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Fashion

Dame Vivienne Westwood: fashion designer dies aged 81

Iconoclastic British designer rose to prominence by outfitting the Sex Pistols as punk took off in the 1970s

- [Remembering Vivienne Westwood: ‘The rebel who was never without a cause’](#)
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Vivienne Westwood, who has died at the age of 81. Her Kings Road boutique was arguably the birthplace of punk. Photograph: Elisa Leonelli/Rex/Shutterstock

[Alyx Gorman](#) and [Sian Cain](#)

Fri 30 Dec 2022 02.52 EST First published on Thu 29 Dec 2022 16.21 EST

Dame [Vivienne Westwood](#), the pioneering British fashion designer who played a key role in the punk movement, has died in London at the age of 81.

Westwood died “peacefully, surrounded by her family” in Clapham, south London, on Thursday, her representatives said in a statement. She had continued to do the things she loved, including designing, working on her book and making art “up until the last moment”, they added.

Her husband and creative partner, Andreas Kronthaler, said: “I will continue with Vivienne in my heart. We have been working until the end and she has given me plenty of things to get on with. Thank you darling.”

A look back at the life and legacy of Dame Vivienne Westwood – video obituary

Born in Tintwistle near the town of Glossop, Derbyshire, in 1941, Westwood moved with her family to London in 1957, where she attended art school for one term. A self-taught designer with no formal fashion training, Westwood learned how to make clothes as a teenager by following patterns and by taking apart secondhand clothes she found at markets in order to understand the cut and construction.

She met the [band manager Malcolm McLaren](#) in the 1960s while working as a primary school teacher after separating from her first husband, Derek Westwood. The pair opened a small shop on Kings Road in Chelsea in 1971 that became a haunt of many of the bands she outfitted, including the Sex Pistols, who were managed by McLaren.



Sex Pistols manager Malcolm McLaren with Vivienne Westwood in 1977. Photograph: Mirrorpix/Getty Images

Her provocative and sometimes controversial designs came to define the punk aesthetic, and Westwood would become one of Britain's most celebrated fashion designers, blending historical references, classic tailoring and romantic flourishes with harder-edged and sometimes overtly political messages.

Westwood and McLaren's shop changed its name and focus several times, including rebranding as Sex, – the pair were fined in 1975 for an “indecent exhibition” there – as well as Worlds End and Seditionaries.

Westwood's first catwalk show, in 1981, for her Pirates collection, was an important step in the punk rebel becoming one of the fashion world's most celebrated stars. But she still found ways to shock: her Statue of Liberty corset in 1987 is credited as starting the “underwear as outerwear” trend.

Even as Westwood's design empire grew into a multimillion-pound business, the designer never lost her activist streak. In 1989 she posed for the cover of Tatler magazine dressed as Margaret Thatcher, over a caption that read: “This woman was once a punk.” She later told Dazed Digital:

“The suit I wore had been ordered by Margaret Thatcher from Aquascutum, but she had then cancelled it.”



Vivienne Westwood, after receiving her OBE in 1992. Photograph: Martin Keene/PA Archive/Press Association Images

Since her earliest punk days, Westwood remixed and inverted imagery drawn from the British monarchy. When she was granted an Order of the British Empire medal in 1992, the designer wore a sober grey skirt suit to accept the honour from Queen Elizabeth II. Outside Buckingham Palace, she gave a twirl to waiting photographers, revealing to all the world that she had worn no knickers.

Westwood was invited back in 2006 to receive the even more auspicious designation of Dame Commander of the British Empire.

In the mid 2000s, Westwood turned her political focus towards the climate crisis. In 2007, she published a manifesto titled [Active Resistance to Propaganda](#), in which she wrote: “We have a choice: to become more cultivated, and therefore more human – or by not choosing, to be the destructive and self-destroying animal, the victim of our own cleverness (To be or not to be).”

As an anti-consumerist, Westwood gleefully undermined her own business interests. In 2010, she told AAP: “I just tell people, stop buying clothes. Why not protect this gift of life while we have it? I don’t take the attitude that destruction is inevitable. Some of us would like to stop that and help people survive.”

In 2015, she [drove a tank to the then prime minister, David Cameron’s home](#) in Oxfordshire, in a protest against fracking. As a vegetarian, Westwood lobbied the British government to [ban the retail sale of fur](#) alongside other top designers including Stella McCartney.

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[Vivienne Westwood drives tank to David Cameron’s house in anti-fracking protest](#) Guardian

She was also an outspoken supporter of Julian Assange. In 2020, she suspended herself in a birdcage to protest against the WikiLeaks founder’s extradition from the UK. In 2022 she designed the suit and dress worn by Assange and his wife, Stella Moris, at their wedding.

Up until the end, Westwood wrote regularly on issues of climate and social justice on her website No Man’s Land. Last month she made a statement of support for the climate protesters who threw soup on Van Gogh’s Sunflowers, writing: “Young people are desperate. They’re wearing a T-shirt that says: Just Stop Oil. They’re doing something.”

Tributes have poured in for the designer. “Vivienne is gone and the world is already a less interesting place. Love you Viv,” tweeted Chrissie Hynde, the

frontwoman of the Pretenders and a former worker at Westwood and McLaren's store.

The American fashion designer Marc Jacobs said he was "heartbroken", writing in a post on Instagram: "You did it first. Always. Incredible style with brilliant and meaningful substance. I continue to learn from your words, and, all of your extraordinary creations. I will always remember the night we bonded over our mutual love for Yves Saint Laurent.

"You never failed to surprise and to shock. I am grateful for the moments I got to share with you and Andreas. Rest in Peace dear Vivienne, although, somehow peace seems like the wrong word."

The model Karen Elson, who frequently collaborated with the designer, wrote on Instagram: "She tore apart notions of femininity, sex, and was one of the first to demand that fashion do better in regards to the climate and without a doubt was one of the most effortlessly original people I've ever met. Fashion, art, culture will mourn this loss of a gargantuan woman who shaped how we wear and what we wore."

Fashion commentator Derek Blasberg wrote that while textbooks may remember Westwood for "ushering in London's counterculture scene to high fashion ... I think she'd want to be remembered most for her advocacy, specifically [concerning] global warming ... Her life was aggressive, relentless and fabulous. A total original."

Westwood is survived by Kronthaler, her second husband, and her two sons, the fashion photographer Ben Westwood, her son with Derek Westwood, and her son with McLaren, Joe Corré, who co-founded the lingerie company Agent Provocateur.

This article was amended on 29 December 2022. When Vivienne Westwood was born in 1941, Tintwistle was in Cheshire, not Derbyshire as an earlier version said. It became part of Derbyshire in 1974.

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Vivienne Westwood

Remembering Vivienne Westwood: ‘The rebel who was never without a cause’

Jess Cartner-Morley recalls meeting the anti-establishment fashion designer and political activist who shaped punk culture and street style

- [Dame Vivienne Westwood dies aged 81](#)
- [Her life and career – in pictures](#)



Vivienne Westwood at an anti-war protest outside a defence and security equipment trade fair in London, September 2021. Photograph: Ki Price/Getty Images



[Jess Cartner-Morley](#)

[@JessC_M](#)

Thu 29 Dec 2022 19.30 EST Last modified on Sun 1 Jan 2023 00.54 EST

Dame [Vivienne Westwood](#) was a very British kind of genius. She was as down to earth as she was flamboyant, a former primary school teacher who came to shape punk culture.

Her clothes were bracingly modern – rips and safety pins, latex and androgyny – but steeped in a love of history. (She had a particular weakness for kilts and corsets.) Her clothes were worn by everyone from Theresa May to Chrissie Hynde, from Princess Eugenie to Pharrell Williams.

She was a rebel, but never without a cause, working tirelessly to raise awareness of the climate emergency many years before it was fashionable.

[The last time I had lunch with Westwood](#), a couple of years ago, she wore a chic silk scarf at her throat, which she fastened with an Extinction Rebellion badge. She was immaculately made up, and ate pizza with a knife and fork, popping the daintiest pieces into her mouth so as not to smudge her bright coral lipstick.

I was supposed to be interviewing her about her fashion legacy, but she was not remotely interested in discussing clothes. Instead, she fixed me with a steady, birdlike gaze that brooked no interruption and talked passionately in her dry Derbyshire lilt about the inequity of modern capitalism, and of the threat posed by populist politicians to progress in protecting the environment.



Vivienne Westwood at an Extinction Rebellion demonstration outside the London headquarters of BP, protesting crimes against the climate in the Papua rainforest, October 2019. Photograph: Ki Price/Getty Images

Westwood's heart had moved on from fashion in the last decade of her life, which she devoted to political causes. But fashion never fell out of love with Vivienne Westwood.

As one of the chief architects of punk, she was the fairy godmother of how every subculture since has used clothes to define its tribe. That streetwear has leapfrogged haute couture to become the leading edge of the global fashion industry owes a great deal to a seamstress from Glossop, Derbyshire who partnered with her boyfriend, [Malcolm McLaren](#), to open a tiny shop on King's Road in London in 1971.

The shop tore through two initial identities – Let It Rock sold Teddy Boy looks, while Too Fast to Live, Too Young to Die pivoted to a rocker aesthetic – before it found fame as Sex in 1974.

Westwood's genius was to capture the energy and iconoclastic spirit of punk, and give it a visual expression. Westwood's clothes were an explainer to the world which showed what punk was. Bondage trousers were a two-fingered salute to polite society. Safety pins were a celebration of anarchy and flux. Costumey historical flourishes were a rejection of the establishment narrative that capitalism was the route to progress for everyone. The [Sex Pistols](#) showed the world what punk sounded like, Westwood showed the world what it looked like.

A look back at the life and legacy of Dame Vivienne Westwood – video obituary

Amid the tortured souls of punk, Westwood carved out her own path, one that was full of humour, beauty and joy. Her clothes – like her worldview – were anti-establishment, but never nihilistic. They were deliberately off-kilter – partly by dint of being ahead of their time – but they were always elegant.

Her Pirates collection of 1981, the first to be shown at [London](#) fashion week, celebrated a dandy aesthetic that presaged the glamorous androgyny not just of the New Romantics, but of Harry Styles. Her Portraits collection, a decade later, put corsets and pearls back in fashion for the first time since the 18th century – three decades later, teenage girls are still saving up for iconic Vivienne Westwood gold-orbed pearl chokers.

There was not a dull moment in Westwood's five-decade career. She was invited to Buckingham Palace to be awarded royal honours twice – in 1992, when she was given an OBE, and in 2006 when she was made a dame – and went knickerless both times. (On the second occasion, however, she declined to twirl for the cameras.) She told reporters that she simply preferred not to wear underwear when wearing a dress. But the anti-establishment spirit of her decision to go commando seemed simply too perfect a vignette of clothes-as-theatre to have been a mere accident.

A true original, Westwood was impossible to pigeonhole. She said to me when we had our last lunch that “I’ve always been a rebel ... punk was a protest, [the clothes] said we don’t accept your taboos, we don’t accept your hypocritical life.”



Vivienne Westwood with Andreas Kronthaler on the runway during the Vivienne Westwood womenswear fall/winter 2022-2023 show at Paris Fashion Week, March 2022. Photograph: Vittorio Zunino Celotto/Getty Images

But in an industry where exciting new talents burn out quicker than matchsticks, she built a fully independent fashion label which has avoided bankruptcies and buyouts, and employs hundreds of staff. And for all her countercultural, defiantly anti-traditional image, she lived that most old-fashioned of lives, a happily married one, for 30 years since marrying Andreas Kronthaler, an Austrian 25 years her junior whom she met while teaching at art school in Vienna. The couple were long a familiar sight around Clapham, where they lived in the same beautifully restored Queen Anne home for more than 20 years.

Three months ago, Westwood was noticeably absent from her Paris fashion week show. The collection has for some years been designed by Kronthaler, but she remained figurehead and muse, and each show would end with her

husband presenting Westwood with a bouquet and taking her hand for a joint bow.

Her absence this time prompted concern for her health, but news came down the rumour mill that the designer had decided to skip Paris fashion week in order to join an XR protest march in London. This explanation was entirely plausible, being very much aligned with Westwood's fashion week priorities.

For the past decade, her catwalk shows have been headlined by Climate Emergency slogan T-shirts, along with protests against austerity, fracking, private land ownership and the protection of rainforests.

For all her apparent eccentricity, Westwood had a very clear-eyed view of what mattered in life – and she knew that it wasn't clothes. She had moved on from fashion long ago, but fashion will be in thrall to Westwood for a long time to come.

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[Vivienne Westwood](#)

A look back at the life and legacy of Dame Vivienne Westwood – video obituary

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Vivienne Westwood: her life and career — in pictures

Vivienne Westwood, 1999. Photograph: Jane Bown/The Observer

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Rights and freedomGlobal development

Actor, doctor, engineer: stories of Iranians sentenced to death over killing at protest

Five men apparently unknown to each other were probably forced to give false confessions



Clockwise from top left; Hossein Mohammadi, Mohammad Mehdi Karami, Seyyed Mohammad Hosseini, Hamid Ghare-Hasanlou and Reza Arya. Photograph: handouts

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[Deepa Parent](#) and [Ghoncheh Habibiazad](#)

Fri 30 Dec 2022 01.00 EST

An actor, a radiologist, a poultry business employee, a karate champion, an engineer – these are five men sentenced to death in [Iran](#) for alleged crimes linked to anti-regime protests. The charges raised against them included murder. With court hearings held largely in secret, their trials have been widely condemned as a sham.

All are due to be executed in connection with the [killing](#) of an agent from the country's feared paramilitary forces, the Basij. The court says Ruhollah Ajamian, 27, was stripped naked and murdered on 3 November. But the circumstances of Ajamian's death are opaque. The alleged attack occurred at a protest commemorating a demonstrator, Hadis Najafi, who had been shot dead by security forces at a rally demanding rights for women.

Tehran has forcefully suppressed peaceful protests that erupted in September, and rights groups accuse pro-regime units of killing hundreds of unarmed demonstrators. Officials seek to portray the rallies as violent "riots" in which security forces have been set upon.

Verified information is scarce. Authorities have been no less hardline in their attempts to silence the families and friends of those on death row, warning them against speaking out. But some feel staying quiet could be worse.

The Guardian has spoken to family and friends of all five men accused of killing Ajamian. Their testimony suggests that the five – none of whom appear to have been acquainted with each other – were probably forced to give false confessions.

Hamid Ghare-Hasanlou, 53



Hamid Ghare-Hasanlou. Photograph: handout

Dr Hamid Ghare-Hasanlou, a radiologist from Karaj, was charged in the Ajamian case with “corruption on earth”, a term used by courts in the Islamic Republic. His wife, Farzaneh, was sentenced to up to 25 years in prison. Amnesty International has said Farzaneh was coerced into giving false incriminating statements against her husband.

Ghare-Hasanlou’s brother, Hasan, said his sibling and sister-in-law had been protesting peacefully, and were detained by police at 2am the next day. “They arrested them and beat Hamid in front of their 13-year-old daughter,” Hasan said. “She is traumatised now, and with what has happened during

these weeks and the death sentence of her dad, she is not in a good mental condition. In only a few hours, their lives completely changed.

“We know that he was tortured in custody as well. Five of his rib bones broke while they tortured him into confessing what he had not done. His left lung got punctured and he started bleeding. They delayed in taking him to the hospital, so a blood clot formed in his lung.”

Speaking on the condition of anonymity, a close friend of Ghare-Hasanlou said: “They put a knife under Hamid’s throat when they wanted to arrest him while his daughter was right there. They threatened his daughter that they would kill her parents if she told anyone about what had happened before sunrise. They also have a son studying at a medical university. He is 20 years old and is on the run, going from one safe house to another so that they don’t arrest him in order to put more pressure on his parents.”

Mohammad Mehdi Karami, 22



Mohammad Mehdi Karami. Photograph: handout

“I’m a pedlar. I sell things on the street,” said a distraught Mashallah Karami, the father of 22-year-old Mehdi Karami, another of the accused. He was speaking [in a video](#) released by the reformist Etemad newspaper,

pleading with authorities to release his son. “I’m asking and begging to remove the death penalty from my son’s file.”

Karami, a karate champion, had been convicted of “corruption on earth” by a court in Alborz province on 5 December. As well as the five people sentenced to death for allegedly killing Ajamian, 11 others received prison sentences. Iranian human rights groups and [Amnesty International](#) dismissed it as a show trial, saying the court did not even specify each defendant’s alleged involvement.

Etemad reported that Karami’s father had said authorities refused to let the family appoint their own lawyer.

Hossein Mohammadi, 26



Hossein Mohammadi. Photograph: handout

Hossein Mohammadi, a theatre actor, was also convicted in the Ajamian case. “His family and close friends decided to announce his execution sentence publicly five days after they knew about it,” a close friend of Mohammadi told the Guardian. They took so long, the person said, because “they were scared to report it publicly” after their government-appointed

defence lawyers warned them against it, saying it could negatively affect his case.

Mohammadi has a love of astronomy, and Interstellar is his favourite film, the friend said. “Hossein is a very emotional person, and he loves acting,” the friend said. “There’s not a lot of money in theatre acting, and so to make ends meet he worked in a post office.”

Seyyed Mohammad Hosseini, 39



Seyyed Mohammad Hosseini. Photograph: handout

An employee of a poultry company, Mohammad Hosseini was on his way to pay respects to his late parents at their graves on 3 November. He came across a large group of protesters who were marching in memory of Najafi, a close friend said.

The source said Seyyed had been battling mental health issues ever since his parents died about 15 years ago. He is the sole breadwinner and responsible for providing for his brother, who has a drug addiction.

“Seyyed wanted to go to the grave of his parents as he always did on Thursday nights. Then he didn’t come to work on Saturday, and I think it

was on Monday that we saw him on state TV,” said the friend.

Iran’s judiciary [has claimed](#) Mohammad Hosseini confessed to stabbing Ajamian. “Seyyed is a quiet and good-natured man who was loved by many. He could not even stand on his feet before taking 7-8 pills daily for anxiety. Those knives that he had carried on that day were for sports since he was a martial arts teacher ... he gave lessons to children for free. Seyyed has no one in this world and only makes about \$190 a month.”

Mohammad Hosseini’s case has been closely followed by the Iranian diaspora. Darya Safai, a Belgian MP of Iranian origin, announced “political sponsorship” of Mohammad Hosseini, personally following up on his case.

A former political prisoner who was arrested and imprisoned in Iran during the 1999 protests, Safai said she felt strongly about the case. “I know that a prisoner keeps thinking ‘is the outside world going to forget about me’. I feel like it’s a responsibility for us to support these prisoners,” she said. “I chose him so I could be his family. I hope he knows that he has a huge family in the world now.”

An independent lawyer, Ali Sharifzadeh Ardakani, was not allowed to defend Mohammad Hosseini but has studied the case and sought to help him. He [said on Twitter](#) he had been allowed to meet Mohammad Hosseini. “His story was devastating – from torture to getting beaten up with his eyes closed and hands and feet tied up, to kicks in the head to the point that he passed out. From iron rods used to beat him on the soles of the feet and shocks in different parts of the body. His statements in court were made under torture and they have no legal grounds,” he said.

The chief justice of Alborz province, Hossein Fazeli Harikandi, has denied the accusations of torture.

Reza Arya, 43



Reza Arya. Photograph: handout

Reza Arya has not been officially announced as the fifth person to have received a death sentence in connection to the Ajamian case, but a close relative told the Guardian that he is.

The relative said Arya was employed by the underground electricity department, and his family loves music. Arya plays the stringed santoor, while his son and his wife play drums.

Arya was driving to visit relatives on the day of the protest, the source said. “The heavy traffic blocked the road, so Reza got out of the car to see what was going on. When he stepped out, he saw people gathered around the spot where Ajamian was killed. He was already dead when Reza got there.”

Alireza Akhondi, a Swedish MP of Iranian origin, has sponsored Arya’s case. “In this difficult situation and the oppression that Iranian people are facing in the past 43 years, it is really important that we do whatever we can for these people,” he said. “These executions are not based on anything.”

Akhondi said attempts to communicate with Iranian officials regarding the case had failed. “They want to show that they don’t care ... They are playing political games that are too familiar for us as politicians. I see this as the

regime is scared. I think this is the first time that the regime sees that the situation is very serious.”

Arya’s relative said he was arrested at his workplace two weeks after the alleged crime, and was now in solitary confinement. He had been allowed to call his family from jail to say he would be executed.

“The children are not attending school any more,” the relative said. “His poor parents are both very old and religious. They keep crying every day. They have said that if he is executed, they will lose all their faith in Islam.”

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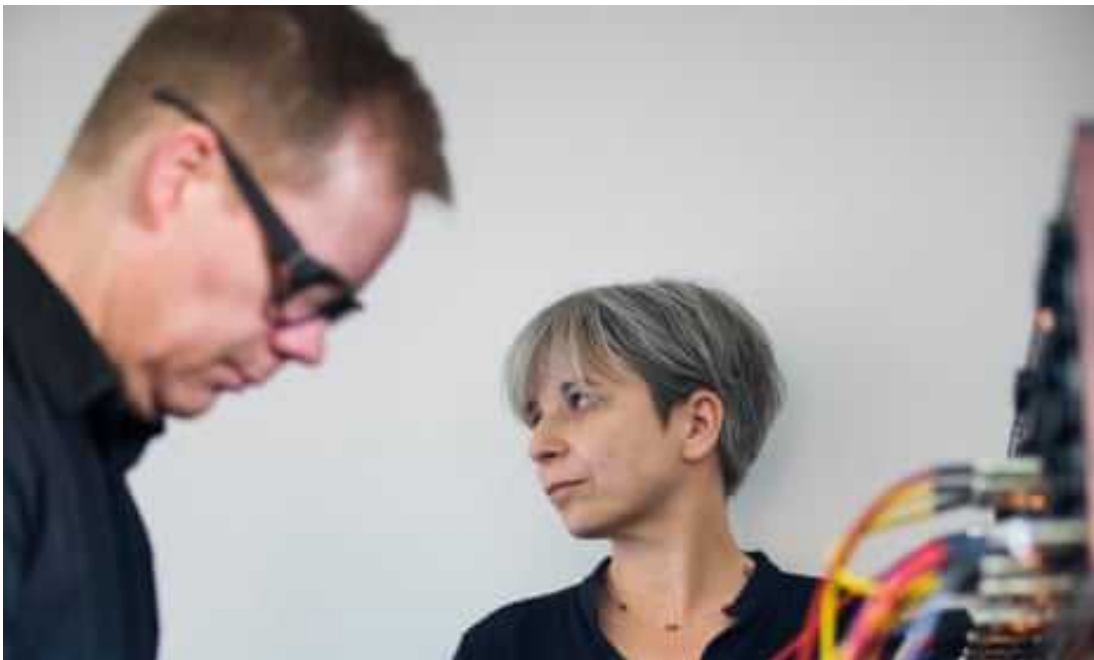
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How Yulia Mahr met Max Richter: ‘My first impression was, who is this sweaty man?’



