often on screen with your wife, Lucy Beaumont. What's the best part of working with your partner?

I don't have the displeasure of seeing her on TV and discovering how rude she has been about me; I get to be sat right next to her while she dissects my personality and physical frailties for an audience's amusement.

What's the worst part of working with your partner?

See previous answer.

What has inspired your latest show, The Knitwit?

It's heavily influenced by Brexit, Covid and the slow destruction of

working-class life under the Conservatives, in that it doesn't reference any of these things at all. Things at the moment are so unremittingly bleak that I have made a deliberate attempt to make this tour a string of the funniest things I can think of to say that make our two hours together an escape from everything else. It's my most personal show yet, as my own decline and decay is much funnier than that of the country.

Do you have any pre-show rituals?

I always arrive early with my notes and start a new diary page for each show with the date, venue and material I'm going to do and in what order. Then I eat too much, too close to the show. I worry about whether or not black coffee will make me void my bowels mid-show. I wonder whether or not I would be funnier if I had just one drink or if that's just a mask for my alcohol dependence. I picture the worst-case scenario for the gig where I dry up and the audience shout and throw things then slowly filter out and leave me in a crumpled heap on the stage. I contemplate getting in my car, going home and never being seen in public again. Then the show starts and is fine.

Best heckle?

Nearly every gig I do is made better by audience interaction. Heckling is very different to audience interaction though, and is almost always pointless and unhelpful. I could tell you the one time a heckle was well placed and got a laugh but that would somehow add to the idea that the drunk arsehole at the back is an essential part of the live performance, which is not true.

What's an important lesson you've learned from being a standup?

Your material will change absolutely nothing about the world or the lives of anyone in it, but striving with every sinew to make people laugh is more important than anything. That and where all the supermarket petrol stations are just off the motorways.

Any bugbears from the world of comedy?

There is far too much of me around.

What are you looking forward to right now?

The fantastic Shane Meadows' forthcoming TV adaptation of the brilliant

book by Ben Myers, [The Gallows Pole](#), set in the beautiful Calder Valley. What's not to like? And even better, I'm not in it.

- [Jon Richardson: The Knitwit is currently on tour](#). Jon & Lucy's Odd Couples is on [Channel 4](#). Comedians Playing Fantasy Premier League Football with Jon Richardson and Matt Forde is available from [Apple Podcasts](#).

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Monstrous maestro: why is Cate Blanchett's cancel culture film *Tár* angering so many people?



Uncomfortable questions ... from left, Sophie Kauer as Olga Metkina and Cate Blanchett as Lydia Tár. Photograph: Courtesy of Focus Features

Despite glowing reviews, Todd Field's drama about a predatory conductor has struggled at the box office. Is this because its protagonist is an unlikeable woman?



[Xan Brooks](#)

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Mon 16 Jan 2023 01.00 ESTLast modified on Mon 16 Jan 2023 09.12 EST

Punters probably don't need another reason to skip *Tár*, Todd Field's much-discussed tale of a feted conductor who becomes a lightning rod for the #MeToo movement, but [Marin Alsop](#) was happy to oblige nonetheless. *Tár*, the US conductor told the Sunday Times, was "anti-woman" and a personal affront. The film could have told the story of a rapacious male monster, but chose instead to make its lead a female conductor. "To have an opportunity to portray a woman in that role and to make her an abuser," Alsop said. "For me, that was heartbreaking."

In Alsop's view, then, *Tár* is a tragic missed opportunity. She wanted one kind of protagonist and wound up with another, in the same way that *Jaws* might have been a film about a dog or *GoodFellas* an account of New

Jersey samaritans. Some movies are like that. They confound and confuse and upend our expectations. In this respect, at their finest, they are a little like life.

‘As a Bipoc pangender person,’ one student tells her, ‘I’m not into cis white male composers like Bach’

Is this what people want, a film that’s like life? The evidence suggests not: despite glowing reviews and mounting awards chatter, Field’s drama has thus far clawed back only \$6m of its reputed \$35m budget. Those who’ve taken against it seem to share Alsop’s concerns, pinpointing the character of Lydia Tár – a trailblazing artist on stage, a ruthless predator in the wings – as their chief bone of contention.

Some viewers were [annoyed](#) to discover that the woman “isn’t real”. Other smarter souls simply don’t care for her. Reviewing the film in the New York Observer, veteran critic Rex Reed described Tár as “abstract”, “vague” and “audience-resistant”. The protagonist was the problem: she wasn’t quite fit for purpose. “So much passion has been distilled in the character of Lydia Tár,” he wrote, “[that] you really want to like her more.”



A star on stage ... Blanchett with Nina Hoss in *Tár*. Photograph: Courtesy of Focus Features

I'm not sure I like her either. I'm not convinced that we're meant to. As played by Cate Blanchett, *Tár* is exacting and imperious, duplicitous and vindictive – a serial sexual abuser who leaves a trail of casualties in her wake. But this question of likability, specifically female likability, is clearly a vexed one. Last year saw the release of Quinn Shephard's [Not Okay](#), a jittery black comedy that follows the fortunes of Danni, a social media influencer played by Zoe Deutch, who fakes her Instagram posts. It came prefaced by a trigger warning of sorts: "This film contains flashing lights, themes of trauma and an unlikable female protagonist." This was partly a joke, Shephard later told IndieWire, but it was also a response to a number of negative test previews. "It was interesting," said Shephard, "that a large chunk of the audience seemed genuinely upset that the film was about Danni."

It is at this point that a defence lawyer might be moved to cross-examine. Would it have been different if Danni (as per Alsop's complaint) was a man? Isn't it up to the audience to decide who they like and who they don't? And, come to that, does it matter? Who's purely likable anyway? The reason viewers thought *Tár* was a real person, I suspect, is because that's how she reads on the screen: as maddeningly variable as the rest of us. Blanchett's maestro is inspiring and cruel, magnificent one minute and utterly monstrous the next. She doesn't exist, but there are plenty like her who do.

About 20 minutes into *Tár*, there's a [scene](#) that brilliantly epitomises the film's tensions. A nervous student called Max announces that "as a Bipoc pangender person" he's "not into" cis white male composers like Bach. In return, *Tár* insists that he shouldn't be so quick to judge. Great music jumps boundaries. She says Max is a robot. She thinks identity politics is a trap. "The narcissism of small differences," snaps *Tár*, "leads to the most boring conformity."

The set-piece is terrific: perfectly managed, building to a climax. It's also a litmus test of sorts. The film is, at its heart, a drama about cancel culture, steeped in the language of intersectionality and online pile-ons. So it's a

discourse on the discourse, like a tennis ball bouncing back and forth, all but daring the viewer to pick a side. Read crudely, Field's scene shows the common-sense crusader swatting away the complacent woke snowflake, except that the tone is ambivalent and the quarrel sullies both parties. Yes, Max is blinkered but Tár is a bully (and arguably just as blinkered). They're both right, they're both wrong. Crucially, bracingly, we're not being told what to think.

There's a quote I like from Philip Roth (a man notorious, incidentally, for weaving real-life people through his fiction). It's from *American Pastoral*, when the narrator admits he can't get to grips with the fumbling, feet-of-clay hero. "The fact remains that getting people right is not what living is about anyway," he explains. "It's getting them wrong that is living, getting them wrong and wrong and wrong and then, on careful reconsideration, getting them wrong again. That's how we know we're alive: we're wrong." Or how about this one, from W Somerset Maugham? "The longer I know people, the more they puzzle me. My oldest friends are just those of whom I can say that I don't know the first thing about them."



Similar territory ...Penélope Cruz in *Parallel Mothers* Photograph: Sony/Allstar

Obviously no character-driven drama can capture the full-fathom depth of the average human being, their changeable natures, their manifest contradictions. But they can at least try. And within the confines of the film's 158-minute running time, Tár manages to stand proud, big as life, which is to say she's complex and combustible, a mystery to herself and to others. One could claim she's part of a vanguard of so-called unsympathetics on screen. This could include Vicky Krieps's scratchy Empress Elizabeth in the period saga [Corsage](#), Penélope Cruz's secretive Janis in Almodóvar's [Parallel Mothers](#), and Renate Reinsve's capricious seeker in [The Worst Person in the World](#).

But really these women are part of a long tradition, one that extends back through the likes of Flaubert's Madame Bovary, Jane Austen's Emma and Thackeray's character Becky Sharp in Vanity Fair. All of these, too, were presumably seen as bad in their day. It's only the passage of time that has rounded their edges. To misquote John Huston in Chinatown: politicians, old buildings and unlikable female characters – they all get respectable if they stick around long enough.

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Most films hold our hand and light the way. A few, though, wave us into the woods then challenge us to find our way back out. These films are unstable and volatile, full of unreliable people, painted in shades of grey. Martin Scorsese feels that there are too many hand-holders and too few challenges. These are “dark days” for cinema, the director lamented last week, meaning that they're actually too bright, too antiseptic, too tidy. But when he saw Tár, he said, “the clouds lifted”.

I tend to wince at studies that suggest big books or arthouse movies improve your physical and mental health, because they make them sound such an ordeal: a worthy regime, like a diet of prunes. But there's probably some truth to it. Fiction should be thrilling, otherwise what's the point? But the best dramas are the ones that stretch us, provoke us, make us meet them halfway. And the richest characters are puzzles. They're the ones we can't quite figure out.

Back in the classroom, Tár sits at the piano and plays Bach's Prelude in C Major. Listen, she tells Max, still trying to win the kid over. The music is a question and an answer, which duly poses another question. Bach, she says, "knows that it's always the question that involves the listener. It's never the answer."

Tár, of course, is not entirely to be trusted – but she's making perfect sense here. Great art asks us questions. Confounding heroes do too. It's not a film's job to pander to our preconceptions, parrot back our opinions and reassure us that we're right. Nor, for that matter, is a film obliged to stay in its lane and give us clearcut goodies and baddies; that simple, bogus moral structure. Fictional characters don't have to be exemplars of anything. Cinemas, like colleges and libraries, should be physical safe spaces, but intellectual and emotional danger zones.

Books aren't mirrors, they're doors, as the critic Fran Lebowitz likes to say – and the same goes for films. Doors can be scary: we don't know what's behind them. But without opening a door, we all remain in our own silos. We miss out on a life of adventure and a world of interesting people we haven't yet met. Some of them will appall us. Some we might quite like.

- Tár is in UK cinemas now, and opens in Australia on 26 January
- Comments on this piece are premoderated to ensure discussion remains on topics raised by the writer. Please be aware there may be a short delay in comments appearing on the site.

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A new start after 60: 'I was such a chicken – until I spent seven weeks travelling alone'



Nooraini Mydin enjoys a coffee during a long stop on her Trans-Siberian journey. Photograph: Supplied image

When Nooraini Mydin was approaching her 60th birthday, she was determined to pursue her dreams. So, despite her fears of loneliness, she boarded a train, bound for Kuala Lumpur



[Emine Saner](#)

[@eminesaner](#)

Mon 16 Jan 2023 02.00 EST

Nooraini Mydin's 50th birthday passed without much of a marker, so she was determined to do something memorable for her 60th. She had always been curious about the Trans-Siberian railway but thought "how about I make it really exciting and get the train from London all the way to Kuala Lumpur?" she says. "I am such a chicken, or I was at that time. I used to get very lonely when I travelled alone." But in August 2016 she set off with two suitcases – containing her laptop, to write about the journey, and several packets of instant ramen noodles, for comfort and economy reasons – for the seven-week journey.

She had had a varied life up to that point. She had been a journalist in Malaysia, but moved to the UK in the 80s, where she had a difficult, short-lived marriage. She worked as a council press officer, in the bakery at Harrods and in admin at a hospital. “Then I started collecting degrees,” she says. She studied law, but didn’t become a lawyer, instead working in the law department of University College London.

It was after the death of her sister, to whom she was close, that she realised it was time to get back to her original dream of writing and journalism. So she started freelancing and planned to write about her trip.

“Everything had to be organised with military precision,” she says. “If you miss one train, that’s it. The cost would be an issue – I had hardly any money.” She left London and spent three nights in cities across Europe – in Brussels, Berlin and Warsaw – before arriving in Moscow. “It was three in the afternoon and the train station was deserted,” she says. “The loneliness you feel in the pit of your stomach ... I thought, what am I doing here?”

But then she made the four-day journey from Moscow to Irkutsk on the Trans-Siberian train, where she made many friends. “On the first leg, there was a doll-maker and a paediatrician. And a Russian dancer, who was planning to settle in Thailand or Vietnam. Then, slowly, they all went off and I was left with a grumpy Russian woman who hated foreigners – I think skin colour might have been a factor.”



Mydin at Lake Baikal. Photograph: Supplied image

She spent a few days at Lake Baikal, one of the world's largest lakes, in southern Siberia. "It was cold when I first arrived, and raining, and the lake was a murky muddy colour. The next morning the sun came out and everything was blue and it was like, wow, paradise. That was the best bit for me." She also loved staying at a camp near Ulaanbaatar, the capital of Mongolia, where the retired doctor who ran it would pile blankets on top of her as she lay in bed in her yurt.