‘I saw this woman acting and fell in love instantly’ ... Max Richter and Yulia Mahr. Photograph: Mike Terry

Composer Richter and artist Mahr met when they collaborated on a project more than 30 years ago. They now have three children and live in Oxford

[Lizzie Cernik](#)

Fri 30 Dec 2022 01.00 EST

For the composer Max Richter it was love at first sight when he spotted the visual artist Yulia Mahr at Edinburgh festival in 1988. She was performing in a play of the Mahabharata, and he was impressed by her talent and beauty. “There were only a few people there. I saw this woman acting and fell in love instantly,” he remembers. “Of course, I never thought I’d see her again, and she never saw me.”

Two years later, their paths crossed again. Yulia was working as a director for a theatre company in London called the Arts Threshold. “It was set up by Brian Astbury, to give young people their first chance in theatre. There was a lot of experimental stuff going on,” she says. “I needed a composer for a show called The Painted Lady, and someone suggested I speak to Max.” Having studied music, Max was in the early stages of his career, performing regularly as a pianist and trying to make a name for himself as a composer. The interview took place in Maison Bertaux, a Soho patisserie that was a popular hangout for artists at the time. “He cycled there, so my first impression was: ‘Who is this sweaty man?’” laughs Yulia. As they began chatting, she was impressed by his “inquiring mind ... He was really up for experimentation. He was clearly happy to question himself and the world,” she says. “I hired him to do the composing role, as I thought he’d turn up and be committed, which is what I really needed.”

As soon as they began working on the show together, their bond began to grow. “She was very smart and full of ideas,” says Max. “I felt immediately we had a shared sense of what was important in the world and what wasn’t. There was common ground in books, theatre and music as well.” Although there was clearly a spark between them, neither of them wanted to rush. “I

had this calm sense of sureness that we could take our time,” says Yulia. “There was some sort of certainty there, which I’d never felt before.”

In May 1991, they shared a kiss at a friend’s wedding and began dating from then on. “We would go to the cinema, for walks and kite-flying on Hampstead heath,” says Max. “We also went to a lot of art galleries because of Yulia’s interest in visual arts.” The couple moved in together in Islington in 1993, and went on to have three children, born in 1998, 1999 and 2008. They married in 2003 and celebrated with a garden party. “We had no money, just £150 to spend, but it was great,” says Yulia. “My ring cost £1 from the Monsoon leftover bin. The woman on the till was cracking up.”

In 2008, they moved to Berlin, where they lived for eight years. “I’m from Hungary originally, and Max is originally from Germany. We wanted to go back and connect with our European roots,” says Yulia.

They returned to the UK in 2016, setting up an artists’ studio at their home near Oxford. “As well as housing our own work, others can use it as a creative space,” says Yulia. Just before lockdown in 2020, they were able to reconnect with their old mentor Brian, when he came to one of Max’s performances at a concert at the Barbican. “It felt like a beautiful reconnection of all our values. It was one of those time machine moments from when we first met,” says Max. “He sadly died a few days later.”

After more than 30 years together, the couple have faced many challenges, but know the stresses of life can never break them. “If you can get through those things and stay the course, your relationship becomes something so profound and unshakable,” says Yulia. “We are always there for each other.”

[Free + Equal](#) by Studio Richter Mahr is out now

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[France](#)

‘A trend is starting’: France leading way in alcohol-free drinks boom

Rush of startups creating alcohol-free spirits, wines and beers is a departure in a country with a vast booze industry



Customers look at alcohol-free drinks at Le Paon qui Boit in Paris.
Photograph: Laura Stevens/the Guardian



[Angelique Chrisafis](#) in Paris
[@achrisafis](#)

Fri 30 Dec 2022 01.00 EST

When Nicole, a retired executive assistant, began preparing her new year get-togethers with family and friends, her first purchase was an artisan bottle of French alcohol-free gin.

“There’s something in the air right now,” the 71-year-old said. “Young people in their 20s and 30s drink so much less booze than we did. My generation was rock’n’roll, we drank a lot, smoked a lot. Times have changed. Young people are finding alternatives – and it’s benefiting us oldies too as we try to step back from bad habits.”

France is one of the fastest-growing markets in the global [boom in alcohol-free drinks](#). The rush of startups creating alcohol-free spirits, wines, cocktails and beers marks a departure in a country with a vast alcohol industry and a president, [Emmanuel Macron](#), who is so supportive of wine that he was voted person of the year by the nation’s [wine review](#), and hailed for saying: “I drink wine every day, at lunchtime and in the evening.” A growing number of major vineyards are producing alcohol-free options

alongside their standard production and young French developers are inventing new forms of alcohol-free rum and gin, while big companies such as Pernod Ricard are investing in the sector.



Augustin Laborde of Le Paon qui Boit. Photograph: Laura Stevens/the Guardian

At [Le Paon qui Boit](#) in northern Paris, France's first specialist wine cellar for 100% alcohol-free drinks, which opened this year, trade was brisk in the run-up to New Year. A young clientele, many in their 20s and 30s, were browsing the 400 different types of drinks, including up to 50 alcohol-free sparkling wines that could be served as an alternative to champagne.

Augustin Laborde set up the shop after a career in international human rights. He quit alcohol during the Covid lockdowns but said the French alcohol-free market was about more than people wanting to stay sober. "It's about a new kind of flexibility of thinking," he said. "Around 80% of our customers still drink alcohol, but they're interested in alternating with alcohol-free. At the start, people thought our customers would be mainly Muslims or pregnant women, and although those customers do come in and are welcomed, they only account for 20%."

Browsing the shop, Anna, 29, a digital project manager, said: “I often have a month off alcohol, just for a break. It used to be considered a really odd thing to do, but that’s starting to change. Drinking water all night was never fun. The new drinks are innovative, and it’s nice not to be infantilised by only having the option of drinking Coke.”

Felix Bogniard, a sommelier who ran a restaurant in central Paris, had already created a tasting menu with homemade, non-alcoholic drinks paired to dishes, included fermented drinks and rare types of juices. “It’s progress to be able to offer the joy of a specific drink paired to a dish, even for people who don’t drink alcohol,” he said. “We’re at a really important moment, there’s a trend starting. People are interested in alcohol-free drinks, even if they do drink alcohol.”

Susie Goldspink of IWSR Drinks Market Analysis said [France](#) was one of the fastest-growing no-alcohol markets and stood out for its high level of new consumers, particularly younger people. “Last year 14% of consumers said they were abstainers, whereas this year it was up to 20%. Abstainers in France are more likely than in other markets to be from the youngest age group, generation Z,” she said.

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The market for alcohol-free drinks is booming worldwide. Photograph: Laura Stevens/the Guardian

She said alcohol-free innovation came amid an established culture of wine drinking. “This new generation of moderators still want to feel like they’re having an adult drink that fits with the occasion but don’t necessarily want the alcohol with it.”

Calixte Payan, one of France’s new young producers, was the first to make alcohol-free spirits using real French gin and rum. Experts in Grasse, the French perfume capital, extract the alcohol and then his team at a historic distillery near Lyon rework the drinks with a number of complex distilling techniques. A drink from Payan’s brand, Sober Spirits, was voted the best alcohol-free rum in the world in London last year, and in San Francisco this year. “We’re at an early stage in France, but the opportunities are huge because there is a lot of demand for these drinks. Before, people didn’t want to openly say they didn’t drink, now they’re going into shops to ask for alcohol-free products ... France is recognised worldwide for its alcohol – fine wines and champagnes – and it could also become recognised for its alcohol-free drinks. There is still work to be done, but people like us are trying to give consumers the best experience possible.”

Karima Lounis handles sales for the French no-alcohol brand JNPR, made in Normandy from juniper berries, and runs tastings across France. She said France's no-alcohol drive was also a no-sugar drive. "People don't want sugar in their drinks, and they're surprised to learn we can create these drinks without sugar," she said. "I've been surprised at end of year tastings by how many young people, between 19 and 30, want to stop drinking alcohol."

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/dec/30/trend-starting-france-leading-way-alcohol-free-drinks-boom>

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Are you bored yet?Books

Are you bored yet? Five great books to snuggle down with over the Christmas break

From a history of art without men, to a post-pandemic novel and a classic collection of short stories, lose yourself in a good read



Curl up with a good book ... Photograph: Sensay/Getty Images/iStockphoto

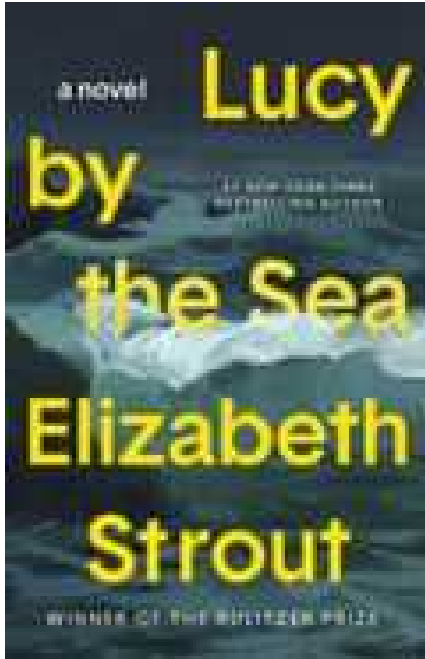


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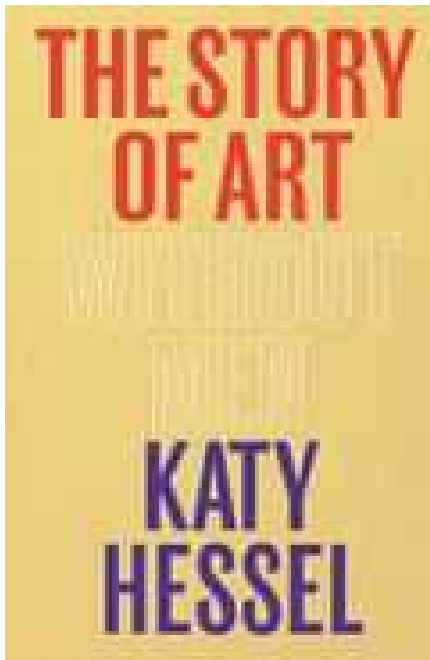
Fri 30 Dec 2022 02.00 EST

The presents have been opened, the loved ones dispersed and the booze is all gone. What better time to settle down to a good book? The long, dark days between [Christmas](#) and the new year offer a time to catch up, but also to explore, reflect and revisit. These suggestions will fatten up your inner bookworm for the year ahead.



Lucy By the Sea by Elizabeth Strout

Strout's latest dispatch from the life of Lucy Barton is one of the first post-pandemic novels to have fully metabolised the trauma. It takes the recently widowed Lucy off to a chilly clifftop hideaway with her risk-averse ex, William, from where they navigate the ups and downs of family life at a safe distance from their beloved daughters. It is Strout's version of *The Tempest*: a paean to peace and reconciliation at the end of a turbulent story cycle.



[The Story of Art Without Men](#) by [Katy Hessel](#)

There have been so many art histories without women over the centuries that Hessel's beautifully written 500-year survey is a welcome, necessary, addition to the bookshelves. Quilting, folk art and ceramics – so long dismissed as “women's work” – are reclaimed as art, in a book which is itself a lovely quiltwork of familiar movements, seen afresh through their forgotten personalities.

[Dubliners](#) by [James Joyce](#)

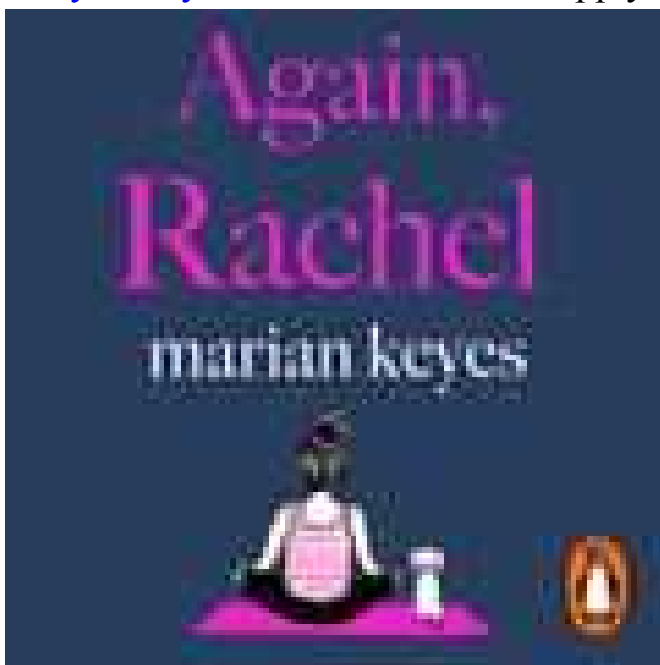
This is one of the world's great short story collections, so intricately patterned that it can withstand any number of re-readings. The 15 “epiclets” – Joyce's word – are all set in the Irish capital, following a thematic course from childhood to maturity, until it arrives at the maudlin Gabriel Conroy, in *The Dead*: “His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead.”

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Audiobook: [Again, Rachel by Marian Keyes](#)

Keyes has a voice and a wit that can see off the worst doldrums. So the fact that she reads her own audiobook gives an extra pleasure to the resurrection of alcoholic Rachel, many years dry, and now a group leader at the Cloisters, where she fought her own demons in the 1998 bestseller Rachel's Holiday. Each of her patients has a poignant story to tell. Meanwhile, Mammy Walsh is about to turn 80, reuniting her five daughters for a surprise birthday bash in this warm hug of a novel.

[2b: We See the Sights by Miriam and Ezra Elia](#)

A little gem – part book, part artwork – from brother-sister team [Miriam](#) and Ezra Elia. It's the latest of a parody series based on the Peter and Jane Ladybird reading scheme of the 1960s and 70s. John and Susan's sightseeing

trip with Mummy includes Kim Kardashian atop Nelson's column, and cancel culture drones circling the National Gallery. "Run! They have detected your unconscious biases," says Mummy.

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- Time for some hard truths: the Tories should have stuck with Boris Johnson
- As northern mayors, we're too often treated like Oliver Twist begging government for more scraps. This is how we change it
- In 2022, I walked away from the greatest love of my life so far. This is why I did it
- Extending conscription may make Taiwan feel safer – but at the cost of alienating its young people

[Opinion](#)**Boris Johnson**

Time for some hard truths: the Tories should have stuck with Boris Johnson

[Owen Jones](#)



He was a disaster as PM, but without him it's looking like electoral oblivion for Britain's 'natural party of government'



‘Driven by petty revenge against Sunak, who he sees as a backstabber, Johnson clearly aided Truss’s ascent to power.’ Photograph: Reuters

Fri 30 Dec 2022 02.00 EST Last modified on Fri 30 Dec 2022 06.30 EST

This year, the Conservative party made perhaps one of its greatest political errors in nearly two centuries of existence: getting rid of Boris Johnson. Don’t worry, I’m not suddenly getting nostalgic for his wretched premiership. The man clearly deserves an ignominious place in the history books – from the tens of thousands of avoidable deaths because of his bungled handling of the pandemic to his seemingly pathological [addiction to deceit](#).

The question I’m interested in here is about the Tories’ own interests; indeed, Johnson’s dethroning may well consign the party to the electoral wilderness for a generation or more.

When they made him leader, Tory MPs entered into a pact, not a love affair, with Johnson. They set aside misgivings about his moral character because he served a purpose: he was the only Conservative with a populist appeal to see off Nigel Farage and Jeremy Corbyn, and [deliver the Brexit](#) craved by the Tory Spartans. For a while, Johnson’s rupture with the EU was sufficiently hard to satisfy the cravings of his rightwing flank. But for them

Brexit was a means, not an end: they sought a bonfire of regulations, rights and taxes. To their growing horror, Johnson was content to invest and to tax.

This sat well with many of the voters who joined the Tory fold in the winter of 2019. After all, rightwing economic libertarians represent a tiny fraction of the British electorate. You could say that Johnson's great political achievement was to keep the electorally poisonous excesses of Tory economic thinking at bay, allowing him to attract supporters who were socially conservative, but who had developed a profound distaste for austerity.

But soon Conservative MPs and the elderly, shire-dwelling Tory membership tired of their prime minister. Not because of his deceit, but because of his lack of Thatcherite zeal. Anyone who succeeded him would have had to prove their commitment to a hardcore economic agenda.

This meant that as soon as Tory MPs secured Liz Truss – the most committed ideologue in Johnson's cabinet – a place in the final two for the membership to decide, her triumph was inevitable. The one politician with a realistic prospect of preventing such an outcome was Penny Mordaunt, but her campaign was torpedoed because she was deemed insufficiently committed to demonising trans people. The [toxic rightwing obsession](#) with trans people, then, played a role in sealing the Tories' fate.



‘The Tories might have gone on to lose a second general election under Johnson, but not so badly as to leave political recovery a distant prospect.’ Boris Johnson and Rishi Sunak in 2020. Photograph: Reuters

The fall of Johnson made the rise of Truss almost unavoidable. And with her came an unapologetic hard-right economic agenda that delighted the grassroots before [crashing the markets](#) and causing mortgage payments to spike. This catastrophe repelled many of those who opted for the Tories in 2019 and, combined with the resulting political turmoil, led to a near total collapse for the Conservatives.

Rishi Sunak’s personal ratings remain competitive with those of the Labour leader – although, given [Sunak’s invisibility](#), perhaps that’s because it’s so easy to forget he’s prime minister – and he can claim vindication for predicting the collision between Trussonomics and reality. But his premiership is doing little good for Tory support, which remains somewhere between dire and calamitous. Indeed, would Johnson have embarked on Sunak’s profoundly unpopular [relaunch of austerity](#)?

True to his trademark sense of humility, Johnson declared in his [resignation speech](#) that “we’re actually only a handful of points behind in the polls”. This wasn’t delusional: the Tories were around seven points behind the opposition when he was turfed out of No 10. That deficit now stretches to

more than [20 points](#). It is true that governments are often unpopular halfway through parliaments and can recoup their support as an election draws close. But there is a difference between a defeat and a rout. The Tories might have gone on to lose a second general election under Johnson, but not so badly as to leave political recovery a distant prospect.

The Tories, frankly, should have held their nerve. Overthrowing a leader naturally triggers political turmoil, which grates on voters. That would have been a price worth paying if there had been a likely successor with popular appeal committed to economic policies that weren't electoral poison. Instead, the [Conservatives](#) had a civil war, and then appointed the most disastrous leader they've ever had.

All of this, of course, means the return of Boris Johnson is entirely plausible, especially if the Tories suffer an electoral drubbing in the May 2023 local elections. If that leads Tory MPs to conclude Sunak must be ejected from power, Johnson is the only viable replacement: you simply cannot appoint a third unelected prime minister, so you must return to the leader who delivered your electoral mandate. That's clearly Johnson's plan; why else are sources saying he will [stand again](#) in Uxbridge?

But he should not be so sure he will prove to be the Tory saviour this time. It is likely that voters will have simply made up their minds. It will be easy to tie Johnson to this crime scene, because – driven by petty revenge against Sunak, who he sees as a backstabber – he clearly aided Truss's ascent to power.

Fatalism now grips Tory MPs, which is why so many are deserting politics, perhaps hoping their destiny will be lucrative City jobs, rather than the televised humiliation of being trounced at the next election. What is done is done, and the absence of a time machine leaves the Tories with no good options. A tragedy for Britain's so-called "natural party of government" – less so for the rest of us.

- Owen Jones is a Guardian columnist
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OpinionDevolution

As northern mayors, we're too often treated like Oliver Twist begging government for more scraps. This is how we change it

[Jamie Driscoll](#)



A devolved north can be trusted to thrive – just look at what we've achieved in the north-east already

- Jamie Driscoll is mayor of the North of Tyne combined authority



‘To start building wealth here that we can keep, we’re creating jobs by repurposing relics of forgotten industries.’ The Newcastle and Gateshead riversides from the Gateshead Millennium bridge. Photograph: Joe Dunckley/Alamy

Fri 30 Dec 2022 04.00 ESTLast modified on Fri 30 Dec 2022 11.28 EST

It is a truth universally acknowledged that whatever the problem, it is always someone else’s fault. Especially in politics. What, though, if there are some genuinely difficult problems to solve? Like why the north-east of England generates less wealth per capita than the south-east. Why 38% of our [children live in poverty](#). Why our life expectancy is the [lowest in England](#).

Michael Gove has just confirmed the government’s extended [devolution deal](#) for the north-east. It’s worth £4.3bn and covers transport and adult education, and includes a [£1.4bn](#) investment fund for economic regeneration. I’ve been working on it for three years and it’s the best-funded devolution deal in England. But will it fix what needs fixing?

I’ve been North of Tyne mayor for three and a half years. My patch covers Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland, up to the Scottish border. In that time, we have smashed our targets from central government, creating 14 years’ worth of jobs, all paying at least the real living wage. Every £1 we

invest returns more than £3 to the Treasury in payroll taxes alone. [Devolution](#) works, and we need more of it.