Her lowest point came in Beijing, when she was invited to tea by a young man who claimed to be a business student wanting to improve his English, only to be presented with a bill for £120. She ended up giving him what she had, which was about £10.

Now I hate travelling with anybody, I have to travel alone. I know I'll be happy in my own company

She is, she says with a smile, "kind of naive. I trust people, and I was giving people my business card with my address on it. It's like everyone I met was a potential friend."

But only once did she consider abandoning her journey. She was in Shanghai during Eid celebrations, and “I could picture my cousin preparing lovely food in Malaysia. I was desperate to end the trip, but then I said no, my mission will be finished.”

Mydin travelled on through Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand, arriving finally at the end of September in Malaysia, where interest in her trip had built up. She appeared on television there to talk about her journey (and would later write a book about it).

The whole experience had given her a big confidence boost. “Having completed it, I felt I could do anything,” she says. She got over her fear of loneliness. “Now, I hate travelling with anybody, I have to travel alone. I know I’ll be happy in my own company.”

But, unlike a rail journey from A to B, human progress isn’t as straightforward – as soon afterwards, Mydin found self-doubt creeping back in. She knows what she needs to do. She is now planning to travel by rail to Turkey.

- [Tell us: has your life taken a new direction after the age of 60?](#)

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2023/jan/16/a-new-start-after-60-seven-weeks-travelling-alone>

2023.01.16 - Opinion

- Striking workers are telling the truth about Britain. No wonder politicians want to silence them
- What's the best way to grow Britain's economy? Spend more on the NHS
- If plants are so intelligent, should we stop eating them?
- Sexual abuse victims know the truth. George Pell allowed lives to be destroyed to protect himself and the Catholic church

[Opinion](#)Industrial action

Striking workers are telling the truth about Britain. No wonder politicians want to silence them

[Nesrine Malik](#)



The Tories and Labour alike believe strikes are unpopular. But picket by picket, the divisive principles underlying British politics are being dismantled



Striking workers at the North West Ambulance Service call centre in Manchester, 11 January 2023. Photograph: GaryRobertsphotography/Alamy Stock Photo/Alamy Live News.

Mon 16 Jan 2023 01.00 EST Last modified on Mon 16 Jan 2023 09.38 EST

More strikes are coming, with [100,000 civil servants](#) due to strike on 1 February. For 18 days across February and March, 150 UK universities [will be shut down](#) by University and College Union action. Last week, 45,000 junior doctors began voting on strike action. They will join transport workers, nurses, ambulance workers and a number of other public and private professionals – an objection of strikers, to suggest a collective noun.

Their caricatures have already been vividly painted – the “[fat cat](#)” trade union leaders, the entitled workers, the uncaring healthcare professionals who are taking advantage of bad times to snatch a higher paycheck; all at the expense of small businesses and poorly patients. These are compelling portrayals. Life is already hard, and those making it immediately and practically harder are easier to blame than those making it abstractly so. A paramedic who refuses to get in their ambulance is a more visible villain than a blur of ministers who have passed policies over the years that have compelled that worker to strike.

But through the fog of disruption and crisis made worse by industrial action, something is emerging that is posing a potent counterargument to the anti-strike sentiment so deeply embedded both in British political culture and legislation. Strikes have come at a time when the old regime is dying, but another has not yet taken its place – now is the time of monsters, as the quote goes. But it could also be a time of breakthrough.

When it comes to offering solutions to the growing deadlock with the nation's workers, we have a vacuum. The government is a mardy mess, veering between long periods of absence and sudden bursts of pugnaciousness. Labour, on the other hand, takes the moral high ground, but is absent on the actual ground. Starmer rightly points out that the nurses' strike is a “badge of shame” for the government, but then [bans frontbench Labour MPs](#) from showing active support for the strikes.

Both the government's proposed [anti-strike legislation](#) and Labour's caution in throwing its weight behind industrial action are based on the same belief: that strikes are unpopular. And maybe in normal times they are. But these are not normal times. Strikes can be *made* popular if politicians lack the charisma or mandate to effectively vilify strikers, and when an economic crisis runs so deep that a class consciousness develops. Public support for the ability to strike in most professions has [grown](#) since June last year. Between Tory menace and Labour caution, a large space has emerged that is up for grabs.

That space has resulted in a strange displacement within British politics. Striking workers and their representatives are describing, with the detail and passion that is missing from our politicians' addresses, the dire reality facing the country and what a hopeful future would look like. Last week, a statement written by the co-chair of the BMA East of England regional junior doctor committee referred rousingly to his fellow workers in the NHS and elsewhere as “[the backbone of this country](#). We drive your ambulances, we sweep your roads, we stock your shelves, we nurse you back to good health. We're the source of any prosperity, any trade, any security.”

And it's not all flourishes of rhetoric. Striking workers are also correctly identifying the guilty parties in a way that sometimes feels almost like a

hallucination, so unaccustomed are we to hearing these arguments made in the political sphere. As the government robotically blames the pandemic and the war in Ukraine for almost everything, and Labour in turn blames the government, striking workers are talking about all the contextual unmentionables – extractive private bosses, an ideological legacy of deregulation and defunding, and a rightwing media that essentially functions as a political propaganda arm.

Giving evidence to the transport select committee last week, the RMT general secretary, Mick Lynch, [hit many](#) of these notes, pointing out that even before the railway strikes service was dire, that the deadlock is because of the government, that the media has waged a campaign against strikers, and that, in the face-off with workers, the Conservatives should no longer assume they are the more popular protagonist by default.

These notes are made even more resonant by the extent of the economic crisis. All but a small minority are feeling the pinch, and know someone who has it harder. There are simply too many people working in these industries or connected with someone who does for the government line to stick. Accounts of professional lives transformed into a kind of daily torture are all around us. In my own extended family, one [NHS](#) worker reports such horrors that we are becoming concerned for their mental health, and we would not only support but encourage some strike action to protect their mind and body.

But even with a political vacuum and more popular empathy than expected for industrial action, the kind of solidarity that will result in a breakthrough that would properly address pay and conditions still seems fractured. The profile of work in this country – itself a legacy of successful union busting – is a mix of private, public, non-unionised and zero hours, meaning there can be no central coordination or messaging to the public.

The media is broadly unsympathetic, placing constant pressure on popular support, and there is little to connect broad grassroots campaigns (such as Enough is Enough) with union leadership in the ways that could bring about a general strike. The risk is then that the strikers' goals become more fragmented and inconsistent over time, and the image the government wants

to portray – that of a crisis-ridden country betrayed by its workers – grows more persuasive.

Whether that changes depends on the momentum and connections striking workers manage to whip up over the next few weeks, and how sustained the cost of living crisis turns out to be. They have a shot. The irony is that both left and right are betting heavily on patriotism and a national sense of belonging to supplement their policy shortcomings, but have serviced them poorly with empty sloganeering, [silly symbolism](#) and culture wars.

When there are no real solutions on offer, that unfulfilled sense of common cause can become welded in a furnace of frustration, and then used as a tool to hammer politicians. For too long, British politics has successfully operated on the principle that there is more distance between the blessed and the unfortunate than there is proximity; that we don't all share the same goals as immigrants, striking workers and people who need benefits and housing, because they are somehow responsible for their misfortune. It's a powerful illusion. But when there are more losers than winners, it could be an illusion that is ripe for piercing.

- Nesrine Malik is a Guardian columnist

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[OpinionNHS](#)

Without health there is no wealth. Why do so few governments understand this?

[Tim Jackson](#)

Politicians are wrong to believe that we can only afford decent care in good economic times



‘Just when we need it most, the leadership that crafted the welfare state is missing.’ Paramedics hold placards in support of the NHS. Photograph: Tejas Sandhu/Sopa Images/Rex/Shutterstock

Mon 16 Jan 2023 03.00 ESTLast modified on Mon 16 Jan 2023 13.11 EST

Seventy-five years ago this month, Labour’s then health minister, Aneurin (“Nye”) Bevan, announced the [birth of a new National Health Service](#), free to everyone at the point of use. It would come into force, he vowed, on 5 July 1948. The date was arbitrary. The challenge was immense. Resistance

was ferocious. But it happened. Just six months later. On time. As advertised.

Fast forward three-quarters of a century, and that stunning success is being wrenched apart. Hospital waiting lists are at an all-time high. Staff retention is at an all-time low. [Health](#) workers can't afford to live. Carers are resorting to food banks to survive. And no one across the political spectrum seems to know what to do.

The blame game is paralysing. It's the cost of living. It's the aftermath of Covid-19. It's the worst flu season in a decade. It's 13 years of "[sticking plaster politics](#)". It's all of the above. Not since 1978's winter of discontent has the battle between key workers and government been so acrimonious – and so desperate. But assigning culpability changes nothing on the ground.

As anyone who has visited an [NHS](#) hospital in recent weeks can see, this desperation is not an abstract phenomenon. It's a visceral reality. It's depicted in the appalling, trench-like conditions of the A&E departments and walk-in clinics. It's written in the stoic heroism of the nurses and doctors who endure those conditions day after day. It's there in the faces of those whose health and lives depend, not on Bevan's dream, but on the nightmare it has become in 21st-century Britain.

Just when we need it most, the leadership that crafted the welfare state is missing in action. In a week dominated by the NHS crisis, the health secretary, Steve Barclay, allocated just 45 minutes to [talks aimed at preventing the next two-day nurses' strike](#) – the second only in history. But aside from vague promises of backdated pay from a future settlement, he was most interested in discussing "productivity".

"Work harder" was the message – to nurses already putting in 18-hour shifts to maintain continuity of care in a system at breaking point. "Bitterly disappointing" is what the Royal College of Nursing called it. "Insulting" was the verdict from Unite. And the government's fallback position is to [criminalise the right to withhold labour](#) – essentially enslaving nurses to a task that everyone at some point needs but no one, it seems, is prepared to value.

Labour's rhetoric is an excoriating critique of this damage. But its pre-manifesto positioning is the oddest “mashup” of memes in political history. A take-back-control bill, a nod to the politics of devolution, a blind faith in technological innovation. All wrapped up in a standout warning that [we can't “spend our way out of \[the Tories'\] mess”](#). There'll be no getting out the “big government chequebook”, Keir Starmer has insisted.

No 10 proposals to end NHS strikes 'insulting', says union official – video

Pushed by the BBC's Sarah Montague on how to close the £73bn gap in health spending between the UK and Germany (say), the [shadow levelling up secretary, Lisa Nandy, was candid](#). There'd be no more spending “the people's money” to solve the crisis. Labour would abide by its “cast-iron rule” to borrow only for investment, she said.

So the formula has to go like this. Devolve power to communities. Unleash the hidden productivity that's lurking there. Watch as economic growth bounds back, bringing higher wages and full government coffers. Hey presto! Now we can afford to pay the nurses.

The “cast-iron rule” is a curious reach back into the 1990s. It's driven by the same anxiety to prove the opposition's credentials to the City that drove Gordon Brown and the same nervousness about any suggestion of taxing the rich. In those days it was called [a “golden rule”](#). But the logic was the same. Borrowing is for investment. Investment brings productivity. Productivity will save us.

As economics commissioner on the (now dismantled) Sustainable Development Commission, I heard this narrative trotted out like a mantra in every region we visited across the country in the years leading up to the financial crisis. Inward investment in hi-tech industry would bring high-wage jobs that would spread wealth to the community. It's not that different from the defunct trickle-down [theory that laid Liz Truss and Kwasi Kwarteng low](#). It failed spectacularly at the time. Its chances of working now are even slimmer.

But there's a more telling point to make. The debate on both sides is predicated on a profound misconception that wealth comes first and health comes second. That we can only afford care if the economy is booming. It couldn't be more wrong. [Without health there is no wealth](#). Without care there is no health. Care *is* investment. It's not a luxury consumer item. It's the most fundamental investment of all. And scaring nurses into impossible ward rounds is the very opposite of productivity.

Our willingness to invest public money in financial assets, military hardware or physical infrastructure and not in people makes no sense. There's no more perverse illustration of this than the [fiasco of the Nightingale hospitals](#) during the pandemic. Built at a cost in excess of £500m, they never reached anything like full capacity because there weren't enough staff to run them. The showpiece London hospital had 500 beds. It treated only 54 Covid patients during the entire pandemic.

Beg, borrow or deficit spend. Change the accounting rules. Tear up the dysfunctional economics that assigns value to bling and consigns what matters most to the gutter. Do whatever it takes. Somehow care must be supported. Without it there is no productivity. Without it there's no society. The care of human life, as Thomas Jefferson once said, is "the first and only task of government". That was the vision that inspired Bevan. It needs to inspire us too.

- Tim Jackson is professor of sustainable development at the University of Surrey and director of the Centre for the Understanding of Sustainable Prosperity

OpinionPlants

If plants are so intelligent, should we stop eating them?