Of course, we can't fix everything. Gove's deal does not reverse a dozen years of austerity and decades of orchestrated underinvestment by Westminster. Councils in the north-east have faced combined funding cuts of £800m a year since 2010. When I was growing up in the north-east, everyone had a relative who worked in heavy industry – coalmines, steelworks and shipyards. All were closed within a few short years. Our GDP per capita in the north-east plummeted from 93% of the national average in 1981 to 73% by 2017. No other English region has suffered this decline.

The impact of this is felt today. When I spoke to teachers at a school near the old Swan Hunter shipyard along the Tyne recently, the kids said they want to be footballers and actors and pop singers – good for them. But what if that doesn't happen, I asked their teachers? "A lot of these kids don't know anyone who's an engineer, or a senior administrator. They don't even know anyone who earns enough to buy a house," they replied.



‘When I was growing up, everyone had a relative who worked in coalmines, steelworks or shipyards. All were closed within a few short years.’ The Swan Hunter shipyard on the River Tyne. Photograph: Owen Humphreys/PA

I think the solution lies in not only [generating more wealth](#) in the north-east, but keeping it here. If we can get everyone a decent income in a worthwhile occupation, many of our other social ills will be alleviated. We'll reap a long-term dividend from reduced demand on our NHS, the criminal justice system and social services. That benefits the whole country.

To start building wealth here that we can keep, we're creating jobs by repurposing relics of forgotten industries. We've cleared the site of the [Swan Hunter shipyard](#) and are in conversations with an international investor to build wind-turbine components. Our Tyne task force is creating jobs in the clean-energy sector. We've landed 11 different tech companies here, creating highly paid jobs in low-carbon businesses. That's what we can achieve when we're empowered to make our own decisions.

Still, too much of this power is not in our hands. Our industries and utilities are overwhelmingly owned by distant billionaires. Take Northern PowerGrid, which is owned by Warren Buffett, and generates [£125m profit](#) each year on a turnover of £355m. Northumbrian Water, owned by Hong Kong-based Li Ka-shing, enjoys similar returns. Our regional infrastructure makes other people rich – but not us. It's a real-life game of Monopoly. Our elected MPs and councillors have no power to change this. Until we get control of how we generate wealth, we'll always be going to Westminster like Oliver Twist, saying: "Please, sir, I want some more."

English devolution is in its infancy compared with other advanced economies, so we must push for more. Our adult education system is devolved, but not the careers service. I'd like to see that changed because the results speak for themselves – since devolution we've seen a 49.7% increase in enrolments to adult education, with 96% of those enrolled completing their course and getting a qualification.

We've used our adult education budget to train welders, chefs, computer coders and other skilled professions. Our flexibility lets us work on a micro level. We have funded organisations such as [Citizens Advice](#) to coach people for job interviews via Zoom. We're helping care workers retrain in later life. Our Just Transition programme helps people who worked in high-carbon industries retrain for nothing to get jobs in emerging green sectors.

We funded a community cafe kitchen to look like a professional restaurant to help trainee chefs feel they have a right to occupy beautiful spaces they have never set foot in. And it works. People who have not had a job interview in years now earn the real living wage in hospitality businesses. Rather than pushing people towards the universal credit meat-grinder, we boost people's confidence. It's about breaking the catch-22 that keeps people trapped – and feeling trapped – when they want to earn their own crust. And it's also about providing jobs so talented people don't need to leave the north-east to develop their careers.

Of course, this new deal will not give nurses a pay rise or restore our council funding. But the recognition by central government that decentralisation might give better results is a turning point. In the [levelling up white paper](#), there was much talk of accountability for mayors and combined authorities. Bring it on.

We want the power and upfront investment here so we can generate the wealth that pays it back, just like any other business. The north of England wants devolution, and we're getting on with it. Let's create a system of "devo max" so we can finally remove the belief that Westminster is both the cause of – and the solution to – all our problems.

- Jamie Driscoll is mayor of the North of Tyne combined authority
- ***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](#).***

OpinionRelationships

In 2022, I walked away from the greatest love of my life so far. This is why I did it

[Moya Lothian-McLean](#)



I was far from alone in going through a major breakup. Perhaps others, too, found romantic love was not enough to fulfil them



‘The story of Phoebe Bridgers and Paul Mescal felt like a fitting culmination to a year marked by the end of long-term relationships.’ Photograph: Taylor Hill/Getty Images

Fri 30 Dec 2022 01.00 EST Last modified on Fri 30 Dec 2022 07.06 EST

Rumours swirled last week that alternative pin-up couple Phoebe Bridgers and Paul Mescal had parted ways. The pairing of singer and actor over two-and-a-bit years was the stuff of internet legend: he was the sensitive hunk with a star-making turn in the TV adaptation of Sally Rooney’s *Normal People*. She was the sorrowful indie-crooner who, it turned out, was one of Mescal’s favourite musicians. They met [over Zoom](#), in a public interview as the pandemic raged. Soon they were dating and seemed destined to live happily ever after, until suddenly [gossipy reports](#) suggested it was all over.

In my circle of friends, this story felt like a fitting culmination to a year marked by the end of long-term relationships. “Wow, the season finale of breakup season,” one [tweeted](#) in response to the maybe-news. It doesn’t really matter whether these two celebrities, entirely separate from my social milieu, are no longer together – we saw what we wanted to see: 2022, the year of big breakups, may have claimed yet more scalps.

In the pub the other day, my friend Stan and I started counting the long-term couples (which we defined as relationships of two years or more) in our immediate friend groups who had separated over the course of the year. Including ourselves, there were 12. This, said Stan, seemed a lot. Later I recounted the exercise to others, who offered more anecdotes about the recent dissolution of long-term partnerships. Suddenly it felt like *everyone* was breaking up around us.

Of these relationships, a majority were heterosexual but a significant number were queer. Ages of those involved ranged from late 20s to nearing 40. None seemed to have ended for a dramatic or acrimonious reason. They were “amicable” breakups – sure, there may have been hurt feelings and recriminations, but no one committed a major infraction that halted the relationship prematurely. These long-term couples simply decided, in 2022, they had run their course.

I am not under the illusion that our informal data collection would weather scientific scrutiny. Nor is it likely to apply beyond our social spheres, which skew heavily towards urban-dwelling, middle-class millennials. For others, I’m sure 2022 will be remembered as the year it seemed everyone was getting engaged, or setting up [polycules on a Caribbean island](#). For my friends, though, the rate of big breakups became a running joke. “The curse got me,” one casualty texted me wryly, after they called time on their relationship of five years.

Such a phenomenon naturally gave rise to theorising about its cause. Perhaps it was simply age: it was suggested that the 27 to 30 range is a key stage in serious relationships; you either get out or dive into a mortgage. This held up for some of us, but it still didn’t feel like the whole story.



‘The omnipresence of titles such as bell hooks’s 1999 book *All About Love* on social media feeds this year suggests something is afoot.’ Photograph: Karjean Levine/Getty Images

The pandemic, of course, was cited repeatedly, with differing interpretations: was it psychological pressure from living under two years of Covid-19 restrictions that eventually pushed couples apart? Or perhaps problems thrown up during lockdown had been initially written off, but if issues persisted into 2022 splits then occurred?

Talking with some of the newly single – and examining my own feelings – I sensed a dramatic change of perspective. A cliché, perhaps, but lockdown, the scale of loss and the long tail of Covid-19 problems have left us with a more urgent understanding of how transient life really is. Wants and needs came into sharp focus. Priorities changed – including the importance placed on long-term romantic love.

In the past two decades there has been a glut of academic work and discussion in popular media that attempts to dismantle the cultural veneration of romantic love. Such thinking argues that we can attach the same importance to alternative forms of love, be it platonic or familial. The omnipresence of titles such as bell hooks’s 1999 book *All About Love* on social media this year suggests something is afoot. Meanwhile, a focus on

community dominated the lockdown years. Is it any wonder the message that romantic love is not a cure-all may actually be getting some practical application?

I cannot speak for my former partner, but I believe objectively we had mileage left in our relationship. There were cracks, yes, but at other points in time, these may have been surmountable. Broadly, we were happy enough – but in 2022, that itself became a faultline for us.

As the months slipped by, I was gnawed by the sense that this “happy enough” relationship was actually shortchanging us. So much of our existence as young people feels decided by forces beyond our control, from the pandemic to the housing market and the government’s shredding of public services. Surely in this rare space where my partner and I had basic agency, we *had* to demand more than simply being “happy enough” for a while longer, and consider individually what would make us feel alive right now? Could romantic love alone bear the weight of those ambitions?

No, it was concluded. Dreams previously compromised, or shelved permanently in favour of preserving a serious relationship, could no longer be put off. With tenderness, we let each other go. I had walked away from the great romantic love of my life thus far, a man who looked like a movie star and read Angela Davis. He was everything I’d been told would complete me. Theoretically, I knew this wasn’t true, but realising it materially was truly emancipating.

Discussing long-term breakups on social media recently, one respondent suggested to me a host of negative reasons – including the possibility of Covid-19-induced “neurological damage” – that may have pushed relationships apart. Some were interpreting these splits as the departure of love from our lives, while I was viewing them as a rejection of the idea that romantic love alone is enough to fulfil us when a multitude of other desires go unmet.

Who is to say if I am right? All I know is I have never loved harder since my breakup, nor dreamed bigger. This is no reflection on my relationship, but

rather the freedom engendered by busting open your horizons. Here's to 2022, a year of big breakups. Losing love has never felt so liberating.

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

Extending conscription may make Taiwan feel safer – but at the cost of alienating its young people

Brian Hioe



China is still regarded as a threat, although not an immediate one and Taiwan's military faces an image problem



‘The debate about the necessity of military service reflects the paradoxes that Taiwan has faced for decades.’ Taiwanese troops training in Penghu. Photograph: EyePress News/Rex/Shutterstock

Fri 30 Dec 2022 03.00 EST Last modified on Fri 30 Dec 2022 07.51 EST

On Tuesday, less than two days after [the largest deployment](#) of Chinese military craft into Taiwanese airspace this year, Taiwan’s president, Tsai Ing-wen, announced an extension of [military conscription](#), lengthening the period for men born after 2005 from four months to one year.

It was expected that Tsai would make the announcement before the end of the year, so this was not a direct reaction to China’s most recent military threats. Tsai cited China’s [August live-fire exercises](#) around Taiwan, which took place after Nancy Pelosi’s [visit to the country](#). Tsai also brought up the invasion of Ukraine as offering lessons for Taiwan.

China’s attempts to intimidate [Taiwan](#) have perhaps had the opposite effect, giving Tsai more leverage to conduct long-discussed military reforms. So, too, with greater international discussion of Taiwan after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Yet the extension of the draft could hurt youth support for Tsai’s Democratic Progressive Party (DPP).

In the 24 hours since the announcement, reactions have been divided among young people. Some have criticised the DPP as having failed to consult them before lengthening the draft. Others have defended it as a necessary measure to make [China](#) think twice about an invasion, and to serve as a deterrent against a shooting war.

The split in reactions reflects the unusual dilemma of young people in Taiwan. [Identity trend polls](#) overwhelmingly show increasing Taiwanese identity and waning Chinese identity. Nevertheless, this has [not led to an uptick](#) in enthusiasm for joining the military, even if that could deter the threat of annexation.

The Tsai administration came to power after [the 2014 Sunflower movement](#), a youth-led social movement against [a trade bill](#) that the then president, Ma Ying-jeou, and his Kuomintang (KMT) party hoped to sign with China. Since then, Tsai and the DPP have enjoyed support from young people cautious of China, while the historically pro-unification KMT has struggled to win them over – in 2020, the KMT had [fewer than 9,000 members](#) under 40.

[Generations of Taiwanese men](#) have served as conscripts, usually for between two and three years. Time in the military was seen as a rite of passage for young men, especially during Taiwan's authoritarian era, as documented in films ranging from New Wave classics such as Hou Hsiao-hsien's 1986 film *Dust in the Wind* to more contemporary fare such as Doze Niu's *Paradise in Service* (2014). During this period, the KMT ruled Taiwan in a one-party fashion, while the DPP traces its origins to Taiwan's democracy movement.

The original setting of the draft to four months – down from a year – [took place in 2013](#) during the Ma administration, possibly as a concession to China, during a period in which the KMT was setting aside its historical antagonisms with the CCP and reinventing itself as a party supportive of closer political relations with China. However, the Ma administration's actions provoked blowback from young people who feared a loss of Taiwan's democratic freedoms in the form of the Sunflower movement and [the rise of a generation](#) of young politicians with China-sceptic platforms.

Yet the Taiwanese military now faces image problems, part of which goes back to its history as the KMT's enforcer during authoritarian times. And incidents such as [the 2013 death](#) of the conscript Hung Chung-Hsiu at the hands of his superiors provoked massive demonstrations and have not helped the military's image. Likewise, military training is commonly seen as not useful, with many stories of conscripts seeing little firearms training, and instead being made to [mop, clean toilets](#) or carry out other menial tasks.

The debate about the necessity of military service reflects the paradoxes that Taiwan has faced for decades. A sword of Damocles has hung over the island for the past 70 years, but there are times when the threat seems quite near and others when it seems quite far. It is not always the case that China is perceived as an immediate and pressing threat; it is often read more as a long-term one.

At the time of August's live-fire exercises, [Taiwan remained calm](#) even as international headlines trumpeted the potential of imminent conflict. So, too, with the more recent drills, in which there was also little domestic reaction. This is not to say that Taiwanese do not react to perceived threats from China, as reflected in the Tsai administration's sweep to power after the Sunflower movement or [reactions to the 2019 protests](#) in Hong Kong. But Taiwan does not always react to threats it may have long since become inured to, which colours the public response to extending the draft.

- Brian Hioe is one of the founding editors of New Bloom magazine, an online magazine covering activism and youth politics in Taiwan and Asia Pacific
- ***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](#).***

2022.12.30 - Around the world

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China

China Covid: experts estimate 9,000 deaths a day as US says it may sample wastewater from planes

Infectious disease experts believe strategy more effective in slowing virus spread than new travel restrictions, as health data firm says thousands are likely dying daily in China



Airline personnel wearing protective suits check passengers on arrival at Xiamen international airport in China's Fujian province last week as Covid infections surge across the country. Photograph: Mark R Cristino/EPA

Guardian staff and agencies

Thu 29 Dec 2022 22.04 ESTLast modified on Thu 29 Dec 2022 22.28 EST

The United States is considering sampling wastewater taken from international aircraft to track any emerging new Covid-19 variants as

infections surge in [China](#), as UK-based health experts estimate about 9,000 people a days are now dying of the disease in China.

The proposed of testing wastewater by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention would provide a better solution to tracking the virus and slowing its entry into the US than new travel restrictions announced this week, three infectious disease experts said.

The US and a number of other countries have said travellers from China will require mandatory negative Covid tests.

Their comments came as UK-based health data firm Airfinity said about 9,000 people in China were probably dying each day from Covid, nearly doubling its estimate from a week ago.

Covid infections started to sweep across China in November, picking up pace this month after Beijing dismantled its zero-Covid policies including regular PCR testing on its population and publication of data on asymptomatic cases.

Cumulative deaths in China since 1 December likely reached 100,000, with infections totalling 18.6m, Airfinity said in a statement on Thursday. It used modelling based on data from Chinese provinces before the recent changes to reporting cases were implemented, it said.

Airfinity expects China's Covid infections to reach their first peak on 13 January with 3.7m cases a day.

Their figures were in contrast to the several thousands of cases reported by Chinese health authorities a day, after a nationwide network of PCR test sites was largely dismantled and authorities pivoted from preventing infections to treating them.

The European Union's health agency said on Thursday it believed the EU-wide introduction of mandatory Covid screenings for travellers from China was currently "unjustified", pointing to the "higher population immunity in

the EU/EEA, as well as the prior emergence and subsequent replacement of variants currently circulating in China”.

But in a series of tweets, the [World Health Organization](#) chief, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, renewed his appeal to China to be more forthcoming with detailed data on the pandemic situation in the country.

“In the absence of comprehensive information from China, it is understandable that countries around the world are acting in ways that they believe may protect their populations,” Tedros wrote.

Airfinity expects deaths to peak on 23 January with about 25,000 a day, with cumulative deaths reaching 584,000 since December. Since 7 December, when China made its abrupt policy U-turn, authorities have officially reported just 10 Covid deaths.

Internationally, travel restrictions such as mandatory testing have so far failed to significantly curb the spread of Covid and function largely as optics, said Dr Michael Osterholm, an infectious disease expert at the University of Minnesota.

“They seem to be essential from a political standpoint. I think each government feels like they will be accused of not doing enough to protect their citizens if they don’t do these,” he said.

The US this week also expanded its voluntary genomic sequencing program at airports, adding Seattle and Los Angeles to the program. That brings the total number of airports gathering information from positive tests to seven.

But experts said that might not provide a meaningful sample size.

A better solution would be testing wastewater from airlines, which would offer a clearer picture of how the virus was mutating, given China’s lack of data transparency, said Dr Eric Topol, a genomics expert and director of the Scripps Research Translational Institute in La Jolla, California.

Getting wastewater off planes from China “would be a very good tactic”, Topol said, adding that it was important the US upgrade its surveillance

tactics “because of China being so unwilling to share its genomic data”.

China has said criticism of its Covid statistics is groundless, and played down the risk of new variants, saying it expects mutations to be more infectious but less severe. Still, doubts over official Chinese data have prompted many places – including Italy and Japan as well as the US – to impose new testing rules on Chinese visitors as Beijing lifted travel controls.

Airplane wastewater analysis is among several options the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is considering to help slow the introduction of new variants into the US from other countries, a spokesperson for the agency, Kristen Nordlund, said.

“Previous Covid-19 wastewater surveillance has shown to be a valuable tool and airplane wastewater surveillance could potentially be an option,” she said in an email.

French researchers reported in July that airplane wastewater tests showed requiring negative Covid tests before international flights does not protect countries from the spread of new variants. They found the Omicron variant in wastewater from two commercial airplanes that flew from Ethiopia to France in December 2021 even though passengers had been required to take Covid tests before boarding.

Reuters and Agence France-Presse contributed to this report

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[US weather](#)

Human toll of deadly US storm grows in ‘blizzard of the century’

Heartbreaking stories pour in about people missing a heart transplant or dying inside a car



With the death toll mounting, Joe Biden and first lady Jill Biden have offered their condolences to grieving families. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

[Maya Yang](#) in New York

Thu 29 Dec 2022 16.25 ESTLast modified on Thu 29 Dec 2022 16.52 EST

One man never came home from a grocery run. Another man missed a chance at a new heart. A woman died after getting trapped in her car.

The human toll that the winter blast which gripped much of the US last week has continued to mount. Since the [“blizzard of the century”](#) swept through

multiple parts of the nation last week, at least 60 people have died [countrywide](#), and details about the heartbreak their families are enduring have been trickling out.

In Buffalo, [New York](#), alone, the death toll has climbed to 37 as rescue workers continue to clear snow-filled roads as part of their search-and-rescue operations.

One of those who died was Abdul Sharifu.

At about noon on Christmas Eve, Sharifu left his home in Buffalo to buy groceries for others. The 26-year-old Congo native who left his country after both of his parents were killed amid war did not return home alive.

Sharifu had gone for milk for a friend's child because the child would not stop crying, according to Sharifu's cousin, who [spoke](#) to Business Insider. When his pregnant wife, Gloria – who was due within a week – woke up from a nap, she was surprised to find that Sharifu had not yet returned home.

After unsuccessfully calling her husband's phone, Gloria contacted Sharifu's cousin, Ally, in a panic. Gloria and Ally waited 24 hours without hearing from Sharifu before notifying the police of his absence and asking for help from friends to look for him.

That evening, the group found Sharifu's car parked near the train station, but there was no sign of him. They eventually learned that Sharifu was found face down in the snow by passersby who brought him to a hospital. He was dead by the time Sharifu's family got to the hospital.

A local government spokesperson confirmed Sharifu was found dead outside in the snow about 11.30pm Saturday, Buffalo News [reported](#). A cause of death was not immediately reported.

“He's the guy [who] likes to help everybody,” Ally [told](#) WKBW. “Right now, we're not doing good.”

“His wife is not doing good. It's so bad right now. So sad.”

News of Sharifu's death came after the nation was shocked to learn of another Buffalo resident who died after being trapped in her car for 18 hours. Anndel Taylor, a 22-year-old student nurse, was attempting to drive home from a hospital shift on Friday when she got trapped in the storm. [The New York Post reported](#) that Taylor sent multiple videos to her family in North Carolina, updating them on the rising snow outside her car.

According to her family, Taylor hoped to sleep in her car while she waited for rescuers to reach her and that she would attempt to escape on foot if they did not.

Several hundred miles south of New York, a 91-year-old man from South Carolina died on Christmas after attempting to fix a broken water pipe outside his home.

At about 10pm that day, Marvin Henley went outside his home to fix the pipe. According to deputies, Henley came back inside his home a while later to change his wet clothes before going outside again to continue with the repairs, WLOS [reports](#).

He was reported missing the next day. Deputies eventually located his body at about 2.30pm on Monday, not too far from his home. [According to](#) the coroner's office, Henley was found wet and exposed to extreme temperatures. His death has been ruled an accident resulting from exposure to the cold.

Meanwhile, on the west coast, an Alaska man missed his heart transplant surgery due to hundreds of cancellations at the Seattle-Tacoma airport in [Washington state](#) on Friday.

Patrick Holland, a father of five from Fairbanks, Alaska, was scheduled to fly to Seattle on Friday to undergo a heart transplant. Holland, who suffers from congestive heart failure, [told](#) the Seattle television station KING that he was put on the active transplant list three weeks ago and was only informed last Thursday by the Heart Institute at University of Washington Medical Center that a heart had become available for him.