[Emma Beddington](#)



Recent research suggests plants may be able to learn and communicate.
This really put me off my baked potato



Plant intelligence ... salad seedlings being dug in at an allotment.
Photograph: Betsie Van der Meer/Getty Images

Mon 16 Jan 2023 02.00 ESTLast modified on Mon 16 Jan 2023 03.14 EST

If you were starting to polish your Veganuary halo, sorry, I have upsetting news, gleaned from a Radio 4 programme called [Is Eating Plants Wrong?](#). Spoiler alert: maybe.

Plants, it explained, “can sense the world around them, learn, remember and engage in complex communication with the species around them”. [Research suggests](#) that pea seedlings can learn to associate a sound with the light they need and choose to grow in a particular direction as a result. They can also [eavesdrop on each other](#) and protect themselves based on what they “hear”. Sagebrush plants communicate to each other the risk of being chomped by insects and trees share nutrients through what Prof Suzanne Simard pleasingly calls the [“wood wide web”](#); they do so more with trees they are related to than with “strangers”.

Do plants show intelligence? “Definitely, yes – I don’t see any problem with this,” replied one interviewee on the programme, putting me off my baked potato and raising fears about what the houseplants my son unwisely left in my care are saying about me behind my back.

It is a head-spinning indication of how much we still have to learn about the world. The really knotty question, though, is what is left for a would-be ethical eater's lunch? Ethical fruitarianism – eating only the parts of plants that detach harmlessly, causing no damage – might meet the standards of the Federal Ethics Committee on Non-Human Biotechnology ([which has ruled](#) that plants have [the right to be protected](#) from undue harm).

But what could we eat in the UK at this time of year under that regime: nuts? Wouldn't we be depriving squirrels? Lab-created meat is still at the experimental stage and costs more than a [Salt Bae gold-sprinkled steak](#), but is roadkill allowed? I would say breatharianism – only “eating” air – is due a revival, but it is mad, dangerous and probably a cult, so no. Alternatively, we could fly in the face of decades of medical advice and stick to stuff with no discernible relationship to anything living: the Irn-Bru diet?

My last option: learn to photosynthesise. If they are so clever, perhaps plants can teach us.

Emma Beddington is a Guardian columnist

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/jan/16/if-plants-are-so-intelligent-should-we-stop-eating-them>

OpinionGeorge Pell

Sexual abuse victims know the truth. George Pell allowed lives to be destroyed to protect himself and the Catholic church

Chrissie Foster

Suppression of the truth comes from the Catholic church's canon law. There is no exposing of hierarchy



‘George Pell’s own words on child sexual abuse betrayed him.’ Photograph: Gregorio Borgia/AP

Sun 15 Jan 2023 23.43 ESTLast modified on Mon 16 Jan 2023 19.02 EST

To be a [sexual assault victim of Catholic clergy](#) is to know the truth – the truth of your own experience. That truth, long suppressed by victim, perpetrator and organisation alike is what keeps the crime of paedophilia

alive. Children are easily intimidated and silenced. Paedophilic crimes thrived among Catholic clergy.

Suppression of the truth comes from the church's canon law 489 which orders every bishop of a diocese and archbishop of an archdiocese, to maintain and keep under lock and key a secret archive. [Canon law 489](#) acknowledges that "criminal cases in matters of morals" could be among the matters held in the secret archive. This means that everyone from the pope down to the bishop in your local diocese maintains a secret archive. Canon laws must be obeyed by clergy.

When an offender is moved to a new parish and new offences occur against more children, that bishop or archbishop who knew of past crimes, yet transferred them anyway, instead of reporting them to police, is responsible for those new sexual assaults. There is no exposing of hierarchy by other hierarchy because they are all compromised.

When it comes to child sexual abuse, Cardinal Pell's own words betrayed him. During the royal commission into institutional responses to child sexual abuse's hearing in Rome, when asked if he knew [Gerald Ridsdale's offending against children](#) was commonly known in the parish, Pell responded that he didn't know. He then added: "It's a sad story and it wasn't of much interest to me."

Another response from Pell in Rome regarded a complaint he received from a college student about allegations of sexual assault by Edward Dowlan against younger boys at the school. When Pell was asked by the commission if he passed on the allegations to school staff, Pell said he hadn't. Pell agreed that he should have done more "... with the experience of 40 years later". The commission asked: "Wasn't it a serious matter then?". Pell replied: "Yes, but people had a different attitude then. There were no specifics about the activity, how serious it was, and the boy wasn't asking me to do anything about it, but just lamenting and mentioning it."

Perhaps before people speak of Cardinal Pell's greatness and saintliness, they should also read the unredacted sections of the final reports on child

abuse from the royal commission case study nos. 28 (Ballarat Diocese) and 35 (Melbourne Archdiocese) which were withheld from publication to allow Cardinal Pell a fair trial.

In short, Pell protected his own interests and his church's finances. He let children suffer. He destroyed lives.

Chrissie Foster AM is the author of *hell on the Way to Heaven* with Paul Kennedy and author of *Still Standing: A Mother's Fight to Bring the Catholic Church to Justice* with Paul Kennedy, to be released 2 May 2023

In Australia, the crisis support service [Lifeline](#) is 13 11 14. If you or someone you know is affected by sexual assault, family or domestic violence, call 1800RESPECT on 1800 737 732 or visit www.1800RESPECT.org.au. In an emergency, call 000. International helplines can be found via www.befrienders.org.

This article was amended on 17 January 2023 to clarify that while a secret archive is mandated under canon law 489, and criminal cases might be among its contents, there is no requirement that any criminal case documentation must be lodged there.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/jan/16/sexual-abuse-victims-know-the-truth-george-pell-allowed-lives-to-be-destroyed-to-protect-himself-and-the-catholic-church>

2023.01.16 - Around the world

- [Hunter Biden Republican targeting president's son says: 'I don't target individuals'](#)
- [Inequality Call for new taxes on super-rich after 1% pocket two-thirds of all new wealth](#)
- [Myanmar Western firms facilitating production of junta's weapons, says report](#)
- [Algeria Daughter of journalist arrested on Christmas Eve calls for his release](#)
- [Exclusive Fintech firm Revolut calls in psychologists after criticism of its corporate culture](#)

Republicans

Republican targeting Hunter Biden says: ‘I don’t target individuals’

Wisconsin senator Ron Johnson grilled on why Jared Kushner should escape scrutiny for profiting from proximity to presidency



Ron Johnson speaks to reporters in Washington. Photograph: REX/Shutterstock

[Martin Pengelly](#) in New York

[@MartinPengelly](#)

Mon 16 Jan 2023 00.01 ESTLast modified on Mon 16 Jan 2023 10.57 EST

The Wisconsin senator Ron Johnson refused to say Republicans planning investigations of Hunter Biden for profiting from his connection to the presidency should also investigate Jared Kushner, Donald Trump’s son-in-law and adviser who secured [a \\$1.2bn loan from Qatar](#) while working in the White House.