According to Holland, doctors gave him an eight-hour window to reach the hospital. He proceeded to book the next flight out to [Seattle](#).

However, once Holland got on his flight, he discovered that the plane had to be rerouted due to hundreds of flights at Seattle's airport being canceled as a result of the storm.

"I heard the pilots say welcome to Anchorage," Holland said. The window for his new heart had closed.

"I think I cried more that day than I have in my life and had exerted every emotion that I'd never had," he said.

Despite the heart being given to another person on the transplant list, Holland's doctors told him that he will not be bumped down on the list because the situation was out of his control.

Holland told KING that he plans to fly down to Seattle in two weeks so he could be closer to the hospital once a new heart becomes available.

"I will be closer – there'll be no storms to stop me," he said. "It would take a completely different act of God to stop me."

As rescue efforts remain under way across the country, officials have [urged](#) people to remain home and stay off the roads.

With the death toll mounting, Joe Biden and the first lady, Jill Biden, have offered their condolences to grieving families.

"My heart is with those who lost loved ones this holiday weekend," the president said in a tweet on Monday. "You are in my and Jill's prayers."

[Ireland](#)

Banshees of Inisherin shines light on Ireland's west coast in tourism spin-off

Despite film's macabre plot, campaign featuring its actors and locations draws millions of views



Colin Farrell displays 'wounded male feelings' in The Banshees of Inisherin. Photograph: AP

[Rory Carroll](#) *Ireland correspondent*

[@rorycarroll72](#)

Fri 30 Dec 2022 01.00 ESTLast modified on Fri 30 Dec 2022 03.32 EST

It has a macabre plot featuring violence, mutilation and despair, but that has not stopped [The Banshees of Inisherin](#) being used as a global advertisement for visiting [Ireland](#).

A tourism campaign based on the film has taken off and transformed its dark story into a glowing promotion for Ireland's west coast islands.

Inis Mór (Inishmore) and Achill Island, the islands where Martin McDonagh's black comedy was filmed, are marketing the locations, and a Tourism Ireland video about the making of the film has drawn more than 6m views. The hope is that visitors will come for the landscapes rather than the toxic relationships portrayed in the film.



Colin Farrell and Brendan Gleeson in *The Banshees of Inisherin*. They also appear in an interview in the tourism video. Photograph: Landmark Media/Alamy

The tourism spin-off is expected to grow if the film, which won screenplay and acting prizes at Venice, continues racking up awards. [Eight Golden Globe nominations](#) have made it a frontrunner for next year's Globes and Oscars.

“We want to capitalise on the positive exposure for Ireland, bringing the beautiful scenery of the Wild Atlantic Way to the attention of people in some of our main markets and inspiring them to come and visit,” said Niall Gibbons, chief executive of Tourism Ireland.

Versions of the agency's [behind-the-scenes video](#) of the film have accumulated 6.1m views on YouTube, with 5.8 million of viewers watching to the end. The ad has had about 200,000 views on Twitter and Instagram.

Made with the cooperation of the film's production company, Searchlight Pictures, it cost €1,230 to make and had a marketing budget of €200,000.

The video includes interviews with Martin McDonagh, Colin Farrell and [Brendan Gleeson](#), who laud the landscape as an integral part of the film. "It allows us to keep the beauty of the west of Ireland to the fore and to showcase our authentic homegrown talent," said Gibbons.



Achill Island lifeboat station as seen from Glassillaun, Mayo, Ireland. Photograph: Gary L'Estrange/Alamy

Travel and lifestyle magazines have run articles on the shooting of the film on Achill Island in County Mayo and Inis Mór, the largest of the Aran Islands, in County Galway. [GQ](#) interviewed the production designer.

Achill's tourism [website](#) features a "Banshees of Inisherin locations trail" which includes a map and pictures of beauty spots, lakes and buildings that appear in the film. "Tour guides can be provided for coach parties to give a first-hand account of the locations and the stories surrounding the filming," it says.

Behind the scenes: The Banshees of Inisherin

The Aran Island ferries [website](#) does not gloss over the film's acrid tone, citing the [Guardian review](#)'s description of "wounded male feelings" and a "dance of death between aggression and self-harm".

Tourism officers will need to wait until next summer to assess the campaign's impact.

Other locations around Ireland have successfully turned on-screen mayhem into tourism boons. Game of Thrones fans make [pilgrimages to forests and castles](#) in Northern Ireland. Curracloe beach in County Wexford boasts of its appearance in Steven Spielberg's blockbuster Saving Private Ryan, which opens with the slaughter of GIs in the D-day landings.

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Girl power: Colombia's first female electrical line workers train to keep the lights on

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[Israel](#)

Israel swears in Benjamin Netanyahu amid concerns of further slide to right

Arab citizens and LGBTQ+ community fear return of veteran leader will damage democracy



Benjamin Netanyahu speaks during a session of Israel's parliament to approve and swear in a new rightwing government. Photograph: Amir Cohen/Reuters

Ben Lynfield in Jerusalem

Thu 29 Dec 2022 15.10 ESTLast modified on Thu 29 Dec 2022 16.14 EST

Israel's most rightwing cabinet ever has been sworn in, with [Benjamin Netanyahu](#) heading an administration that could open the door to fervently nationalist and religious politicians to radicalise the country and policies towards the Palestinians.

Israeli liberals fear the veteran leader's return to power [in alliance with anti-Arab, ultranationalist and ultraorthodox parties](#) will damage democratic aspects of the country's governance. Arab citizens and [the country's LGBTQ+ community](#) are both alarmed at what may be in store.

Netanyahu took pains to assuage concerns, telling Israeli media following his government's swearing in at the Knesset: "There is no reason to be concerned. My government will care for all the citizens of [Israel](#)."

The cabinet was voted in by a 63 to 54 tally, capping the right's victory in November elections and [coalition agreements](#) between Likud and far-right parties that, if implemented, could harm Israel's relations with western allies. There are fears that the government, which [openly calls for annexation of the West Bank](#), could seal the fate of a possible two-state peace compromise with the Palestinians.

Speaking from the West Bank, where tensions have already been high in recent months, Dalal Salameh, a member of the central committee of the ruling Palestinian Fatah movement, warned the new government could trigger a new intifada.

"This is a fascist government whose main goal is exclusive control over all of Palestine," she said. "These people will lead to an explosion because of how they think and how they will act on the ground. An explosion will come because the Palestinians will not accept it and this will lead to an intifada and going into unexpected areas."

"This situation leaves no possibility for people to see light," she said.

Speaking in the Knesset before presenting his ministers, Netanyahu, who was in power from 2012 to 2021 before being voted out amid corruption charges he denies, said allegations he is undermining democracy were unfounded. "Losing elections is not the end of democracy. It is the meaning of democracy. Respect the decision."

Amir Ohana, a Netanyahu loyalist taking up his post as the first openly gay Knesset speaker, vowed the government “will not harm a single child or family”.

Concerns over where Netanyahu and his ministers are headed were heightened earlier this week with the publication of coalition agreements and guidelines that call for annexation of the West Bank with the timing yet to be determined, mass regularisation of illegal settlement outposts, and amending an anti-discrimination law in a way that would allow doctors and other providers to [refuse service to LGBTQ+ patients](#), Arabs and others if it violates their beliefs.

The government also declared it a priority to pass legislation enabling the Knesset to override supreme court decisions, thereby removing a major check on its power.

Daniella Weiss, a prominent settler leader who is close to Bezalel Smotrich, the leader of the ultranationalist Religious Zionism Party and finance minister in the new government, pointed towards radical change in an interview, saying that a “revolution” was taking place. She said the new government would promote Jewish values and more intensive Jewish settlement of the biblically resonant West Bank as well as the Negev and Galilee regions inside Israel, which have large Arab populations.

“The connection with the birthplace of the nation will be strengthened, bringing us closer to our dreams, and the chances of a Palestinian state are becoming lower and lower,” she said.

This year has already seen some of the worst West Bank violence since 2015 as Israeli forces have cracked down on Palestinian unrest and militant attacks.

Nachman Shai, the outgoing minister of diaspora affairs from the now opposition Labour party, said of the government: “If they accomplish what they want to, Israel will no longer be a democracy.”

Gadi Gvaryahu, head of the Tag Meir group that combats violence by settlers, termed the government “delusional”.

“This country was built by secular people, some of them atheists, with their feet on the ground – people without delusional ideas. If this messianic path is what we’re going on, God help us,” he said.

Members of the new government

Bezalel Smotrich, finance minister

Smotrich, 42, will gain wide influence over the future of Palestinians in the occupied West Bank. A strict nationalist with anti-Arab and homophobic views, Smotrich told an interviewer recently that Israel’s economy will flourish if people “obey” Jewish religious law.

Smotrich’s primary goal is boosting annexation efforts in the West Bank, in the belief that more Israeli settlement there paves the way for the culmination of the biblically prophesised Messianic age.

In his new capacity, Smotrich, who is a settler, is expected to worsen conditions for Palestinians, whom he has in the past suggested should be encouraged to emigrate.

Last year, he told Arab Knesset members that their presence in Israel is a “mistake” emanating from former Israeli prime minister David Ben-Gurion “not finishing the work” of throwing out all Palestinians.

Itamar Ben-Gvir, national security minister

Considered by many to be the most dangerous politician in the country, Ben-Gvir has advocated expelling “disloyal” citizens in a barely concealed reference to Israel’s Arab minority population.

A disciple of the anti-Arab rabbi Meir Kahane, the sometimes gun-touting Ben-Gvir has extremist credentials, having been convicted of inciting racism and supporting terrorism. As a lawyer, he defended people later convicted of murder and other egregious crimes against Palestinian civilians. He had for many years prominently displayed in his home a picture of Baruch Goldstein, a fellow disciple of Kahane, who killed 29 Palestinians at mosque prayers in 1994.

Ben-Gvir is politically shrewd and media-savvy. In the recent campaign, he modified some of his old messages, encouraging his followers to chant “death to the terrorists” rather than “death to the Arabs”.

Avi Maoz, deputy minister

Leader of the far-right, anti-LGBTQ+ Noam party, which has only one Knesset seat, Maoz will wield considerable power over Israeli education as a deputy minister.

A settler in the Wadi Hilweh neighbourhood of occupied East Jerusalem, which he views as the cradle of biblical King David’s kingdom, Maoz, 66, espouses a state guided by ultra-conservative Jewish religious principles in which the chief rabbinate is a fully fledged branch of the government. Noam campaigned by stoking hatred of the LGBTQ+ community and Reform Jews, who are adherents of the most liberal branch of the faith and the largest denomination in the US. He opposes women joining the army, saying a woman’s role is to have children and raise an “exemplary” family.

Netanyahu has created for Maoz a new “National Identity” government agency to inculcate his views. More worrisome to a broad segment of the Israeli public is that Netanyahu has given him control of external school programmes, which used to be under the purview of the education ministry. Opposition leader Yair Lapid fears that he will use this to promote “dark, homophobic, nationalist and violent” teachings.

Aryeh Deri, interior and health minister

Head of the ultra-orthodox Shas party, whose political base is made up primarily of lower-income Jews with roots in the Arab world, Moroccan-born Deri is a close ally of Netanyahu. His career has been fraught with corruption allegations and convictions and includes serving time in prison from 1999-2001. On Tuesday, the Knesset amended a law to enable him to serve as a minister in the new government despite being on probation after reaching a plea bargain deal for tax evasion charges.

Netanyahu has showered on Deri a bevy of posts in this government: deputy premier, interior minister and health minister, and in two years he is slated to

rotate into the job of finance minister. Critics view him as primarily a sectoral politician concerned with building up Shas institutions and power. Secular Jews and women's rights advocates are wary that Shas will propel initiatives to expand the role of religion in society at their expense.

Yariv Levin, justice minister

Enjoying an especially close relationship with Netanyahu, Levin is expected to spearhead a drive to weaken the supreme court and other judicial checks and balances. In Levin's view, the court is an elitist leftwing body that acts against the will of the majority. "The situation of rule by judges is not democracy," he told Galei Zahal, the army's radio station, in July. In fact, the court has recently moved to the right.

Levin backs giving the Knesset power to override supreme court decisions and altering the way judges are selected to subordinate the judiciary to the cabinet. Critics say the plans of the new government to cripple the judiciary are aimed at least in part at engineering the cancellation of ongoing corruption proceedings against Netanyahu.

Haaretz columnist Ravit Hecht has contrasted Levin's calm style with what she considers his explosive and destructive ideas, terming him "the most sophisticated operator in Israeli politics".

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Headlines saturday 31 december 2022

- [Pope Benedict Former pope Benedict XVI dies aged 95](#)
- [Live Russia-Ukraine war: Putin offers new incentive for Russians to join fight in Ukraine](#)
- [New year honours 2023 Brian May and Lionesses among those recognised](#)
- [Honours list Knighthoods go to outspoken critics of government](#)
- [New Year honours Community champions dominate list](#)
- [Gymshark Founder who launched £1.25bn empire in parents' garage awarded MBE](#)

The ObserverPope Benedict XVI

Former pope Benedict XVI dies aged 95

German predecessor to Pope Francis became first pontiff to step down as head of Catholic church in 600 years

- [Analysis: Death of Benedict eases way for retirement of Francis](#)
- [Benedict XVI obituary](#)



Pope Benedict XVI leads the Ash Wednesday service at the St. Peter's Basilica on February 13, 2013. Photograph: Franco Origlia/Getty Images

[Harriet Sherwood](#) *Religion correspondent*

[@harrietsherwood](#)

Sat 31 Dec 2022 04.52 EST Last modified on Sat 31 Dec 2022 14.46 EST

Pope Benedict XVI, who served as leader of the Catholic church from 2005 until his resignation in 2013, died on Saturday aged 95, three days after his successor, Pope Francis, warned the world that he was gravely ill.

The Vatican announced that Francis would preside at Benedict's funeral in St Peter's Square on Thursday. From Monday, his body will lie at St Peter's Basilica to allow the faithful to pay respects.

Benedict's death brings to a close an unprecedented period in recent history where two popes have coexisted, a situation that has caused tensions within rival camps in the Vatican. It eases the way for his successor, Pope Francis, to consider whether to follow Benedict by retiring at some point – impossible while the outcome would have been three popes.

Rishi Sunak and Keir Starmer paid warm tribute to Benedict, referring to his 2010 visit to the UK as a historic moment. Other world leaders including Ireland's Michael D Higgins, France's Emmanuel Macron, Italy's Giorgia Meloni and Germany's Olaf Scholz also issued tributes.

Cardinal Vincent Nichols, the archbishop of Westminster and leader of the Roman Catholic church in England and Wales, said he was a scholar, pastor and a man of God who would be remembered for "his courtesy, his gentleness, the perceptiveness of his mind and the openness of his welcome to everybody that he met".

Justin Welby, the Anglican archbishop of Canterbury, said Benedict was "one of the greatest theologians of his age".

Earlier this week, Pope Francis announced during his weekly audience that Benedict was "very sick" and asked for people to pray for him.

Benedict, born Joseph Aloisius Ratzinger in Germany in 1927, was a deeply conservative pontiff, whose tenure was overshadowed by sexual abuse scandals in the church. He retired leaving a chequered reputation after a papacy that was at times divisive.

The son of a policeman, he grew up in rural Bavaria and at the age of 14 joined the Hitler Youth, a requirement, and served in the German army in the second world war. Towards the end of the war, he deserted and was briefly held as a prisoner of war by US forces.

He later became a major figure in the Vatican and, as Cardinal Ratzinger, served as a right-hand man to his predecessor, Pope John Paul II. He headed the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, a Vatican department once known as the Inquisition, for 24 years, a position that earned him the nickname “God’s rottweiler”.

During his tenure, allegations of clerical sexual abuse and its cover-up began to surface. His critics said he failed to grasp the gravity of the crimes and the scale of the crisis, which reached a peak several years after he was elected pope in April 2005.

As well as the flood of allegations, lawsuits and official reports relating to sexual abuse and the priests’ complicity in covering it up, the Vatican was also rocked by the theft of confidential documents, many of which later appeared in an exposé of alleged corruption. In October 2012, a Vatican court convicted the pope’s personal butler, Paolo Gabriele, of stealing the papers. He told the trial he had been acting against “evil and corruption”.

The divisive papacy of Benedict XVI – video obituary

Benedict held uncompromising positions on homosexuality and contraception. He had strongly opposed liberation theology, a radical movement that began in South America in the 1960s and advocated clerical social activism among the poor and marginalised.

His sudden resignation at the age of 85, in February 2013, the first pope to do so since the middle ages, left the church reeling. He said at the time that he did not have the strength to carry on as leader of the world’s estimated 1.2 billion Catholics. “I have had to recognise my incapacity to adequately fulfil the ministry entrusted to me,” he said.

He took the title of Pope Emeritus, and pledged to remain “hidden to the world”, devoting himself to private prayer. He retired to a monastery in Vatican City, where he read, wrote letters and articles, received guests and played the piano.

But the former pope remained a powerful conservative influence and a focus for opponents of Francis’s efforts to reform the church and redirect it to

serving the poor. He repeatedly made his views known through letters, articles and interviews. In April 2019, two months after Francis convened a groundbreaking Vatican conference on sexual abuse, Benedict published a [6,000-word letter](#) saying abuse was a product of a culture of sexual freedom dating from the 1960s.

In January 2020, [Benedict publicly defended clerical celibacy](#), as Francis was considering allowing married men to become priests in limited circumstances. “I cannot keep silent,” he wrote in a book, *From the Depths of Our Hearts: Priesthood, Celibacy and the Crisis of the Catholic Church*, arguing that priestly celibacy protected the mystery of the church.

The controversy, which erupted just before *The Two Popes* – a film about the apparently warm relationship between Benedict and Francis – was aired on Netflix, exposed tensions between rival Vatican camps.

Additional reporting by Angela Giuffrida in Rome

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[Ukraine war live](#)Ukraine

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[New Year honours list](#)

New year honours 2023: Mary Quant and Lionesses among those recognised

Brian May and Grayson Perry are knighted, Denise Lewis is made a dame and Frank Skinner becomes MBE



(Clockwise from top left) Brian May, Grayson Perry, Frank Skinner and Denise Lewis Composite: Getty/Reuters/David Levene- Guardian/Reuters

[Caroline Davies](#)

Fri 30 Dec 2022 17.30 EST Last modified on Sat 31 Dec 2022 08.34 EST

The fashion designer [Mary Quant](#), the Lionesses and the Queen guitarist Brian May are among those recognised in the first new year honours of the king's reign.

Quant, 92, who as one of the most influential fashion figures in the swinging 60s popularised the miniskirt and hot pants, becomes a Companion of Honour, one of the top honours.

May, 75, an astrophysicist and animal welfare campaigner, is knighted. He said: “I regard it as a kind of charge, like a kind of commission to do the things that one would expect a knight to do: to fight for justice, to fight for people who don’t have any voice. And, in my case, for all creatures who don’t have a voice, and I regard it as a kind of endorsement of what I do.”

Grayson Perry, 62, the artist, writer and broadcaster, is also knighted.

Virginia McKenna, 91, the actor and co-founder of the Born Free Foundation, is made a dame in recognition of her wildlife conservation work. She said the award “really belongs to all those striving to end wild animal suffering and keep wildlife in the wild”.

The Olympic heptathlon gold medallist Denise Lewis, 50, now president of Commonwealth Games England, said of becoming a dame: “It’s an incredible honour. I’m just trying to take it in and its enormity.”

Prof Sir Michael Marmot, the author of *The Health Gap* and the director of UCL’s Institute of Health, who has spoken out on how policies such as austerity have affected public health, becomes a Companion of Honour. He said he was “astonished”.

The idea that what he did should be recognised in such a way was wonderful, he said. “There are some countries where I would not be allowed to say what I say. I would not be allowed to tell the truth.”



Leah Williamson. Photograph: David Price/Arsenal FC/Getty Images

In sport, the England women's football team scored well, with the captain, Leah Williamson, receiving an OBE, and Lucy Bronze, Beth Mead and Ellen White – the Lionesses' all-time top goalscorer – awarded MBEs. The team's Dutch head coach, Sarina Wiegman, is made an honorary CBE by the Foreign Office. The former Northern Ireland goalkeeper Pat Jennings, 77, has been made a CBE.

The first woman to run one of Britain's biggest banks, Alison Rose, the chief executive of NatWest Group, is one of 15 women made dames, and said the honour was "a reflection of the fantastic work of all my colleagues at NatWest Group". Out of a total of 1,107 recipients of all honours, 50% are women. At CBE level or above, 45% are women.



David Harewood. Photograph: David M Benett/Getty Images

The actor and broadcaster David Harewood, 57, who found international fame as the CIA director David Estes in the US drama *Homeland*, is awarded an OBE after becoming a prominent advocate of better mental health support. [Stephen Graham](#), 49, the star of *This is England* and well known for high-profile parts in several award-winning films and dramas, also becomes an OBE.

Frank Skinner, 65, the broadcaster and comedian, becomes an MBE and said: “I deal mainly in laughs and applause and they disappear into the air quite quickly. So getting a proper medal that you can hold on to and polish regularly feels [as if it] has given my career a sense of permanence that I like.”

The saxophonist, broadcaster and winner of two Mobo awards Yolanda Brown, 40, said she was “excited and honoured” to have been made an OBE. Janet Kay, 64, known as the “Queen of Lovers Rock”, who hit the charts in the 1970s with *Silly Games*, is made an MBE. So too is the opera mezzo-soprano Christine Rice, who said: “To be given an MBE is the culmination of so much joyful and serious endeavour. Thank you!”

The chief rabbi, Ephraim Mirvis, said he was “enormously honoured and deeply humbled” to have been knighted, adding: “It will be particularly moving for me to receive this award from his majesty the king in his first year as our monarch.”

Noreen Riols, 96, one of the last two surviving female members of the French section of the Special Operations Executive – the British espionage and sabotage organisation known as “Churchill’s secret army” – has dedicated her MBE to the memory of her late comrades.

The list also recognises senior diplomats at the forefront of the UK’s response to the war in Ukraine, with damehoods for Melinda Simmons, the ambassador in Kyiv, and Deborah Bronnert, the ambassador in Moscow.

Rosamund Adoo-Kissi-Debrah, who campaigned for the clean air act known as Ella’s law, named after her daughter who [died in 2013 from air pollution](#), is made a CBE. She said her daughter would be proud of what she had achieved so far in her fight for cleaner air.

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Helen Belcher. Photograph: Andrew Eberlin/PA

Helen Belcher, the director of Transactual and a trustee of Trans Media Watch, who is made an OBE, said that while it was “very gratifying to be recognised in that way”, she also felt “a slight fear of what the press reaction is going to be because it’s almost as if trans people can’t do anything right at the moment in the current environment”.

This year’s list is the first published since the death of Queen Elizabeth II, and the first to be signed off by her son Charles as king.

Jason Knauf, the former royal aide who made a complaint of bullying against the Duchess of Sussex, which she denied, has been recognised for his service to the monarchy.

He is made a Lieutenant of the Royal Victorian Order (RVO) after working for seven years for the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, and later the then Duke and Duchess of Cambridge. Honours within the RVO are in the king’s gift and are bestowed independently of Downing Street to people who have served the monarch or the royal family in a personal way.

When working for the Duke and Duchess of Sussex as their communications secretary in October 2018, Knauf emailed his concerns about Meghan to William’s then private secretary, in an apparent attempt to force Buckingham

Palace to protect staff. The duchess's legal team have in the past strenuously denied the allegation.

Themes reflected in the list of recipients include sustained public service, youth engagement and support for environmental and climate change action.

Recipients are selected by independent committees, with those chosen then formally approved by the prime minister and the king.

Organisations that resort to paying for professional services to try to succeed in getting a nomination have faced criticism and are discouraged. Sir Hugh Robertson, the chair of the sport honours committee, said such applications could easily be spotted compared with those submitted by members of the community, and were less likely to be selected.

“You can sort of spot the polished ones. If you came to me and said, ‘I desperately want a nomination, how should I do it?’ the last thing you should do is pay someone to draw the thing up, because it’s just so obvious after a while,” he said.

Of those submitted by community members, he said: “They are written with passion, not polish.”

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[New Year honours list](#)

New year honours list includes outspoken critics of government

Chris Bryant and Julian Lewis receive knighthoods while Michael Marmot gets Companion of Honour



Chris Bryant, Sir Michael Marmot and Julian Lewis. Composite: Uk Parliament/Rex/Shutterstock

[Peter Walker](#) *Political correspondent*

[@peterwalker99](#)

Fri 30 Dec 2022 17.30 EST

Sir Michael Marmot, the world-leading expert on health inequalities, has been made a Companion of Honour in the new year honours, among a series of people to be rewarded despite their often outspoken criticism of ministers and government policy.

Marmot, who headed a landmark inquiry into UK health inequalities and [has since been vocal](#) about the lack of action to address them, receives one of the most prestigious honours in existence.

The Companion of Honour rewards UK or Commonwealth citizens for long-term prominence in the arts, science, medicine or government, and is limited to just 65 people at any one time.

Marmot, who heads University College London's Institute of [Health](#) Equity, said that as well as being delighted with the award, he felt the decision said "something very good about Britain" given his regular criticisms of government.

In renewed condemnation of policies since 2010, Marmot said austerity "made poor people poorer and deprived those in need of services, markedly increasing health inequalities".

The current cost of living crisis was, he said, a renewed challenge. "We see it in the drama of public sector workers, after 12 years of pay cuts, striking so they have enough money to feed their children without resort to food banks," Marmot said. "The poor in Britain are poorer than in most European countries. A policy of low pay for essential workers is not only bad for their health, it defeats government wishes to grow the economy."

The two MPs given knighthoods in the new year honours have proved similarly troublesome to ministers.

Chris Bryant, the senior Labour backbencher who chairs the Commons standards committee, has been centrally involved in a series of events damaging to government, including the investigations into Tory ex-minister Owen Paterson and [Boris Johnson](#).

Bryant said he was very shocked, calling the news an honour for the whole committee. "I was surprised. I have no idea how this comes about," he told PA Media.

Julian Lewis, the Tory MP for New Forest East since 1997, [humiliated Boris Johnson](#) in July 2020 by becoming elected to lead parliament's powerful

intelligence and security committee, evading an attempted stitch-up by Johnson to install Chris Grayling, a loyalist.

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Johnson stripped Lewis of the Conservative whip, and he was forced to sit as an independent for six months.

Alok Sharma, the Tory MP and former minister, was knighted for his work chairing the Cop26 climate summit in Glasgow. Andrew Stephenson, the MP who chaired the Tory party for two months under Boris Johnson, received a CBE.

Among awards for civil servants, Tom Scholar, who was ousted as the head Treasury civil servant by Liz Truss and her then chancellor, Kwasi Kwarteng, is elevated to the Order of the Bath.

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[New Year honours list](#)

Community champions dominate new year honours list

Charity fundraisers and volunteers supporting refugees among those recognised for their contribution



Tricia Ward-Jones receives the British empire medal for her 17 years of charity fundraising. Photograph: Promise Dreams/Facebook

[Caroline Davies](#)

Fri 30 Dec 2022 17.30 EST

The theme of public service is at the forefront of the new year honours list, with the majority of those receiving awards nominated for their work in their local communities.

Tricia Ward-Jones, 69, from Shropshire, receives the British empire medal (BEM) after 17 years as a volunteer fundraiser for Promise Dreams, a

charity based in Wolverhampton, which helps the families of children who are seriously or terminally ill create memories.

She said: “We are a tiny organisation and I am very proud of how we have managed to fulfil dreams for families of terminally ill children.”

One of her favourite dreams was for “a very poor family” who wanted a family portrait before their child died and later told her: “You cannot believe the difference it makes. And that child now lives with us on the wall.”

Ben Lindsay, 44, the chief executive of Power the Fight, an award-winning charity in south London that tackles violence affecting young people, is made an OBE.

He said the charity creates solutions for sustainable change and acts as a link between the community and policymakers. Lindsay founded it after the death of a 16-year-old he knew.

Power the Fight supports those facing the issue of youth violence, by offering therapeutic support in schools, through to teachers, police officers and NHS staff. “We also support families who have lost young people to violence,” he said. “We want to build a safer and more peaceful community.”

Louenna Hood, 38, a nanny from Cambridgeshire, receives a BEM after collecting and dispatching six containers of clothing and other supplies to young families forced to flee their homes in Ukraine. She also raised £190,000 to buy provisions for them. Hood said she was “completely stunned”, adding: “I started the campaign but I would never have been able to do it without the community.”



Asrar ul-Haq has worked with refugees in Greece since he retired from Greater Manchester police

Asrar ul-Haq, 60, a former Greater Manchester police officer, is made an OBE in recognition of his work with marginalised communities. He said he had devoted his efforts to building better communications between the police and former offenders.

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Since retiring, he has spent time working with refugees in Greece, helping coordinate the rescue response to get people safely from boats to camps. “I hope I’ve done my little bit to make something better for somebody else,” ul-Haq said.

Jim Jones, 52, a Greater Manchester police inspector, is awarded a BEM for his work supporting vulnerable offenders and diverting them away from the criminal justice system, as well as being an armed forces champion, leading a network to help veterans struggling with life outside the military.

He said: “For me, it was a win-win, because you are doing the right thing for veterans and also increasing the chances that they will not reoffend.”

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Business

Gymshark founder who launched £1.25bn empire in parents' garage awarded MBE

Ben Francis, 30, among slew of businesspeople recognised for services to commerce and economy in new year honours list



Ben Francis, founder of Gymshark, a British fitness apparel and accessories brand. Photograph: Richard Pohle/Richard Pohle/News Licensing

[Rupert Neate](#) *Wealth correspondent*

[@RupertNeate](#)

Fri 30 Dec 2022 17.30 EST

The 30-year-old founder of the exercise clothing brand Gymshark has been awarded an MBE in the new year honours list, – just one of a slew of

businesspeople to be recognised for their services to commerce and the economy.

Ben Francis, who began his £1.25bn empire sewing his own gym clothes in his parents' garage in Bromsgrove, near Birmingham, in 2012, is the youngest of those to be honoured for their services to business.

He owns 70% of Gymshark, which was valued at £1.25bn by the Sunday Times earlier this year, giving him an estimated fortune of about £875m – making him the 191th richest person in the UK and the third richest person aged 30 or under.

Francis dropped out of Aston University, where he was studying international business and management, to focus on Gymshark – his third business venture.

“As a kid I was obsessed with football, but as I realised I’d never be good enough to make a living from football, that obsession moved to computer-based projects,” [he said](#).

“I was never great at school (something I later learned was more down to application rather than anything else), until at the age of 17 I took an IT class. This IT class was different to anything else I’d done before because it was all about learning and applying real skills – not just writing about them.”

At around the same time Francis joined a gym and noticed that many of the other bodybuilders had adapted their own gym clothes as none available were quite the right fit.

He asked his grandmother, a curtain-maker, to teach him how to sew, before investing in a machine to create his clothes.

Gymshark secured investment from the US private equity firm General Atlantic in 2020, raising the brand's value to £1bn and attaining the [prized status of being a “unicorn” startup](#).

Other business people also recognised in the honours list included Alison Rose, the chief executive of NatWest and the first woman to run one Britain's biggest high street, who has been given a damehood. Anita Frew, the chair of Rolls-Royce and one of only 18 women leading boards at Britain's biggest listed companies, also got the top honour.

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Ivan Menezes, the boss of the drinks business Diageo, was knighted for services to business and equality, while Johnnie Boden, the Eton-educated former stockbroker who founded clothing company Boden, was awarded a CBE.

Rose, who joined the bank 30 years ago as a graduate and climbed the ranks to take on the top job in November 2019, said: "It is a tremendous privilege to receive a damehood in His Majesty's new year honours list and I am immensely proud to lead an organisation that plays such a positive role in the lives of people and families across the UK."

[Liz and Charles Ritchie](#), the parents of a young man who killed himself after becoming addicted to gambling and launched a campaign to tackle problem gambling, were awarded MBEs for services to charity. Gillian Wilmot was also awarded an MBE for services to the prevention of problem gambling.

2022.12.31 - Spotlight

- [How can you be the best possible parent, lover or friend? Here's what the experts think](#)
- [Naked ambition The invisible dress was the way to be seen in 2022](#)
- [Comedian Rosie Jones: 'No matter how hard I work, people will always judge me on how I talk, how I walk'](#)
- [2023 in books Highlights for the year ahead](#)
- [Max Liu If your New Year's resolution is to read more books this year, this is why you shouldn't](#)

Health & wellbeing

How can you be the best possible parent, lover, friend, citizen or tourist? Here's what the experts think

It's not easy being a 'good' person – what can we learn from the people who have thought about it the most?



‘Knowing a neighbour is there for you in difficult times can be powerful.’
Illustration: Jean Jullien/The Guardian

[Moya Sarnier](#)

Sat 31 Dec 2022 02.00 EST Last modified on Sun 1 Jan 2023 01.03 EST

I used to think I was a good person. I was caring to my friends, my partner, my family; I gave to charity and I volunteered; I wasn't racist, homophobic or sexist. Boxes: ticked. But when I started training to become a therapist in the NHS, I began to understand that however much we might like to think of

ourselves as good people, we don't actually know ourselves very well. We don't know what's really going on under the surface; why we do the things we do.

I learned about how we might, without consciously realising it, deny the feelings and motivations we consider to be bad, pushing them down into our unconscious and projecting them out on to others, so they become the bad people. I learned that deep in the human psyche, alongside love and kindness, run currents of rage, need, greed, envy, destructiveness, superiority – whether we want to acknowledge them or not. Goodness me, I thought. How terrible – for everybody else.

But of course, it is not just true for everybody else. As a patient in psychoanalysis, I've now discovered all this so-called badness exists in me, too. Unconsciously, perhaps I had tried to cancel out these judged-as-bad thoughts and feelings by doing good and helping others. Now I see that as hypocrisy and avoidance. Real goodness grows from accepting that the capacity for badness we abhor in others and in our institutions also exists within ourselves. If we can tolerate and understand this, then we can see and repair the damage we inevitably do to our loved ones and others. This is how we can grow into better adults, partners, parents, neighbours, citizens, travellers, friends. I asked experts in “goodness” what it meant to them. Here's what they told me.

How to be ... a good citizen

Matthew Bolton, executive director of Citizens UK and author of [How to Resist: Turn Protest to Power](#)

Sometimes we mistake being a good citizen with fulfilling our role in our representative democracy. We have the privilege of being able to vote, an amazing thing that people across the world would wish for, and that people in our own history here have fought for – but the work of being a good citizen is about democratic activity day in, day out, in your neighbourhood, at your work, around any cause that matters to you.

The first step is to spend time reflecting on what you really care about – something deeply connected to you. Being a good citizen and making a difference is hard and takes time, so choose something you'll still care about in 2024 and beyond. Is there no safe green space in your neighbourhood? Do you want to fight the climate crisis? Is there a dangerous road crossing near your house?

The next step is to recognise that you can't be a good citizen on your own. Research who is already campaigning and connect with others. [Relationships](#) will sustain you and your motivation. Being a good citizen isn't just about joining one protest; that can leave you jaded and hopeless when things don't change. It's about making connections and staying the course.

Finally, think local. Focusing on parliament can feel disempowering – it can contribute to the feeling that nothing ever changes. But I've seen big changes come from local people coming together to make small shifts that spread from neighbourhood to neighbourhood and end up influencing government policy. That's what is happening with Citizens UK's [campaign for the living wage](#). I believe that citizens are made, not born. You can learn to be a good citizen – and it's never too late to start.

... a good partner and lover

Couples therapist Catriona Wrottesley

In couples therapy, you often see partners who have a sort of belief system they aren't aware of – that one is the caring parent and the other is the cared-for child. When you question it, they look at you as if you're crazy: "Of course we care, that's what a good partner does!" But in this particular couple system, care is modelled on the mother-infant relationship (although either gender can be in either role), where one person is always in emotional turmoil and the other makes it better, rather than two adults offering each other reciprocal care. You might think you're being a "good partner", but this fixed dynamic can drain relationships of life and spontaneity – not to mention sex.

Similarly, one partner might see themselves as “good” at doing chores around the home or comforting the children, and become impatient and frustrated with the other who becomes the “bad” one. And the more you’re deprived of the opportunity to clean a bathroom or hold a crying baby – even if it’s not exactly how the primary carer might do it – the less confident and more inadequate you might feel, and the more these roles can become entrenched.

All of this can make for a pressurising atmosphere in the bedroom. Men often speak about feeling they have to perform – but when you talk about performance, you lose touch with yourself and your partner; you’re relating to some external standard that takes you outside your relationship. If you can be less goal-oriented in your lovemaking, you might begin to enjoy all the aspects of being intimate. You can have an experience that’s not all about you and your partner having mind-blowing orgasms, but about being together in a total sense, seeing each other in the most intimate way – being vulnerable and playful because you feel safe and happy. That’s not focused on the goal of having great sex, but great sex may well be the outcome.

... a good tourist

Juliet Kinsman, co-presenter of Funny Old World: a Podcast for the Eco-Curious



‘Be respectful and leave little in your wake.’ Illustration: Jean Jullien/The Guardian

Being a good tourist means treating somebody else’s home with respect, leaving little in your wake and putting as much money as possible in local pockets.

People tend to think about sustainable, responsible travel only as environmentally friendly travel – and, of course, we should support businesses that are kinder to nature. But the economic power of travel is immense, and you control that wealth distribution. Pick accommodation with local owners; they’re more likely to be a better custodian and employ local people. You don’t want to stay in a hotel that exists to make money for an international management company; ideally you’d book a small independent guesthouse directly. If not, tour operators such as [Intrepid](#) or [Responsible Travel](#) are sticklers for supporting local businesses.

I always advocate for undertourism. Choose destinations that get fewer travellers rather than more obvious, overpopulated places. The pandemic turned everything upside down, so some countries that were previously victims of [overtourism](#) now desperately need our money, such as Peru. But instead of Machu Picchu, why not visit Kuélap, an Inca site in the north that’s older and less well known? Also consider which countries operate on

better renewable energy grids: Norway, Spain and Costa Rica run on high amounts of renewable energy, whereas the Dominican Republic and many other tropical islands run on diesel generators.

How will you get there? I love [Byway](#), the slow travel, flight-free itinerary booker that takes away the faff of deciphering train timetables. If you are going to fly, remember a low-cost airline packed full has a much smaller carbon footprint per person than an expensive flight with a lot of business-class seats.

But this is also a question of basic manners. Being a good traveller means not being entitled, not demanding the best table in the restaurant because we can't all have that. And be patient: there's a global crisis in employment in hospitality and service isn't as good as it used to be, so we all need to be more tolerant.

... a good neighbour

Hafeezah Soni, Yorkshire programme manager for the Jo Cox Foundation

Being a good neighbour isn't about organising street parties twice a year. That's setting the bar too high, and not everyone will have the time or the social or mental resources to take part in group activities. But if you know your neighbour celebrates Diwali, why not drop them a note to wish them well? It doesn't cost anything, but it makes people feel valuable, seen and respected.

In my work, I hear a lot about belonging, social cohesion and loneliness, and many people tell me they don't feel as if they belong, whether that's because of language difficulties, accessibility problems, or different opinions. These problems may seem huge, but I've found that communities can change through very small gestures – micro-interactions, such as smiling, saying hello, thanking the bus driver. Research shows us that this [can improve wellbeing and reduce loneliness](#).

It's not always easy to be a good neighbour. When there are difficulties, you can only try to understand the other person's perspective and find some common ground. If you smile at someone and they don't smile back, well,

that's OK; they may have something going on that you don't know about. Good neighbours create an environment where a smile and a hello is possible, whether or not the other person is able to accept it.

You don't need to be your neighbour's best friend. I live near lots of elderly people and I see their routines, so if I don't see a light come on I can wonder what may be wrong. An acquaintance has value for being just that, because a sense of community fosters a feeling that help is available for those who need it, while respecting everybody's boundaries. Knowing a neighbour is there for you in difficult times can be powerful. During the pandemic, we saw [a rise in local Facebook and WhatsApp groups](#), people leaving food on doorsteps – we learned the value of good neighbours, and we mustn't forget it.

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... a good parent

Josh Cohen, psychoanalyst, “good enough” parent and author of [How to Live. What to Do. How Great Novels Help Us Change](#)



‘A good enough parent transmits humanity, fallibility and tolerance of imperfection.’ Illustration: Jean Jullien/The Guardian

The entire parenting industry claims to know the answer to this, feeding the fantasy that you can get parenting *right*. These gurus insist they alone know what is good, and that any alternative approach is bad for your child. Possibilities and anxieties proliferate.

The popularity of attachment parenting has spread the idea that maintaining a perpetual bond between mother and child is the way to avoid the trauma of separation. That this is what it means to be a good parent. But growth itself *is* traumatic. Development involves becoming a separate person, and that’s traumatic: anyone who claims you can short-circuit that is a glorified snake oil salesman.

The psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott is perhaps most famous for his concept of “good enough” parenting – the antithesis of this industry that offers only perfect solutions, set up to make parents feel inadequate if they don’t work, in which we always fall short of a punishing ideal. But if you start from the perspective that there is no ideal – not only that you might make mistakes but you will and you have to make mistakes – it can be a kind of liberation. There is something monstrous about the very notion of error-less parenting; it would mean being an AI bot who knows all the right moves but can’t

transmit its own humanity because it doesn't have any. And one of the jobs of a good enough parent is to transmit humanity, fallibility, tolerance of imperfection.

Likewise, being a “good” parent does not mean raising a “good” child. If you try to make your child “good”, they will become a distorted reflection of your own mind. Whereas if you can create an environment and a dynamic in which your child is encouraged to think for and about themselves, to be in touch with so-called negative emotions such as sadness and anger, they can become their own person. That doesn't mean you surrender your authority; it means you model a different kind of authority. All of this happens naturally when you try to find ways of talking to your child about what they are thinking and feeling; listening, being curious and orienting yourself towards them in a receptive rather than an imposing way. Children can become incredibly anxious when they believe that there is a right and good answer and a right and good way of doing things that they may not be successfully achieving. And so can parents.

... a good friend

Clinical psychologist and friendship researcher [Miriam Kirmayer](#)

Some characteristics of a good friend may seem fairly obvious: we think of them as someone you can trust, who is reliable, supportive and present. In fact, there's a common belief that being a good friend means needing to be consistently willing to give that support, presence, energy. But if we are constantly in that giver role, depleting ourselves by supporting others without taking the opportunity to be supported by them, that can be a recipe for burnout, resentment and feelings of distance and disconnection. You may sense that your friends don't really understand you, don't know what's going on with you – and they may feel the same.

The other side of that, which often gets missed, is that it feels good for our friends to show up for us when we're struggling. When we aren't comfortable being vulnerable with our friends and leaning on them, we are robbing them of that chance to support us, to feel that they are a good and valued friend to us. So as well as asking, “How can I be a good friend to

you?”, we need to ask, “How am I allowing you to be a good friend to me?” Are you allowing friends to show up for you, and what boundaries do you need to set to contribute to that? Sometimes it’s a question of opening up more, or it might be a case of needing to pull back and not being so giving.

We might feel we are responsible for fixing our friends’ problems and removing their pain, but often what they need is for somebody just to be there with them. Sitting with someone in their distress, letting them know that when they feel overwhelmed or anxious or down, we can tolerate that, and we aren’t going anywhere – and letting them do the same for us – can be a powerful step towards being a better friend.