“I’m concerned about getting to the truth,” Johnson insisted. “I don’t target individuals.”

Republicans are undoubtedly targeting Hunter Biden, for allegedly making money thanks to his father, Joe Biden. In the House, newly under GOP control, committees have [promised investigations](#).

Appearing on NBC’s Meet the Press on Sunday, Johnson focused his own fire on the president’s surviving son.

The host, Chuck Todd, said: “Senator, do you have a crime that you think [Hunter Biden](#) committed because I’ve yet to see anybody explain. It is not a crime to make money off of your last name.”

Johnson referred to investigations pursued with Chuck Grassley, a Republican senator from Iowa, and a report written by a Trump-aligned group which Johnson said “detail[ed] all kinds of potential crimes” involving Joe Biden’s son.

Todd said: “Let me stop you there. ‘Potential’. This is potential. Potential is innuendo.”

Johnson said: “Is it a crime to be soliciting and purchasing prostitution in potentially European sex trafficking operations? Is that a crime? Because Chuck Grassley and I laid out about \$30,000 paid by Hunter Biden to those types of individuals over December of 2018, 2019, about \$30,000.

“That’s about the same time that President Biden offered to pay about \$100,000 of Hunter Biden’s bills. I mean ... that’s just some information. I don’t know exactly if it’s a crime.”

Hunter Biden is known to be under [investigation](#) over his tax affairs. He has denied wrongdoing. His struggles with addiction have been widely discussed, not least in [his memoir](#). He has not been charged with any crime.

On Sunday, after some back and forth over what Johnson said was media bias against Republicans – a key focus of the new GOP House – Todd said: “Senate Democrats want to investigate Jared Kushner’s [loan from the](#)

[Qatari government](#) when he was working in the [US] government negotiating many things in the Middle East.

“Are you not as concerned about that? ... I say that because it seems to me if you’re concerned about what Hunter Biden did, you should be equally outraged about what [Jared Kushner](#) did.”

Johnson paused, then said: “I’m concerned about getting to the truth. I don’t target individuals.”

Todd said: “You don’t? You’re targeting Hunter Biden multiple times on this show, senator. You’re targeting an individual.”

Ron Johnson appears on Meet the Press on Sunday.

Johnson said: “Chuck, you know ... part of the problem, and this is pretty obvious to anybody watching this, is you don’t invite me on to interview me. You invite me on to argue with me. You know, I’m just trying to lay out the facts that certainly Senator Grassley and I uncovered.

“They were suppressed. They were censored. [The FBI] interfered in the 2020 election. Conservatives understand that. Unfortunately, liberals and the media don’t. And part of the reasons are our politics are inflamed, is we do not have an unbiased media. We don’t. It’s unfortunate. I’m all for a free press.”

After more cross-talk, Todd said: “Look, you can go back on your partisan cable cocoon and talk about media bias all you want. I understand it’s part of your identity.”

The interview moved on to Johnson’s connections to Trump’s attempt to overturn the 2020 election and links between Trump advisers and the abortive coup in Brazil.

The conversation ended with host and senator talking over each other again.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/jan/15/i-dont-target-individuals-republican-ron-johnson-hunter-biden-jared-kushner>

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Inequality.

Call for new taxes on super-rich after 1% pocket two-thirds of all new wealth

\$26tn of new wealth created since start of pandemic went to richest, Oxfam report reveals



Private aircraft at Zurich airport used to ferry visitors to and from the Davos World Economic Forum. The report coincides with the start of this year's gathering. Photograph: Ennio Leanza/EPA

[Larry Elliott](#) *Economics editor*

Sun 15 Jan 2023 19.01 EST Last modified on Mon 16 Jan 2023 03.25 EST

Oxfam has called for immediate action to tackle a post-Covid widening in global inequality after revealing that almost two-thirds of the new wealth amassed since the start of the pandemic has gone to the richest 1%.

In report to coincide with the annual gathering of the global elite at the World Economic Forum in Davos, the charity said the best-off had pocketed

\$26tn (£21tn) in new wealth up to the end of 2021. That represented 63% of the total new wealth, with the rest going to the remaining 99% of people.

Oxfam said for the first time in a quarter of a century the rise in extreme wealth was being accompanied by an increase in extreme poverty, and called for new taxes to be levied on the super-rich.

Policies introduced to combat the economic impact of Covid 19 – such as cuts in interest rates and the money creation process known as quantitative easing – boosted the value of property and shares, which tend to be owned by [richer people](#).

The report said that for every \$1 of new global wealth earned by a person in the bottom 90% in the past two years, each [billionaire](#) gained roughly \$1.7m. Despite small falls in 2022, the combined fortune of billionaires had increased by \$2.7bn a day. Pandemic gains came after a decade when both the number and wealth of billionaires had doubled.

Danny Sriskandarajah, the chief executive of Oxfam GB: “The current economic reality is an affront to basic human values. Extreme poverty is increasing for the first time in 25 years and close to a billion people are going hungry but for billionaires, every day is a bonanza.

“Multiple crises have pushed millions to the brink while our leaders fail to grasp the nettle – governments must stop acting for the vested interests of the few.

“How can we accept a system where the poorest people in many countries pay much higher tax rates than the super-rich? Governments must introduce higher taxes on the super-rich now.”

Oxfam said extreme concentrations of wealth led to weaker growth, corrupted politics and the media, corroded democracy and led to political polarisation. [The super-rich](#) were key contributors to the climate crisis, the charity added, with a billionaire emitting a million times more carbon than the average person. They were also twice as likely to invest in polluting industries, compared with the average investor.

The report called on governments to introduce immediate one-off wealth levies on the richest 1%, together with windfall taxes to clamp down on profiteering during the global cost of living crisis. Subsequently, there should be a permanent increase in taxes on rich, with higher rates for multimillionaires and billionaires.

In support of its call for redistribution of wealth, Oxfam said:

- Food and energy companies had more than doubled their profits in 2022, paying out \$257bn to wealthy shareholders at a time when more than 800 million people were going hungry.
- Only 4 cents in every dollar of tax revenue came from wealth taxes, and half the world's billionaires lived in countries with no inheritance tax on money they give to their children.
- A tax of up to 5% on the world's multimillionaires and billionaires could raise \$1.7tn a year, enough to lift 2 billion people out of poverty, and fund a global plan to end hunger.

In a foreword to the report, Colombia's finance minister, José Antonio Ocampo, said: "Taxing the wealthiest is no longer an option – it's a must. Global inequality has exploded, and there is no better way to tackle inequality than by redistributing wealth."