... a good grownup

Moya Sarner, NHS psychodynamic psychotherapist and author of [When I Grow Up – Conversations With Adults in Search of Adulthood](#)

It was 22-year-old Boru who taught me what it really means to be a good grownup. We first spoke four years ago [for this newspaper](#), about his experiences as an 18-year-old with drug-induced psychosis treated on an adult mental health ward. When we spoke again in his early 20s, he told me he was using drugs to run away from his problems. He was unemployed, living with his parents, watching his friends’ lives progress. A good grownup, he told me, is “someone who’s got their shit sorted” – and that wasn’t him.

I also didn’t feel like the competent, confident grownup I thought I should be – and neither did most of the adults I knew. So I spent three years interviewing people aged 19 to 90, from all walks of life, about feeling not-quite-adult, as well as researchers in neuroscience, sociology, history and more for a book about adults and their search for adulthood.

I researched statistics about people hitting the traditional landmarks of adulthood later and later, if at all – from buying a home to getting married or starting a family. I recognised what made me feel like a bad grownup: that I’ll sit with a broken fridge rather than call an engineer to repair it. And I reflected that surely these cannot be the most meaningful markers of adulthood. Being a good grownup runs deeper than that.

Then I saw Boru again. He told me how, over two years, he'd quit drugs, found a job he loves, rented a flat with a friend. He's now cycling round the world, having adventures that will nourish him for the rest of his life. So what changed? He says he started to grow up because he stopped running away. That meant listening to his thoughts and feelings, including the ones he didn't like, grappling with his situation, working things through. "You start to have those conversations with yourself, and you become more of an honest person. I don't feel like I'm hiding from anything any more, because I'm not hiding from myself."

I think growing up must involve finding your own way to have those conversations. Boru does it on his bike, I do it in psychoanalysis, others I spoke to do it while cooking or playing music. That, for Boru, and for me, is what it means to get your shit sorted.

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Fashion

Naked ambition: the invisible dress was the way to be seen in 2022

From Kim Kardashian's Marilyn Monroe homage to Florence Pugh and Bella Hadid, female nudity has a visceral power



Florence Pugh, braless in a sheer fuchsia halterneck gown, sits alongside Anna Wintour at the Valentino fall/winter 2022/2023 fashion show in Rome, Italy. Photograph: Jacopo Raule/Getty Images



[Jess Cartner-Morley](#)

[@JessC_M](#)

Sat 31 Dec 2022 03.00 EST

The best way to get noticed in 2022 was to wear an invisible dress. From Kim Kardashian in a skin-tone sheath previously worn by Marilyn Monroe to Florence Pugh in one-ply-tissue-weight Valentino pink, “naked glamour” was the look that defined 2022.

After a decade of demure trends, when high necklines and puffed sleeves ruled the catwalk and loose midi dresses replaced pencil skirts as power dressing in the office, this year put the body back in the spotlight.

Near-naked dressing is back, but the new look is – in the vernacular of Instagram – heavily filtered. Long but ultra-sheer gowns that showcase the body while preserving an air of mystery have replaced short skirts and plunging necklines.

The patron saint of naked glamour is Marilyn Monroe. In 1960, in an interview with Marie Claire, Monroe recalled how when a previous reporter had asked her what she wore in bed, “I said, ‘Chanel No 5’, because it’s the truth ... and yet, I don’t want to say ‘nude’.” From that moment on, nudity –

or the suggestion of it – was key to her brand. In May this year, Kim Kardashian made headlines at the Met Gala by [wearing the dress Monroe wore](#) to sing Happy Birthday to the the US president, John F Kennedy, 60 years earlier. In 1962, the shock value of the dress lay in its transparency, and because Monroe’s wardrobe choice was interpreted as suggestive of an intimate relationship with the president. In 2022, the shock value lay in Kardashian revealing she had lost 16lbs to fit into the dress, by not eating solid food for three weeks.



Kim Kardashian made headlines by revealing she had lost 16lbs to fit into Marilyn Monroe’s dress. Photograph: Evan Agostini/Invision/AP

The most talked about red carpet dresses of the year, the most in-vogue wedding dress of the year and the catwalk moment that went viral from Paris fashion week all involved naked dresses. Valentino’s haute couture show in July commandeered [Rome’s Spanish Steps as a catwalk](#), but it was the front-row look worn by Pugh, braless in a sheer fuchsia halterneck gown, that made headlines. The actor’s Don’t Worry Darling director, Olivia Wilde, picked up the “free the nipple” baton at the Academy Museum gala three months later, in a silver Alexandre Vauthier sheath so fine that what lay beneath – just a pair of shoulder pads – was clearly visible.

The viral moment of the most recent catwalk season came at Coperni's Paris fashion week show, when model Bella Hadid stood in her knickers while a dress was sprayed on to her skin. Fabrican is a liquid blend of natural and synthetic fibres applied by aerosol, which on contact with the surface of the body becomes a non-woven fabric. After 10 minutes, Hadid was wearing a dress solid enough that a technician could add a slit in the hem and fold down the neckline to drape around her shoulders, but it remained so X-ray sheer that, like Monroe's rhinestone-studded crystals, it read as naked. The [clip](#) has been viewed over a million times on TikTok.



Bella Hadid is dressed by spraying Fabrican on to her body. Photograph: Julien de Rosa/AFP/Getty Images

There is more to the construction of a successful naked dress than meets the eye. The dress worn by Monroe and Kardashian is said to be embellished with 6,000 tiny rhinestones, each stitched by hand. Monroe paid \$1,440 – a substantial price tag in 1962 – for the dress, which was designed by Bob Mackie, then a young apprentice for the French designer Jean Louis. The gown set a record for a dress at auction, raising \$1.2m in 1999. Seven years later it was sold again for \$4.8m. “Nowadays everyone wears sheer dresses, but back then that was not the case,” said Kardashian. “In a sense, it’s the original naked dress. That’s why it was so shocking.” Mackie became the master of the naked dress, creating the transparent dress with strategically

placed silver sequins and white feathers that [Cher wore to the Met Gala in 1974](#).

But for all the technical virtuosity of its construction, it is the power to spotlight the body beneath that lends the naked dress its visceral power. It has become a cultural totem at a moment when women's bodies have become a political battleground. This year, the US supreme court overturned the constitutional right to abortion, and the death in custody of Mahsa Amini, arrested by Iran's morality police after being accused of wearing her hijab incorrectly, sparked widespread protests.



Olivia Wilde at the Academy Museum gala. Photograph: Image Press Agency/NurPhoto/Rex/Shutterstock

In 2022, female nudity is not mere titillation, it is a hotbed of cultural controversy. The naked dress trend also reflects a continued obsession with a narrowly defined “perfect” body shape. Kardashian’s weight loss was as compelling a storyline as the heritage of her dress. Much of the online criticism against Pugh’s sheer Valentino gown was directed not against her nudity, but against her temerity in being “comfortable with my small breasts ... it aggravated [people] that I was comfortable,” the actor told Harper’s Bazaar. “It was just alarming, how perturbed they were. They were so angry that I was confident,” she added.

The fashion blogger Camille Charriere faced a backlash after posting photos of a see-through wedding dress, made from upcycled white lace by the British fashion designer Harris Reed and worn over a visible white thong, to her 1.3 million followers earlier this year. “I could never picture myself as a conventional bride ... and had no desire to wear a traditional, virginal gown ... I deeply resent the way our wardrobes are still being policed by society. We, collectively, should feel furious that women still have to endure this patriarchal nonsense,” she later wrote.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2022/dec/31/naked-ambition-invisible-dress-way-seen-2022>

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The Q&A Rosie Jones

Comedian Rosie Jones: ‘No matter how hard I work, people will always judge me on how I talk, how I walk’

The comedian and author on her first kiss with a woman, eating crisps in bed and getting so drunk she fell asleep in the toilet



Rosie Jones: ‘Describe myself in three words? Funny, happy idiot.’
Photograph: Jiksaw

[Rosanna Greenstreet](#)

Sat 31 Dec 2022 04.30 EST

Born in Bridlington, east Yorkshire, Rosie Jones, 32, worked as a television researcher while studying comedy writing at the National Film and Television School. She became a comedian and a regular on shows such as The Last Leg. This year, Channel 4 commissioned her to make a

documentary on ableism and abuse. She is the author of [The Amazing Edie Eckhart](#) children's books about a girl with cerebral palsy. In March, Jones starts her first UK tour, [Triple Threat](#). She lives in London.

What is your greatest fear?

Not being liked.

What is the trait you most deplore in others?

Falseness.

What was your most embarrassing moment?

One time I got so drunk in the Soho theatre in London that I fell asleep in the disabled toilet for two hours. People still call the toilet Rosie's Bedroom.

What is your most treasured possession?

I met a disabled activist called Barbara Lisicki who campaigned for the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. They all wore T-shirts that said "Piss on Pity". Their idea was, don't give us pity – we don't need it – what we need are rights. Barbara gave me one of the T-shirts and I've framed it. Without that T-shirt I wouldn't have the job I have, the life I lead, the house I bought. That T-shirt is everything.

Describe yourself in three words

Funny, happy idiot.

What makes you unhappy?

Unfortunately, I am met with ableism and abuse every day. When I leave my house I'm on my guard because I don't know what anyone will say to me and that upsets me. No matter how hard I work, no matter how successful I get, there are always going to be people who judge me on how I talk, how I walk.

What is your most unappealing habit?

I very regularly eat crisps in bed at night. I will wake up to crisps in my duvet, on my pillow, in my hair.

Who is your celebrity crush?

[Jodie Comer](#) and [Gillian Anderson](#).

What is the worst thing anyone's said to you?

"You're not funny." I fully understand why my comedy might not be right for everyone, but don't tell me, get on with your day!

What do you owe your parents?

Everything, because they never held me back and they never saw my disability as a problem. Even though I get abuse and discrimination, I don't care because I grew up in a loving and accepting family.

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What or who is the greatest love of your life? [Comedy](#). Through comedy you can sneakily change the world. If I didn't have comedy, I would be a very sad girl.

What was the best kiss of your life?

The first kiss I had with a girl. It wasn't romantic, I don't remember her name. It was in a gay bar in Soho: I was 25, and up until then I'd been desperately kissing all the boys, thinking, "I think I like girls, but it makes more sense if I'm straight." Then I kissed her and everything made sense, and I didn't kiss another boy after that.

What did you dream about last night?

I don't dream – maybe because I'm living the dream.

What do you consider your greatest achievement?

My books. There's no greater feeling than a disabled child coming up to me and saying, "I've never seen myself in a book before."

What keeps you awake at night?

Deadlines.

How would you like to be remembered?

As someone who was happy, silly and went out there, unafraid, and did what she wanted to do.

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Nelson and Prince Harry. Composite: Guardian

The best fiction and nonfiction to look forward to in the new year, from Zadie Smith to Simon Schama, Margaret Atwood to Rory Stewart

[*Justine Jordan*](#) and [*David Shariatmadari*](#)

Sat 31 Dec 2022 04.00 EST

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January



Bret Easton Ellis is back with his first novel in 13 years. Photograph: Franco Origlia/Getty Images

Nonfiction

Spare by Prince Harry, Bantam

The prince tells all in a memoir that was delayed following the death of his grandmother, the Queen, in September 2022.

Bloodbath Nation by Paul Auster, Faber

A devastating reflection on 200 years of American gun culture from the acclaimed writer and film-maker.

Pirate Enlightenment by David Graeber, Allen Lane

In this posthumous work, the anthropologist and Occupy movement leader makes the case that Enlightenment values were best embodied by a ramshackle utopia in late 17th-century Madagascar.

I'm Black So You Don't Have to Be by Colin Grant, Cape

A memoir told through the stories of Grant's mother, sister, uncle and others. It also covers his short-lived medical career and time at the BBC.

Pegasus: How a Spy in Your Pocket Threatens the End of Privacy, Dignity and Democracy by Laurent Richard and Sandrine Rigaud,

Macmillan

An inside account of the investigation that exposed the digital surveillance system capable of infecting billions of mobile phones.

Red Memory by Tania Branigan, Faber

Fifty years after the Cultural Revolution, the Guardian's former China correspondent shows how it continues to reverberate through the lives of ordinary people.

In Good Hands: The Making of a Modern Conductor by Alice Farnham, Faber

One of Britain's foremost conductors lifts the lid on what they actually do and how you become one.

*Fiction***The Shards by Bret Easton Ellis, Swift**

Broadcast last year on his podcast, Ellis's first novel in 13 years melds autobiography and fiction to focus on a group of privileged LA students at risk from a serial killer.

The New Life by Tom Crewe, Chatto

An impressive debut of unconventional lives in Victorian England, inspired by Havelock Ellis and John Addington Symonds's work on gay sexuality.

Really Good, Actually by Monica Heisey, 4th Estate

"If your husband dies, at least people feel bad for you ...". The Schitt's Creek screenwriter's debut is a modern comedy about divorce and precarity.

Age of Vice by Deepti Kapoor, Fleet

Action-packed crime drama of corruption in contemporary India set around a wealthy family.

Kick the Latch by Kathryn Scanlan, Daunt

Following the brilliant short-story collection *The Dominant Animal*, a tough, beautiful novel about a horse trainer drawn from conversations between subject and author.

Cold People by Tom Rob Smith, Simon & Schuster

An alien invasion forces human survivors to Antarctica: the *Child 44* author turns to high-concept SF with an apocalyptic tale about efforts to adapt and evolve.

*Poetry***Balladz by Sharon Olds, Cape**

The American poet's new collection explores childhood and white privilege as well as the experience of lockdown.

*Teens***Influential by Amara Sage, Faber**

YA debut about social media, internet fame and cancel culture, with a heroine whose parents have put her whole life online.

February

Family portraits ... Ayòbámi Adébáyò. Photograph: Katherine Anne Rose/The Observer

Nonfiction

And Then What?: Inside Stories of 21st-Century Diplomacy by Catherine Ashton, Elliott & Thompson

The former EU foreign policy chief and leader of the Iran nuclear negotiations breaks her silence in this memoir of top-level diplomacy.

The Crisis of Democratic Capitalism by Martin Wolf, Allen Lane

With both capitalism and democracy under increasing stress across the world, journalist Martin Wolf makes the case that the marriage of these two systems is still the best way of organising society.

Getting Better by Michael Rosen, Ebury

After spending six weeks on a ventilator during a bout of Covid-19, the former children's laureate reflects on this and other episodes of suffering and recovery.

Still Pictures: On Photography and Memory by Janet Malcolm, Granta

In her final book, posthumously published, the New Yorker writer weaves an affecting memoir around 12 family photographs.

The Big Con: How the Consulting Industry Weakens Our Businesses, Infantilizes Our Governments and Warps Our Economies by Mariana Mazzucato and Rosie Collington, Allen Lane

Political economists Mazzucato and Collington chart the inexorable rise of consulting, which thrives in an era of hollowed-out states and stripped-back firms.

Two Sisters by Blake Morrison, Borough

Thirty years after the searingly honest *And When Did You Last See Your Father?*, Morrison writes about his sister Gill, whose alcoholism and ill health fractured their relationship.

Transitional by Munroe Bergdorf, Bloomsbury

The model and trans activist tells the story of her own search for authenticity and argues that we all transition, one way or another.

It's OK to Be Angry About Capitalism by Bernie Sanders, Allen Lane

The man who challenged Hillary Clinton for the 2016 Democratic nomination sketches his vision for a future in which the 1% no longer call the shots.

Fiction

Victory City by Salman Rushdie, Cape

Presented as the translation of an ancient epic, Rushdie's latest explores the rise and fall of a magical Indian city, along with the spinning of stories and the quest for women's agency.

The World and All That It Holds by Aleksandar Hemon, Picador

Two young Sarajevans are caught up in the first world war and beyond, in a novel about history's revolutions and the enduring power of love.

Owlsh by Dorothy Tse, translated by Natascha Bruce, Fitzcarraldo

This subversive fairytale debut set in an alternative Hong Kong interrogates life under oppressive regimes.

A Spell of Good Things by Ayòbámi Adébáyò, Canongate

Two families' destinies are intertwined, in a portrait of inequality in contemporary Nigeria from the author of the Women's prize-shortlisted *Stay With Me*.

In Ascension by Martin MacInnes, Atlantic

From a trench in the Atlantic to alien intervention, inner worlds to outer space, fiction full of discovery and wonder.

Hungry Ghosts by Kevin Jared Hosein, Bloomsbury

From a Commonwealth short story prize winner, a striking debut of violence, religion and family struggles set in 1940s colonial Trinidad.

Poetry

Content Warning: Everything by Akwaeke Emezi, Bloomsbury

A bold debut collection delving into Blackness, trauma, sexuality and the

divine from the author of *The Death of Vivek Oji*.

March



A fast-paced tale of idealism and political infighting from Eleanor Catton.
Photograph: Murdo MacLeod/The Guardian

Nonfiction

Saving Time: Discovering a Life Beyond the Clock by Jenny Odell, Bodley Head

The author of *How to Do Nothing* imagines a future in which we free ourselves from the timetables imposed by the profit motive, and rediscover the pace and rhythms of the pre-industrial world.

The Earth Transformed by Peter Frankopan, Bloomsbury

A sweeping examination of how climate has shaped history, and how humans in turn have shaped climate, from the author of *The Silk Roads*.

Good Girls: A Story and Study of Anorexia by Hadley Freeman, 4th Estate

The columnist and author of *House of Glass* reflects on her experience of anorexia and as an inpatient on an eating disorders ward.

Ravenous: Why Our Appetite Is Killing Us and the Planet, and What We Can Do About It by Henry Dimbleby, Profile

The founder of Leon and leader of the National Food Strategy on the problem with modern diets.

The Marriage Question: George Eliot's Double Life by Clare Carlisle, Allen Lane

A fresh perspective on the great writer through the lens of her relationship with (already married) George Lewes, which she called "this double life, which helps me to feel and think with double strength".

Dispatches from the Diaspora by Gary Younge, Faber

A collection of the former Guardian columnist's journalism, sketching the contours of recent Black history from Nelson Mandela's first election campaign to the Obama presidency and beyond.

The Best Minds by Jonathan Rosen, Allen Lane

The tragic story of Rosen's childhood best friend, Michael Laudor, whose brilliant academic career was cut short by a psychotic illness that led him to commit a horrific act of violence.

The Patriarchs: How Men Came to Rule by Angela Saini, 4th Estate

The science journalist delves into deep time to uncover the historical roots of gendered oppression.

Fiction

Birnam Wood by Eleanor Catton, Granta

A decade on from the Booker-winning *The Luminaries*, this is a fast-paced tale of idealism and political infighting in the end times as New Zealand environmental activists run up against an American billionaire.

Old God's Time by Sebastian Barry, Faber

After two books set in 19th-century America, Barry returns to Ireland for the story of a retired policeman pulled back into the past.

Tomás Nevinson by Javier Marías, translated by Margaret Jull Costa, Hamish Hamilton

Right and wrong blur in the final novel from the Spanish writer who died last year, as a retired spy goes undercover on the trail of a terrorist.

Cursed Bread by Sophie Mackintosh, Hamish Hamilton

Fable of a town afflicted by madness, from the author of *The Water Cure* and *Blue Ticket*.

Cuddy by Benjamin Myers, Bloomsbury

The hermit St Cuthbert, unofficial patron saint of the north of England, is at the centre of a genre-melding experimental novel based around the creation of Durham cathedral and ranging from the Viking invasions to the present day.

Old Babes in the Wood by Margaret Atwood, Chatto

A collection of short stories featuring “beloved cats, a confused snail, Martha Gellhorn, George Orwell, Hypatia of Alexandria and an alien”, with a central sequence focusing on a long-married couple.

Dr No by Percival Everett, Influx

Following the Booker-shortlisted *The Trees*, an absurdist caper with bite about the exploits of a brilliant maths professor and an aspiring Bond villain.

Nothing Special by Nicole Flattery, Bloomsbury

The Irish short story writer’s debut novel focuses on two teens coming of age in 60s New York, in the orbit of Andy Warhol’s Factory.

Man-Eating Typewriter by Richard Milward, White Rabbit

The transgressive adventures of a psychopath in Swinging 60s London: this ingenious homage to the avant garde is told entirely in the gay slang Polari.

Teens

Different for Boys by Patrick Ness, Walker

From the *Chaos Walking* author, an exploration of sexuality and masculinity focusing on a gay teenager.

April



David Baddiel investigates the psychological pull of religious faith.
Photograph: David Levene/The Guardian

Nonfiction

What Good Law Can Do by Jolyon Maugham, WH Allen

The founder of the Good Law Project sets out his vision for a legal system that defends the weak instead of serving those in power.

How to Think Like a Philosopher by Julian Baggini, Granta

Baggini takes inspiration from the greatest philosophers to provide a toolkit for clear thinking in an era of misinformation.

Among Others: Friendships and Encounters by Michael Frayn, Faber

The playwright and novelist writes about his inspirations in this celebratory memoir.

The Forgotten Girls: An American Story by Monica Potts, Allen Lane

A journalist returns to her home town to look at the very different course her best friend's life has taken amid rural poverty in Arkansas.

Free and Equal: What Would a Fair Society Look Like? by Daniel Chandler, Allen Lane

A galvanising vision for society that uses the revolutionary ideas of American thinker John Rawls as its starting point.

George: A Magpie Memoir by Frieda Hughes, Profile

The poet and painter (daughter of Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes) writes of her unlikely love for a magpie that she rescues and rears by hand in the Welsh countryside.

The God Desire by David Baddiel, William Collins

An examination of atheism and the fundamental psychological pull of religious faith from the comedian and author of *Jews Don't Count*.

Stuck Monkey: The Deadly Planetary Cost of the Things We Love by James Hamilton-Paterson, Apollo

From online shopping to pets and phones, the story of how unthinking consumer habits contribute to the environmental crisis.

Fiction

Granta Best of Young British Novelists 5

Once every decade since 1983, Granta magazine has tipped 20 British fiction writers for enduring success. Who will make it this time? Tash Aw, Rachel Cusk, Brian Dillon and Helen Oyeyemi are the judges.