He added: "Fairness is at the heart of Colombia's tax reforms. Concretely, this means a new wealth tax, higher taxes for high-income earners and large corporations reaping extraordinary profits in international markets, and ending tax incentives that exist without clear social or environmental justification.

"We are also implementing digital services taxes and adopting a corporate minimum tax rate, building on the international tax deal,."

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Myanmar

Western firms facilitating production of Myanmar junta's weapons, says report

Independent experts find western-supplied materials are still finding their way into military's hands



Myanmar military hardware on display to mark Independence Day in Naypyidaw on 4 January 2023. Photograph: AFP/Getty Images

[*Rebecca Root*](#) in Bangkok

Mon 16 Jan 2023 04.48 ESTLast modified on Mon 16 Jan 2023 16.36 EST

Companies in 13 countries across Europe, Asia and North America are assisting Myanmar's junta – either indirectly or directly – by supplying materials to the stated-owned entity that produces the military's weapons, a report by the [Special Advisory Council for Myanmar](#) (SAC-M) has found.

The weapons are then being used to commit human rights atrocities.

The military forcibly took control of [Myanmar](#) in February 2021. It has since killed more than 2,730 people and arrested more than 17,200 in an attempt to eradicate resistance. Reports of airstrikes, villages being burned down and children being tortured have become synonymous with the junta, which faces a genocide investigation by the international court of justice.

“The fact that weapons used in ... attacks have links to countries who are claiming ‘impartiality’ in the face of brutal and widespread repression of democratic aspirations is simply scandalous,” said Dr Gerard McCarthy, an assistant professor at the International Institute of Social Studies, who specialises in the politics of welfare and development in south-east Asia.

The report by the SAC-M found – through interviews and analysis of shipping records and leaked documents – that dozens of companies based in Austria, France, China, Singapore, India, Israel, Ukraine, Germany, Taiwan, Japan, Russia, South Korea and the US were supplying raw materials, machines, technology and parts to the Directorate of Defence Industries (DDI), a state-owned company responsible for producing military equipment for Myanmar’s armed forces.

“It’s more or less a military-owned enterprise,” said Yanghee Lee, a former UN special rapporteur on the human rights situation in Myanmar and founder of the SAC-M, which is a group of independent experts, including former UN officials, who came together after the coup to advocate on behalf of the democratic movement in the country.

She added that the DDI could use these imported supplies “to suppress and commit human rights violations, war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide”.

The SAC-M called on the companies, whether directly or indirectly doing business with the military and associated entities, to stop.

Among those, the Austrian company GFM Steyr is believed to have provided computer numerical control machines for the manufacturing of gun barrels. Dassault Systèmes in France is said to have supplied 3D electromagnetic simulation and analysis software, and computer aided

design (CAD) software for 3D modelling. The Germany-based Siemens Digital Industries Software is thought to have provided multiple types of software, and Ukraine's Ukrspecexport is believed to have supplied types of transfer technology for the production of 2SIU self-propelled howitzers, BTR-4 armoured personnel carriers and MMT-40 light tanks.

Lee said that if these companies were not doing business directly with the DDI, they should investigate how their products had inadvertently ended up being used for the manufacturing of arms by the military in Myanmar.

The companies referred to above did not respond to requests for comment.

Countries also have a role in ensuring their companies are not inadvertently facilitating human rights violations, according to the report. "Failing to do so makes them complicit in the Myanmar military's barbaric crimes," Lee said.

"The hypocrisy here is mammoth," McCarthy said. Myanmar's democratically elected National Unity government had been "stonewalled internationally" in its attempts to procure defence capabilities, he said. "Yet many of the same countries claiming not to want to 'intervene' in Myanmar are turning a blind eye to their own companies directly and indirectly arming the dictatorship."

Austria's ministry of labour and economy said it had not issued export licences to the defence industry in recent years and had "no knowledge" of deliveries of military items or dual-use goods to Myanmar from Austrian companies.

A spokesperson at Singapore's ministry of foreign affairs said it did not authorise the transfer of arms or items with potential military application to Myanmar.

"In addition, Singapore submits reports to the UN register of conventional arms on international arms transfers every year," the spokesperson said, adding that the register did not include Myanmar.

“We will not hesitate to take action against those who contravene our laws.”

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[Algeria](#)

Daughter of Algerian journalist arrested on Christmas Eve calls for his release

Imprisonment of Ihsane el-Kadi, a longstanding government critic, prompted outcry from human rights groups



Ihsane el-Kadi founded a radio network and business daily that have been shut down. Photograph: RSF

[Jason Burke](#) *Africa correspondent*

Mon 16 Jan 2023 00.00 EST Last modified on Mon 16 Jan 2023 06.55 EST

The daughter of the prominent Algerian journalist Ihsane el-Kadi has called for his immediate release from detention in a notorious prison following his arrest at midnight on Christmas Eve.

Kadi, who has been a longstanding critic of the Algerian government and is one of the north African country's most influential voices, was [arrested by security forces](#) in plain clothes at his home in the coastal city of Boumerdès, 35 miles east of Algiers, on 24 December and placed in a pre-trial detention.

A judge is scheduled to hear an appeal from his lawyers to release him from detention on Wednesday. His daughter, Tin-Hinane el-Kadi, called for her father to be freed immediately. "There is absolutely nothing in the case that can justify preventive detention," she told the Guardian. "He is not a dangerous criminal and he can't flee because [the authorities] have already confiscated his passport."

The imprisonment has prompted an outcry from human rights and media organisations but almost no interest from western governments keen to maintain relations with Algeria due to its massive energy reserves.

One close associate of Kadi, who requested anonymity for fear of reprisals, said: "Algiers has been very successful in quieting any criticism ... We have not seen any meaningful moves to try to pressure the Algerian regime on its domestic human rights abuses."

Friends and supporters of the jailed journalist say they have been disappointed by the lack of support, which observers say is partly a consequence of the war in Ukraine.

Algeria has massive oil and gas reserves that supply southern European countries and are more important than ever to the European Union as its members seek alternatives to Russian energy. In June, the then [Italian prime minister, Mario Draghi, concluded a series of deals with Algeria](#) to reduce Rome's reliance on Moscow for energy supplies.

High prices paid for both commodities has refilled government coffers, encouraging civilian politicians and the army generals who hold real power behind the scenes to believe they can buy off any opposition to their increasingly authoritarian rule, analysts say.

Khaled Drareni, a north [Africa](#) representative of the campaign group Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF), said the conflict in Ukraine meant Algeria was in a strong diplomatic position.

“The war means that the Europeans need reliable partners and so think about their immediate interests above all,” he said.

Kadi faces charges of carrying out or inciting acts likely to undermine state security and a maximum sentence of seven years in prison. He denies any wrongdoing.

Critics say new Algerian security laws are vaguely worded and designed to provide a pretext to close down any opposition. [Sixteen other journalists](#) were arrested last week on similar charges.

Authorities have also shut down the radio network and business daily that Kadi founded. Both were considered among the very few independent media remaining in Algeria. The country is [ranked 134th out of 180 countries](#) in RSF’s 2022 World Press Freedom Index.

Campaigners say the arrest of Kadi caps an intense campaign of intimidation and harassment targeting people and organisations supportive of the [Hirak reform](#) movement, which emerged in 2019 from weekly demonstrations against the former French colony’s political establishment. The protests forced the 82-year-old then president, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, to [renounce a bid for a fifth term in power and resign](#), but to no real reforms.

The employees of the closed newspaper and radio network [wrote in an online petition](#): “The closure of any media ... is an extremely serious act. It is a violation of democratic rights that have already suffered badly.”

Repression in Algeria has intensified since Abdelmadjid Tebboune came to power in a 2019 election that was boycotted by millions of voters. There are now 200 or more “prisoners of opinion” behind bars, the vast majority connected to the Hirak movement. Activists have also reported [forced disappearances of prominent members of the reform movement](#).

In June 2021, Kadi was [sentenced to six months in prison](#) after calling for the integration of followers of all ideologies, including Islamists, within the reform movement. He was spared jail on that occasion.

Kadi was initially held in the infamous El Harrach prison in Algiers in a crowded communal cell with about 60 others, including some accused of murder and other violent crimes, then moved to a smaller shared cell. The transfer to better accommodation was granted by a sympathetic senior official. The prison dates back to colonial times and is unheated, so extremely cold at night for all inmates.

Tin-Hinane el-Kadi said her father had suffered “unparalleled intimidation and harassment from the state” with his detention the culmination of years of intensifying pressure from the authorities against any dissent.

“It’s a huge backlash. The regime has forced critics to make a choice: leave or go to jail,” she said.

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[Fintech](#)

Fintech firm Revolut assembles behavioural team after criticism of its corporate culture

Exclusive: Company denies creation of team to track overhaul is part of effort to secure UK banking licence



Revolut's co-founder and chief executive, Nik Storonsky, will tell employees they need to be 'inclusive, approachable' and 'respectful at all times'. Photograph: Henrique Casinhas/Sopa Images/Rex/Shutterstock

[*Kalyeena Makortoff*](#) *Banking correspondent*
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Mon 16 Jan 2023 05.49 ESTFirst published on Sun 15 Jan 2023 19.01 EST

Britain's most valuable fintech company, Revolut, is assembling a team to track whether staff are being "approachable" and "respectful", as it tries to

address criticism about an aggressive corporate culture and secure a UK banking licence.

While the crypto trading to payments company is valued at \$33bn (£27bn) and boasts 25 million customers and 6,000 staff in offices stretching from London to Tokyo to São Paulo, it has so far lacked a UK licence that would bring the firm within regulated customer protection schemes.

The new division, which will include psychology and behavioural science experts, will be part of a package of measures unveiled on Friday by bosses hoping to encourage a more “human” approach to a divisive working environment that has reportedly driven out some staff.

In a company-wide town-hall meeting led by its joint founder and chief executive, the [former Lehman Brothers banker Nik Storonsky](#), employees will be told they need to be “inclusive, approachable” and “respectful at all times”, and to use the “the best tone of voice, time and situation to provide feedback”.

The new list of so-called “values-based behaviours” will replace phrasing on the company’s website that includes warning prospective employees that the “bar is very high” and that if staff fall short of “perfection” they will be assessed “accurately, not kindly”, even though “it might hurt sometimes”.

The move comes after a string of controversies over Revolut’s working environment in recent years, with some former staff claiming they were set unachievable targets in the name of the startup’s growth, forced to do unpaid work and put under severe pressure to the point where they eventually quit their jobs.

Revolut has grown exponentially since 2015, when it launched as a prepaid card offering free currency exchange to customers. It has since ballooned into a company employing 6,000 staff across 37 countries and launching more than 50 products and services that ranged from holiday insurance and home rentals, wage advance, buy now pay later and crypto trading.

The company – which Storonsky hopes will become the “Amazon of banking” – was last estimated to be worth \$33bn in 2021, [which at the time was higher than NatWest](#) and prompted congratulations from Rishi Sunak, then chancellor, who said he wanted to see “even more great British fintech success stories”.

However, widely reported issues around Revolut’s corporate culture, as well as its high staff-turnover, are understood to have been raised with Storonsky by board members who have been trying to convince the [Financial Conduct Authority](#) to approve the company’s UK banking licence application since early 2021.

Revolut, which is chaired by the former Standard Life Aberdeen boss Martin Gilbert, secured an EU banking licence through Lithuania in 2018. Securing a UK licence would allow Revolut to hold its British customers’ deposits – rather than relying on a licensed partner – and make money by offering its own loans to customers. The company is hoping UK approval will then convince US, Australian and even Japanese regulators to follow suit and issue licences.

Revolut denies the planned cultural “shift” is directly meant to appease the financial watchdog. However, one of its senior bosses admitted the firm had previously failed to address the “human” side of every day work.

“I wouldn’t say this is a straight reaction from regulatory discussions ... This is more linked to our growth and how we’re changing and the feedback we were getting from our people. We really needed to shift and change,” said Hannah Francis, the head of people experience at Revolut..

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She continued: “We did get some comments that potentially it seemed a little bit more aggressive, but in the fast-paced, hyper-growth that was Revolut however many years ago. We have really moved on since then. So what we really wanted to do is make sure that this new value statement kind of covered that more human aspect around our people, and around how we operate with each other.”

Revolut’s overhaul attempt will involve a “CultureLab” team made up of data analysts, as well as behaviour science and psychology experts, focused on assessing whether employees are adhering to the new standards.

The company said it would also revamp performance reviews for senior managers, require one-to-one catch-ups between managers and staff focused the new values, and would be paying more attention to whether recruits were not only good workers but a good “cultural fit” for the company.

Revolut said it was also launching a new “value champions” recognition and reward programme focused on staff behaviour as well as working results.

The headline and text of this article were amended on 16 January 2023. The team in question is being assembled internally, not “called in” as an earlier headline indicated. And it includes people with a psychology background, but not “psychologists” as an earlier version said based on information provided.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2023/jan/16/fintech-revolut-psychologists-criticism-corporate-culture-uk-banking-licence>

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