A House for Alice by Diana Evans, Chatto

Set in the shadow of Grenfell, the follow-up to *Ordinary People* features a family whose matriarch wants to move back to Nigeria after 50 years in London.

Greek Lessons by Han Kang, translated by Deborah Smith and Emily Yae Won, Hamish Hamilton

A mute young woman in Seoul makes a connection with her language teacher, who is himself losing his sight, in the new novel from the author of *The Vegetarian*.

The Memory of Animals by Claire Fuller, Fig Tree

Following the Costa-winning *Unsettled Ground*, an investigation of grief,

atonement and survival, in which a young woman takes part in a mysterious vaccine trial.

Jimi Hendrix Live in Lviv by Andrey Kurkov, translated by Reuben Woolley, MacLehose

An ex-KGB officer, an ageing hippy and a pair of young lovers feature in an affectionate, blackly comic picaresque of the Ukrainian city from the author of *Death and the Penguin*.

The Long Form by Kate Briggs, Fitzcarraldo

The debut novel from a prizewinning essayist considers motherhood, babyhood, caregiving, reading and the creativity of everyday life.

Biography of X by Catherine Lacey, Granta

Set in an alternative America, an ambitious, genre-busting investigation of creativity told through the life of an iconoclastic artist, as written by her grieving widow.

The Five Sorrowful Mysteries of Andy Africa by Stephen Buoro, Bloomsbury

Exuberantly funny coming-of-age debut about a Nigerian teenager falling for a white girl.

Romantic Comedy by Curtis Sittenfeld, Doubleday

Average-looking men get to date beautiful women – why is the reverse never true? A comedy scriptwriter tests out this social rule in the follow-up to *Rodham*.

Poetry

Divisible by Itself and One by Kae Tempest, Picador

Poems of gender, transformation and the body in a collection about authenticity and conformity.

May



Simon Schama examines the problem of killer diseases from a sweeping historical perspective. Photograph: Graeme Robertson/The Guardian

Nonfiction

Art Is Magic by Jeremy Deller, Cheerio

The artist behind the Battle of Orgreave and Sacrilege (an inflatable version of Stonehenge) explores the people, places and cultural artefacts that have inspired his work.

Politics: A Survivor's Guide: How to Stay Engaged Without Getting Enraged by Rafael Behr, Atlantic

The Guardian columnist and self-confessed news junkie draws on years of reporting to trace the roots of our toxic politics and offer good reasons not to switch off.

Sleeping on Islands: A Life in Poetry by Andrew Motion, Faber

The former poet laureate guides us through his life in poetry, from encounters with Larkin and Auden to the act of composition itself.

Is This OK?: One Woman's Search for Connection Online by Harriet Gibsone, Picador

The phenomenon of parasocial relationships – the bonds we think we have

with people we only know online – are expertly dissected by Gibsons in her account of living digitally in the 21st century.

Out by Tim Shipman, William Collins

The final part of the former Sunday Times political editor's Brexit trilogy – following *All Out War* and *Fall Out* – covers the effort to “get Brexit done” under prime minister Boris Johnson.

Foreign Bodies: Pandemics, Vaccines and the Health of Nations by Simon Schama, Simon & Schuster

Schama applies a sweeping historical perspective to the problem of killer diseases, telling the stories of 15 people whose pioneering work altered the course of pandemics and our understanding of them.

I'm Not As Well As I Thought I Was by Ruby Wax, Penguin Life

Wax's “most honest, rawest book to date” covers her lifelong struggle with mental ill-health, including her recent stay in a psychiatric institution

Fiction

August Blue by Deborah Levy, Hamish Hamilton

A woman chases her double across Europe, in an investigation into fraying identity from the author of *The Man Who Saw Everything*.

The House of Doors by Tan Twan Eng, Canongate

Love and betrayal in early 20th-century Malaysia from the Booker-shortlisted author, inspired by Somerset Maugham's visit to Penang.

Mister, Mister by Guy Gunaratne, Tinder

Exploring Britishness and unbelonging, the follow-up to *In Our Mad and Furious City* focuses on “idiot, poet, jihadist, son” Yahya Bas, locked up in a UK detention centre after travelling to war-torn Syria in search of his roots.

Small Worlds by Caleb Azumah Nelson, Viking

The author of the Costa-winning debut *Open Water* captures three summers in the life of a young Black man, to highlight father-son relationships, faith, friendship – and the power of dancing.

The Happy Couple by Naoise Dolan, W&N

The Irish author follows her comic debut, *Exciting Times*, with an ensemble novel about commitment and betrayal set around a wedding.

Yellowface by Rebecca F Kuang, Borough

Hotly tipped satire of white privilege and identity politics in publishing, from the bestselling YA author of *Babel*.

The Making of Another Major Motion Picture Masterpiece by Tom Hanks, Hutchinson Heinemann

How a comic book leads, eight decades on, to a multimillion-dollar superhero movie, in the film actor's debut novel.

The Story of the Forest by Linda Grant, Virago

From eastern Europe to Liverpool suburbia and postwar Soho, a novel of world events and generational memory from the Women's prize winner.

Nineteen Claws and a Black Bird by Agustina Bazterrica, translated by Sarah Moses, Pushkin

Short stories from the author of BookTok cannibal phenomenon *Tender Is the Flesh*.

Soldier Sailor by Claire Kilroy, Faber

The first novel in a decade from the acclaimed Irish writer focuses on the drama of new motherhood.

The Ferryman by Justin Cronin, Orion

From the author of vampire bestseller *The Passage*, a new epic about a hidden island paradise which is not what it seems.

Poetry

Tomorrow Someone Will Arrest You by Meena Kandasamy, Atlantic

The personal is political in a collection reckoning with resistance, freedom, caste and the refugee crisis.

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June



Brandon Taylor's second novel is *The Late Americans*. Photograph: William J Adams/The Observer

Nonfiction

On Women by Susan Sontag, Hamish Hamilton

A collection of essays from the 1970s by one of the most influential feminists of the 20th century, gathered together here for the first time.

An Uneasy Inheritance by Polly Toynbee, Atlantic

Toynbee comes from a long line of radicals, reformers and scholars – all of whom have wrestled with the contradictions of being comfortably middle class while trying to further the cause of socialism. She tackles that guilt and awkwardness head on in this frank family history.

American Whitelash: The Resurgence of Racial Violence in Our Time by Wesley Lowery, Allen Lane

The American journalist on white supremacists' retaliation for the Obama presidency, and how it has led to a moment of great danger in American history.

The Sister: The Extraordinary Story of Kim Yo Jong, the Most Powerful Woman in North Korea by Sung-Yoon Lee, Macmillan

Barely known in the west, Kim Jong-un's younger sister exerts enormous influence as propagandist-in-chief and second-in-command of the secretive authoritarian regime.

This Is Not America: Why We Need a Different Conversation About Race by Tomiwa Owolade, Atlantic

Writer and critic Owolade argues that American debates about race have been imported wholesale into British life, clouding our understanding of the specific needs and strengths of Black communities here.

Know Your Place by Faiza Shaheen, Simon & Schuster

The Labour parliamentary candidate assesses the chances of someone of her background becoming an MP as being "10 times more unlikely than being struck by lightning". Here she uses her knowledge of statistics to examine the state of social mobility in Britain today.

Matrescence by Lucy Jones, Allen Lane

A look at what science is revealing about the "physiological and psychological metamorphosis" that takes place during pregnancy, birth and child-rearing.

Fiction

I Am Homeless If This Is Not My Home by Lorrie Moore, Faber

Two exes on a road trip through troubled America open “a trapdoor in reality” in a tragicomic novel about past and present.

The Late Americans by Brandon Taylor, Cape

Follow-up novel to the Booker-shortlisted debut, *Real Life*, an exploration of love, identity and politics through the connections between a group of lovers and friends.

Kairos by Jenny Erpenbeck, translated by Michael Hofmann, Granta

One couple’s experiences of love and betrayal in Berlin around the fall of the Wall, from the prize-winning German author.

Ordinary Human Failings by Megan Nolan, Cape

A tragedy on a 90s London estate becomes a tabloid scandal centred on an Irish immigrant family in the second novel from the author of *Acts of Desperation*.

Be Mine by Richard Ford, Bloomsbury

Nearly a decade after *Let Me Be Frank With You*, this final novel in the Frank Bascombe series finds Frank towards the end of his life, acting as caregiver to his son.

The Bee Sting by Paul Murray, Hamish Hamilton

Tragicomedy about love, family crises and the end of the world from the author of *Skippy Dies*.

Scattered Love by Maylis Besserie, translated by Clíona Ní Ríordáin, Lilliput

Yell, Sam, If You Still Can recounted the last days of Samuel Beckett; this follow-up features the ghost of WB Yeats.

Poetry

Verbal Riddim: Dub Poetry 1970–2001, Vintage Classics

The first ever major collection of dub poetry, including Jean “Binta” Breeze, Linton Kwesi Johnson and many more.

Children

Kofi and the Rap Battle Summer by Jeffrey Boakye, Faber

For 9-12, a debut about music and money-making on a 90s estate from the writer and educator.

July



Short stories from the Booker prize winner Shehan Karunatilaka.
Photograph: Sarah Lee/The Guardian

Nonfiction

Wasteland by Oliver Franklin-Wallis, Simon & Schuster

What happens to what we throw away? Franklin-Wallis, features editor at British GQ, travels to landfills in Ghana, incinerators in Oklahoma and sewers in Britain to expose a sprawling global system in crisis.

Black Ghosts: Encounters With the Africans Changing China by Noo Saro-Wiwa, Canongate

Nigerian writer Saro-Wiwa's account of a journey through China and the African migrants trying to build a life there.

Seventeen: A Coming of Age Story by Joe Gibson, Gallery

Gibson, writing 30 years on and under a pseudonym, shares the story of his relationship with a teacher twice his age at a major UK private school.

Art Monsters: Unruly Bodies in Feminist Art by Lauren Elkin, Chatto

In a book billed as “part feminist manifesto and part memoir”, Elkin examines female artists including Pussy Riot, Louise Bourgeois and Audre Lorde, celebrating their ability to provoke and disquiet.

Fiction

The Birth Lottery & Other Surprises by Shehan Karunatilaka, Fleet

Witty and unsettling short stories from last year’s Booker prize winner.

Crook Manifesto by Colson Whitehead, Fleet

A sequel to his New York-set 70s comic heist novel Harlem Shuffle.

Chain-Gang All-Stars by Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah, Harvill Secker

A near-future American dystopia about gladiatorial fights in for-profit prisons, from the author of Friday Black.

Corey Fah Does Social Mobility by Isabel Waidner, Hamish Hamilton

Surreal follow-up to the Goldsmiths prize-winning Sterling Karat Gold charts the misadventures of a writer chasing recognition from the “Social Evils prize committee”.

The Black Eden by Richard T Kelly, Faber

From the author of The Knives and Crusaders, a novel of political opportunity and social change focusing on five men amid the discovery of North Sea oil.

No One Prayed Over Their Graves by Khaled Khalifa, translated by Leri Price, Faber

A flood destroys a village near Aleppo at the beginning of the 20th century, in this tale of life and death in Syria at a time of great change.

After the Funeral by Tessa Hadley, Cape

From a master of the short story, a collection teasing out the vast

consequences of small events.

August



Helen Macdonald examines the weaponisation of nostalgia in her SF fantasy thriller, *Prophet*. Photograph: Sophia Evans/The Guardian

Nonfiction

Where We Come From by Aniefiok Ekpoudom, Faber

Culture writer Ekpoudom charts the social evolution of British rap and grime, interviewing the artists and listeners who created a uniquely influential scene.

Ootlin by Jenni Fagan, Hutchinson Heinemann

Novelist and poet Fagan writes powerfully about her childhood as a ward of the state, a rootless existence that fostered a fascination with storytelling.

Money by David McWilliams

A sweeping exploration of the meaning and mechanics of money, from the Silk Road to Wall Street, written by the Irish economist and author of *The Pope's Children*.

Fiction

Caret by Adam Mars-Jones, Faber

Set in 1970s Cambridge, a return to the world of idiosyncratic comic hero John Cromer, previously seen in *Pilcrow* and *Cedilla*.

The Future Future by Adam Thirlwell, Cape

One woman is pitted against the world in Thirlwell's latest, billed as "a contemporary novel that somehow takes place in the 18th century".

Prophet by Helen Macdonald and Sin Blaché, Cape

Genre-blending SF fantasy thriller about the weaponisation of nostalgia, from the author of *H Is for Hawk* and debut novelist Blaché.

The Girl in the Eagle's Talons by Karin Smirnoff, translated by Sarah Death, MacLehose

A new author takes over Stieg Larsson's *Millennium* series, as the story moves to the stark expanses of northern Sweden.

Poetry

Bright Fear by Mary Jean Chan, Faber

Drawing on a Hong Kong childhood, a new collection from the Costa award winner exploring postcolonialism and queer identity.

September



Rory Stewart's *Power Failures* asks where modern politics has gone wrong.
Photograph: Murdo MacLeod/The Guardian

Nonfiction

Silence All the Noise by Caster Semenya, Merky

The South African Olympic gold medallist tells the story of her life, including the toll taken by the intense international scrutiny of her body and gender.

Catland by Kathryn Hughes, 4th Estate

The story of how Victorian and Edwardian Britain fell in love with cats, from the development of prize breeds to Louis Wain's artistic obsession.

Minority Rule by Ash Sarkar, Bloomsbury

An examination of the way British Conservatives and American Republicans have stoked fears of a "takeover" by marginalised groups.

Memoir by Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, Chatto

The British-Iranian woman wrongly imprisoned in Iran between 2016 and 2022 writes about her incarceration and the fight to get her out.

Sonic Life: A Memoir by Thurston Moore, Faber

From coming of age in 70s New York to creating one of the most influential

bands of his era with then-partner Kim Gordon, the Sonic Youth frontman tells the story of his life.

Emperor of Rome by Mary Beard, Profile

A sweeping history of the Roman emperors, from the brilliant to the debauched, by Britain's best-known classicist.

Talking to My Father by Yanis Varoufakis, Bodley Head

An incisive critique of the current dominant economic model, "technofeudalism", written in the form of a letter from Greece's ex-minister of finance to his late father.

Power Failures by Rory Stewart, Cape

A no-holds-barred account of what's gone wrong with modern politics, from the outspoken former Conservative minister.

Fiction

The Fraud by Zadie Smith, Hamish Hamilton

An enslaved man becomes a star witness in the Tichborne trial, in a novel about deception and hypocrisy inspired by real events in Victorian London and Jamaica.

The Wren, The Wren by Anne Enright, Cape

The Booker winner follows three generations of an Irish family, from the 70s to the present day, in a "meditation on love: spiritual, romantic, darkly sexual or genetic", combining poetry, adventure and the resilience of women.

The Vaster Wilds by Lauren Groff, Hutchinson Heinemann

From the author of Fates and Furies and Matrix, a 17th-century "female Robinson Crusoe" in which a young English servant flees from a starving colonial encampment into the American wilderness.

The Maniac by Benjamín Labatut, Pushkin

When We Cease to Understand the World explored the far edges of scientific discovery; this is another genre-blending mix based around the polymath Johnny von Neumann, who worked on the Manhattan project.

The Glutton by AK Blakemore, Granta

The follow-up to her prize-winning debut *The Manningtree Witches* is a dark story of “insatiable hunger” set in revolutionary France.

The Door of No Return by David Diop, translated by Sam Taylor, Pushkin

Coming after his International Booker-winning *At Night All Blood Is Black*, Diop’s latest novel, set in the 18th century, tells of how a French naturalist travels through a Senegal ravaged by the slave trade.

The Secret Hours by Mick Herron, John Murray

Standalone novel from the author of the bestselling *Slough House* series about washed-up spies.

Absolutely and Forever by Rose Tremain, Chatto

Set in the second half of the 20th century, a tale of thwarted love.

Beasts of England by Adam Biles, Galley Beggar

This irreverent sequel to *Animal Farm* sets out to skewer the inequalities of contemporary Britain.

Untitled by Sebastian Faulks, Hutchinson Heinemann

Based around a mishap in a London fertility clinic, Faulks’s new novel promises romance and mystery.

Weirdo by Sara Pascoe, Faber

Comedian’s debut novel about an awkward woman looking for love.

Poetry

The Iliad translated by Emily Wilson, Norton

Following her celebrated version of the *Odyssey*, a “galloping” translation of Homer’s martial epic, which was a decade in the making.

Children

Impossible Creatures by Katherine Rundell, Bloomsbury

The beginning of a new fantasy series for 8-12, in which children travel to a

magical archipelago filled with mythical creatures.

In the Shadow of the Wolf Queen by Kiran Millwood Hargrave, Orion
First volume in an epic trilogy about nature, magic and love.

October



Clare Balding explores Britain's relationships with dogs. Photograph: John Walton/PA

Nonfiction

In the Name of the Mother: Daphne's Sons and a Quest for Justice by Paul Caruana Galizia, Profile

An urgent account of the life of Caruana Galizia's mother Daphne, a Maltese journalist who was assassinated for her work exposing corruption.

Around The World in 80 Games by Marcus du Sautoy, 4th Estate

What makes some games world-beating, while others simply don't travel? The mathematician and professor of the public understanding of science goes in search of answers.

Isle of Dogs by Clare Balding, Ebury

The broadcaster on how Britons' relationships with dogs has influenced the country's history and culture.

Untitled memoir by Jada Pinkett Smith, 4th Estate

From a difficult upbringing in Baltimore to her tumultuous marriage to Will Smith, the actor and talkshow host shares lessons learned.

A Therapeutic Journey by Alain de Botton, Hamish Hamilton

The author and philosopher presents a guide to mental wellbeing informed by 15 years of involvement in the School of Life.

Fiction

Cahokia Jazz by Francis Spufford, Faber

From the author of Golden Hill and Light Perpetual, a detective story set amid the speakeasies of an alternative 1920s America.

The Night-Side of the River by Jeanette Winterson, Cape

Spooky stories for Halloween, along with "real-life encounters with the occult".

Julia by Sandra Newman, Granta

A feminist retelling of George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four, as seen from the perspective of Winston Smith's lover Julia.

Tremor by Teju Cole, Faber

From the author of Open City, one man's creative, personal and professional life in the lead up to the pandemic.

Poetry

The Lights by Ben Lerner, Granta

A new collection by the author of The Topeka School.

November



A mysterious tale from Mike McCormack. Photograph: David Levene/The Guardian

Nonfiction

Depraved New World by John Crace, Faber

The Guardian's parliamentary sketch writer attempts to make sense of the dizzying politics of post-Brexit Britain, from the ousting of Boris Johnson onwards.

Property by Rowan Moore, Faber

Private property has traditionally been seen as the bedrock of free societies, but is our fetishisation of it creating misery, unfairness and instability?

Fiction

This Plague of Souls by Mike McCormack, Canongate

From the author of the prizewinning *Solar Bones* comes the tale of an Irish man who returns home from a mysterious trial to his family house, only to find it deserted.

Shot With Crimson by Nicola Upson, Faber

The latest in the historical cosy crime series starring crime novelist

Josephine Tey, this time set around the filming of Hitchcock's Rebecca.

Poetry

School of Instructions by Ishion Hutchinson, Faber

A book-length poem about the experience of West Indian soldiers in the first world war.

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[OpinionBooks](#)

If your New Year's resolution is to read more books this year, this is why you shouldn't

[Max Liu](#)

From 'all the books I read this month' pictures on Instagram to Goodreads targets, we are forgetting to read for pleasure



‘Reading is never about quantity and always about the quality of time you spend with a text.’ Photograph: Cultura Creative Ltd/Alamy

Sat 31 Dec 2022 04.00 ESTLast modified on Sat 31 Dec 2022 05.22 EST

How long will it take you to read this article? It would almost certainly take me longer. [On average](#), adults read about 240 words a minute, but I always exceed those pesky “reading time” estimates that appear on some articles. I review books professionally, but I still take longer to read a book than

almost anyone else I know. I should probably feel embarrassed about that – but instead, I take joy in it.

I inherited the habit of reading for pleasure from my mum who, in my recollections of childhood, is always sitting at the kitchen table zipping through novels or travel literature about places we couldn't afford to visit. Reading is what I do first thing in the morning and last thing at night, never going anywhere without a paperback in my pocket or a hardback in my bag or both. I'm like a character in David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest*, who says: "I do things like get in a taxi and say, 'The library, and step on it.'"

But it's always taken me a long time. When I started reviewing books a decade ago, I was averaging 20 pages an hour. I have accelerated to about 30, but that's still slow, according to one literary critic I know who thinks "most people would read a page a minute", and another who says she can read 60 to 100 pages an hour.

Book reviewers aren't the only ones under pressure to read quickly. Pictures of "all the books I read this month" are ubiquitous on social media and, in an era when we seem to live through one crisis after another, reading nonfiction has become a way of keeping up. Books constantly appear to help us understand Brexit, economics, environmental catastrophe, war, viruses. Some are an enlightening bulwark against what Saul Bellow called "the din of politics", while others read like powerful articles opportunistically thinned out into weak books. It is understandable that we read to try to make sense of events, but it can also fuel the notion that reading is a chore, which it absolutely is not.

Adding to this sense are the apps helping you to speed through great mounds of these books at pace. Blinkist cuts down books into "easy-to-read-insights", presenting "the key insights from a nonfiction book as short, actionable takeaways". Spreeder teaches techniques to speed up your reading pace and promises to "make reading faster, easier and more enjoyable".

Why would pleasure be synonymous with pace? My slow reading seems to be down to a combination of slower processing speeds, and "subvocalising"

– sounding out words as I read them. But especially when it comes to the latter, I wouldn't want to train myself to go faster. It was news to me that not everyone subvocalises, because one of my favourite things about reading in any genre is hearing the language in my mind. "He speaks in your voice, American, and there's a shine in his eye that's halfway hopeful," goes the opening sentence of Don DeLillo's *Underworld*, one of my favourite novels. Without subvocalising, I wouldn't have caught the music of those words, when I picked up the book by chance in 1999.

The holiday period is the perfect time to slow down and read a good book. But New Year is also when people make resolutions about reading more. You can set an annual reading target on Goodreads and elsewhere, but it can then become tempting to prioritise reading shorter books, or reading more quickly, so you reach your target. There's nothing wrong with short books, as this year's fine Booker prize shortlist demonstrated, but reading with one eye on a target is self-defeating. As Zadie Smith wrote: "When you practise reading, and you work at a text, it can only give you what you put into it."

There is a place for routine and structure in our reading. Recently, I finished *African American Poetry: 250 Years of Struggle and Song*, an 800-plus page anthology edited by Kevin Young. It begins in the 19th century, with the work of the enslaved poet Phillis Wheatley, before moving through the Harlem renaissance and beyond to contemporaries such as Claudia Rankine and Danez Smith. For two years, I read the poems each morning in the four minutes it took my coffee to brew. It was a wonderful reminder that reading is never about quantity and always about the quality of time you spend with a text.

So if you're looking for a reading resolution for 2023, don't stick a number on it – resolve to read for pleasure, not as a chore.

- Max Liu is a freelance writer

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[Opinion](#)Greta Thunberg

Greta Thunberg ends year with one of the greatest tweets in history

[Rebecca Solnit](#)



Thunberg's funny exchange is a reminder of the connection between machismo, misogyny and hostility to climate action



‘He was hoping to promote himself with his sneer at Thunberg; he managed to raise his visibility just in time to make news of his arrest.’ Photograph: Jonathan Nackstrand/AFP/Getty Images

Sat 31 Dec 2022 03.21 ESTLast modified on Sat 31 Dec 2022 16.23 EST

On 27 December, former kickboxer, professional misogynist and online [entrepreneur](#) Andrew Tate, 36, sent a boastfully hostile tweet to climate activist Greta Thunberg, 19, about his sports car collection. “Please provide your email address so I can send a complete list of my car collection and their respective enormous emissions,” he wrote. He was probably hoping to enhance his status by mocking her climate commitment. Instead, she burned the macho guy to a crisp in nine words.

He went looking for attention; he got it

Cars are routinely tokens of virility and status for men, and the image accompanying his tweet of him pumping gas into one of his vehicles, coupled with his claims about their “enormous emissions”, had unsolicited dick pic energy. Thunberg seemed aware of that when she [replied](#): “yes, please do enlighten me. email me at smalldickenergy@getalife.com.”

Her reply gained traction to quickly become one of the top 10 tweets of all time; as I write, it's been liked 3.5 million times and shared directly 650,000 or so, and the interchange became the topic of countless news stories around the world, from India to Australia.

There's a direct association between machismo and the refusal to recognize and respond appropriately to the climate catastrophe. It's a result of versions of masculinity in which selfishness and indifference – individualism taken to its extremes – are defining characteristics, and therefore caring and acting for the collective good is their antithesis.

“[Men resist green behavior as unmanly](#)” is the headline for a 2017 story on the phenomenon. Machismo and climate denial, as well as alliance with the fossil fuel industry, is a package deal for the right, from the “rolling coal” trucks whose plumes of dark smoke are meant as a sneer at climate causes to Republicans in the US who have long opposed nearly all climate action (and are major recipients of oil money).

Thunberg's takedown clearly stung Tate, who 10 hours later tweeted out a pompous video in which he tried to reassert his masculinity and status by blathering on in a dressing gown, with a cigar and a pizza box as props. Not long after that, he and his brother Tristan Tate [were arrested](#) by Romanian authorities in connection with appalling allegations of sex trafficking. Tate is a troll and a creep; he's also alleged to be a pimp and rapist. Tate denies all wrongdoing.

Tate is part of a huge network of far-right men online and he'd been banned from most social media platforms. Elon Musk's Twitter let him back on not long before the tweet that was heard around the world.

He was hoping to promote himself with his sneer at Thunberg; he managed to raise his visibility just in time to make news of his arrest and the charges international news. By at least [one account](#), his Romanian-brand pizza box in his video helped cue Romanian police to his location. Had he not harassed Thunberg, the news of his arrest and the charges would not have been major news. He went looking for attention; he got it.

Thunberg drily [tweeted](#) the morning of the 30th: “this is what happens when you don’t recycle your pizza boxes,” mocking her own earnest public image. So far it has 2.6 million likes. Beyond the entertainment value of what transpired over the past few days is a serious reminder of the intersection between machismo, misogyny, hostility to climate action and climate science, and the dank underworld of rightwing characters like Tate recruiting white boys and young men to their views.

- Rebecca Solnit is a Guardian US columnist. Her most recent books are *Recollections of My Nonexistence* and *Orwell’s Roses*

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[OpinionUK cost of living crisis](#)

No one is safe until everyone is safe – we applied it to the pandemic, but why not our economy?

[Rowan Williams](#)

A ‘cost of living crisis’ is a sign our society has gone fundamentally wrong. It’s time we stopped reducing people to calculations of cost



Illustration: Joe Magee/The Guardian

Sat 31 Dec 2022 02.00 ESTLast modified on Sat 31 Dec 2022 06.18 EST

A few weeks ago, a friend reminded me of that old song, All My Trials: “If living were a thing that money could buy / The rich would live and the poor would die.” Which, of course, they do. Just how many unnecessary deaths will result from the lethal combination of extreme cold and soaring energy costs this winter remains to be seen, but no one needs an economics degree

to work out that the figures will be weighted towards those who lack choices and resources.

It is not just that insecurity literally threatens lives; it is also that all those things financial security makes possible – the freedom to celebrate, to plan for your children, to give gifts to people you love – become monstrously complicated. Living with any fullness or imagination recedes over the horizon when choices are all about survival. Who goes hungry – you, or your child? How many jobs can you take on to keep the family fed without wrecking your physical and mental health?

In a society that prioritised security for everyone, the “cost” of living would be virtually invisible. The systems and rhythms of exchange that support us – work, wages, welfare – could be taken for granted. The natural and instinctive concern to keep one another safe that holds cohesive communities together would shape the way our economy operated, so that no one had to constantly calculate how much “living” they could afford.

A “cost of living” crisis is a sign that something basic about how we imagine society has gone fantastically wrong. When “living” becomes a commodity that some can afford and some can’t, the assumption that we ought to be able to trust one another to sustain our security is being challenged at the root. We are being lured into that most destructive of myths: that the essential human position is as an individual purchaser acquiring desirable goods – not a contributor to the building of a trustworthy network of relations, dependable enough to allow more people to become active and generous contributors.

Not everyone who recycles the mantra of “growth” as the answer to everything does so out of ideological fanaticism. For some it is a means for creating more active citizens by creating more active consumers. But when growth is sold to us as a self-evident priority, the mechanisms by which it might be used in service of our shared security seem to fade out of sight. What “trickles down” is risk, not profit.

Over the past 15 years, we have had a succession of stark reminders about this. The 2008 crisis underlined the fact that profit-driven risk-taking in

financial sectors was more costly for society than for the well-cushioned risk-takers. The pandemic showed that those who really provided the safety nets of skill and care in the face of international disaster were among the least fairly rewarded workers in the community (I pass over the disgracefulness of those whose priority was to make profits from the marketing of defective or unsuitable medical equipment). And now we are once again faced with the question of how we can construct a society that gives its members reason to trust they will not constantly be asked to bear the cost of other people's greed, recklessness or folly.

The cost of living crisis is in fact an example of costs being transferred from the powerful to the powerless – from ambitious speculators, market fundamentalists (in and out of government), naked profiteers and, in the past horrendous 10 months of war in Ukraine, foreign dictators, to a population pushed with increasing aggressiveness into debt, housing, food and energy poverty, and insecure working conditions. It is a sign that we have once again forgotten the “covenantal” character of community. It was repeated often enough during the pandemic that no one is safe unless everyone is safe: have we really not noticed that this applies to our economic as much as to our medical wellbeing?

Much has been said about the decline of Christian practice and belief in the UK. But if nearly half the population of England and Wales [still identify as Christian](#), they still, presumably, believe at some level that the Christian and Jewish model of a community in which each person is responsible for all, where cost is not automatically transferred from rich to poor, makes moral and practical sense. Add to this the number of adherents to other faiths who would have much the same basic assumption about human interdependence, and you have the conundrum of why we tolerate a social order where precariousness is so unevenly shared.

The story we heard in the carol services is about a moment in human history when it was confirmed, once and for all, that the deepest force and pressure within all reality “bends toward justice”, in Martin Luther King's phrase – and not to an abstract distributive justice but to a loving, attentive, generous valuing of each person that sets them free in turn for love, attention and generosity.

It is a story about what human living might be if we finally turned our backs on our addiction to commodifying everything we touch, reducing things and people to calculations of cost. If living were a thing that money could *not* buy, all might be free to live. The refusal to see this is the real crisis. The forgetting of this is the real religious and moral sea change.

- Rowan Williams is a former archbishop of Canterbury

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OpinionThe super-rich

I'm a therapist to the ultra-rich. Trust me when I say **Glass Onion** is not as far-fetched as you think

[Clay Cockrell](#)

The greatest heartbreak that comes with extreme wealth is not being able to trust even your friends



‘An increasing need to go bigger and more elaborate.’ Edward Norton as Miles, Madelyn Cline as Whiskey and Daniel Craig as Benoit Blanc. Photograph: John Wilson/Netflix © 2022

Fri 30 Dec 2022 07.48 ESTLast modified on Fri 30 Dec 2022 12.39 EST

As a therapist to “ultra high net worth individuals”, for me the new Netflix sensation, [Glass Onion, A Knives Out Mystery](#), hits a little too close to home. While the average person naturally finds it hard to muster any sympathy for billionaires, the sequel to the 2019 murder mystery film

[Knives Out](#) perfectly illustrates why I would never choose to enter the complicated world of my clients. Trust me when I say you'll never see me buying a lottery ticket.

Director Rian Johnson sets his sequel on a lavish private Greek island owned by billionaire Miles Bron (Edward Norton). Miles' closest friends gather to play a murder mystery game over the course of a glamorous weekend – along with the world's greatest detective, Benoit Blanc (Daniel Craig). While this might seem like a far-fetched storyline, it is not entirely unusual.

One of the problems I hear when listening to the super-rich is an increasing need to go bigger and more elaborate with social events. Why have a normal birthday party when you can hire the Rolling Stones to give a concert for your friends? Why throw a small Christmas gathering with your family when you can get Michael Bublé to sit at the piano and sing his holiday hits during cocktail hour? After a while, it's just never enough. The bigger they go, the less satisfied they become. Imagine having everything, and not being able to enjoy it.

The film also skilfully explores the greatest heartbreak that comes with wealth: rich people can't trust anyone. Ever. And each time they try – and believe me, they do try – it will often burn them. All of their relationships are tainted by the power dynamic brought about by their wealth. In *Glass Onion*, while Miles presents with confidence and swagger, he knows that his weekend guests, his oldest and dearest friends from his pre-wealth days, are only there because of the power he has over them. He invests in their ventures, pulls them out of scrapes, holds their debts – each one has a tie that binds. These relationships are not based on authentic love or open honesty, but a toxic dynamic that festers into paranoia.



‘These relationships are not based in authentic love or open honesty, but a toxic dynamic that festers into paranoia.’ Photograph: John Wilson/AP

I’ve seen some of my wealthy clients innocently and generously help out an old high school friend going through financial troubles, or perhaps offer to send their kids to college, to suddenly realise that the relationship has a whiff of business about it. They begin to notice that their old friend seems hesitant around them, and perhaps too eager to please. The power dynamic has changed, and now there is a sense of obligation and debt.

This has happened even within families. One of my famous clients was invited to dinner by her sister, only to arrive and realise it was actually a planned evening with some producers who wanted to pitch a TV deal and product endorsements. It seems that every interaction comes with an ask.

If this is what the very wealthy experience from their friends and family members, can you imagine what it’s like when new people come into their lives? With every new friend comes a host of doubts. What do they want? Are they interested in me, or my money and/or fame? It’s a fine line between paranoia and educated suspicion.

Cautious of new friends and burned by their old friends, many of my clients become very isolated, or only socialise in a bubble of other billionaires.

While most of us do not feel sorry for the very wealthy, in reality, it's not all helicopters, yachts and private islands. It's a complicated world with its own rules and pitfalls, and many people do not survive it.

Throughout *Glass Onion*, it becomes increasingly clear that the rich often do get burned, and that wealth corrupts people because it robs us of life's true treasure: friendship. After the credits roll, maybe you'll be left not wanting to buy a lottery ticket either; and instead, wanting to hold your own friends a little closer.

- Clay Cockrell is a psychotherapist and the founder of Walk and Talk Therapy

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[Life and style](#)

2022: the year in review – Edith Pritchett cartoon

[Edith Pritchett](#)

Sat 31 Dec 2022 03.00 EST

[January: man working from home; partygate – cake, gun and Boris Johnson;](#)
[February: Storm Eunice people with umbrellas, Millennium Dome roof.](#)
[March: Rishi Sunak fishing into a piggy bank; Will Smith slapping Chris](#)
[Rock. April: Neil Parish, tractor on phone. May: Coleen Rooney and](#)
[Rebecca Vardy on scales of justice; Kim Kardashian in Marilyn's dress.](#)
[June: Queen on jubilee plate; travel delays, holidays in Gatwick Pret. July:](#)
[Mick Lynch, poster boy for strikes; woman and electric fans in heatwave;](#)
[BP and Shell logos battling for cash. August: Love Island ballot box, only](#)
[general election this year; Chloe Kelly waves England shirt; September:](#)
[Holly Willoughby and Philip Schofield by Queen's coffin and Charles with](#)
[crown. October: Daily Fluff headline Liz Truss the only choice, pound](#)
[crashes; Kwasi Kwarteng with map in passenger seat of car with Liz Truss](#)
[driving; Boris Johnson threatens a return. November: Elon Musk on a blue](#)
[bird; Toad on Matt Hancock's head. December: Christmas shopping](#)

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2022.12.31 - Around the world

- [Coronavirus WHO urges data 'transparency' as China prepares to open borders](#)
- [EU China bristles as states prepare to scale up Covid monitoring](#)
- [China Another Covid wave expected in rural areas](#)

China

WHO urges Covid data ‘transparency’ as China prepares to open borders

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus says WHO officials stressed to Beijing the importance of sharing data ahead of easing of travel restrictions on 8 January



Passengers in protective gear carry their luggage in the Capital airport terminal in Beijing. The WHO has urged China to share its Covid data as cases surge in the country and it relaxes travel restrictions. Photograph: Ng Han Guan/AP

Guardian staff and agencies

Fri 30 Dec 2022 23.40 EST

The World Health Organisation again urged China's health officials to regularly share specific, real-time information on the country's Covid surge, as the UK joined other countries in bringing in travel restrictions, citing a lack of data as the reason.

WHO Covid experts [met Chinese officials on Friday](#) and “again stressed the importance of transparency and regular sharing of data to formulate accurate risk assessments and to inform effective response”, said the WHO chief, [Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus](#).

In particular, WHO requested more genetic sequencing data, data on hospitalisations, intensive care unit admissions and deaths – and data on vaccinations delivered and vaccination status, especially in vulnerable people and those over 60 years old.

The WHO invited Chinese scientists to present detailed data on viral sequencing at a WHO technical meeting due to be held on 3 January.

China’s National Health Commission said of the meeting only that its health officials had exchanged views with the WHO and that more technical exchanges would be held.

A surge in Covid infections across China and doubts about its official data have prompted the return of health checks across Europe and around the world in the wake of the rapid end to Xi Jinping’s zero-Covid strategy.

China is set to significantly loosen its travel restrictions on inbound and outbound travel from 8 January, and travel for lunar new year later that is expected to see [hundreds of millions of Chinese workers return to regional home towns](#), with many expected to take the disease with them to areas that have fewer medical facilities.

Chinese state media reported that Shanghai’s major hospitals had seen the number of emergency patients double in the past few days, sparking calls for non-urgent patients to be moved to smaller hospitals.

At the city’s Ruijin hospital, the number of visits to emergency reached [1,500 a day](#), with Covid patients accounting for 80% of those visits, the state-backed Global Times reported on Friday.

The UK became the latest country to [bring in restrictions](#) in a move designed to align with US policy. The decision was taken because of what the

government believes is a lack of reliable data from China.

The US attributed [its recent change](#) to policy to the lack of information on Covid variants and concerns that the increased cases in China could result in the development of new variants.

British MP Tobias Ellwood, the chair of the Commons defence select committee, suggested the government's emergency response committee – known as Cobra – should have been convened amid concerns about the reliability of China's data.

“We should be taking our own precautionary measures ... we do not know what variants of Covid have developed in China in the three years of their lockdown,” he told LBC radio. “Any dithering leaves us as a hostage to fortune ... The later you leave any action, the less impact it will have.”

Singapore, a key travel hub, said on Friday that it would take a “cautious” approach to increasing capacity as Chinese foreign travel resumed. The emergence of new and more dangerous variants, and the potential burden on Singapore's health system of sick travellers, were its main concerns, its health ministry said.

Germany's health minister, Karl Lauterbach, said it was “not yet necessary” to bring back mandatory testing for travellers coming into the borderless Schengen area from China via [Germany](#) but that data on Covid variants provided by Beijing was not sufficiently reliable. “Therefore we very much have to rely on doing that ourselves,” for example by carefully looking at individual flights, he said.

Chinese state media has called the return of testing requirements for travellers “discriminatory” and politically motivated in an attempt to undermine China's reopening.

Senior Covid official Liang Wannian said on Thursday that China played an active role in global pathogen monitoring and would alert the WHO “in a timely manner when a new variant is discovered or when the mutation causes a change in virulence or transmissibility of the virus”, the Global Times reported.

With Reuters

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/dec/31/who-urges-covid-data-transparency-as-china-prepares-to-open-borders>

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Coronavirus

China bristles as EU states prepare to scale up Covid monitoring

France joins Spain and Italy in requiring arrivals to show a negative result with the UK to follow suit



Adolfo Suárez Madrid-Barajas airport where arrivals from China will now have to show a negative Covid test or prove they are fully vaccinated. Photograph: Gabriel Bouys/AFP/Getty Images

[Philip Oltermann](#) in Hamburg

[@philipoltermann](#)

Fri 30 Dec 2022 10.42 EST Last modified on Fri 30 Dec 2022 15.19 EST

European countries are preparing to scale up the monitoring of potential new coronavirus variants from China, as Spain and France brought back mandatory testing at airports in response to Beijing's rapid rollback of anti-infection measures.

The two countries on Friday followed Italy's lead by requiring arrivals from China to show a negative test result, though unlike Rome, Spain makes exceptions for those who can prove they are fully vaccinated.

At a press conference announcing Spain's new measures, the country's health minister, Carolina Darias, also said she was pushing to revise the conditions that had to be met in order for travellers to obtain the EU's digital Covid certificate.

A rise in infections across China and doubts over the regime's official data have prompted the return of Covid checks in several countries outside the EU, including the US, India, Israel, Taiwan, South Korea and Japan. The UK [has announced a similar move](#).

Chinese state media said the return of such testing requirements for travellers from [China](#) was "discriminatory" and politically motivated in an attempt to undermine China's reopening.

In Brussels, Berlin and Paris, however, officials said this week it was important to be vigilant but too early to raise alarm over the outbreak in the world's most populous country.

Germany's health minister, Karl Lauterbach, said it was "not yet necessary" to bring back mandatory testing for travellers coming into the borderless Schengen area from China via [Germany](#).

Data on Covid variants provided by Beijing was not sufficiently reliable, the centre-left politician said. "And therefore we very much have to rely on doing that ourselves," for example by carefully looking at individual flights, he said.

The European Commission's health policy chief on Friday urged the EU's 27-member states to consider scaling up gene sequencing of Covid-19 infections and monitoring of wastewater, including from airports, to detect any new variants that could be brought in from China.

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In a letter to health ministers of the EU member states, Stella Kyriakides said the bloc should be “very vigilant” when China lifts travel restrictions on 8 January, since reliable epidemiological and testing data for China were quite scarce.

In the letter, Kyriakides advised ministers to assess their practices on gene sequencing of the coronavirus “as an immediate step”, Reuters reported.

Earlier in the week, Italy’s far-right prime minister, Giorgia Meloni, argued that requiring Covid tests for all passengers from China was “only effective if it is taken at the European level”, noting that many people arrive in Italy on connecting flights through other European countries.

After an announcement made by [Italy’s health ministry on Thursday](#), travellers from China are obliged to show a negative test result upon embarking on their flight and to take a second antigen test upon their arrival.

This article was downloaded by calibre from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/dec/30/china-bridles-as-eu-states-prepare-to-scale-up-covid-monitoring>

China

China: another Covid wave expected in rural areas after lunar new year

Many city workers heading home for holiday in late January are likely to take disease with them



A patient with Covid-19 lays on a bed in a hallway at Tangshan Gongren hospital in north-east China. Photograph: Noel Celis/AFP

[Emma Graham-Harrison](#) and Gregor Stuart Hunter

Fri 30 Dec 2022 11.13 EST First published on Fri 30 Dec 2022 11.00 EST

China is preparing for another wave of Covid to hit its more vulnerable countryside in early 2023, as the current wave of infections [overwhelms hospitals](#) and intensive care units in many cities.

The lunar new year, China's most important holiday, falls in late January. It offers a chance of reunion after years of separation under the harsh internal travel restrictions and lockdowns of the previous zero-Covid policy.

But as hundreds of millions of workers head home, many are expected to take the disease with them, to areas that have [fewer hospitals and clinics](#), fewer medical professionals, less equipment and medicine, and less money to pay for care.

“In the face of a virus like Omicron, all people should be equal, but the fact is that as far as the virus is concerned, urban and rural areas are not equal,” said one post on the Chinese social media platform WeChat, from a user in a small town in central Henan province. “Not only are resources and opportunities unequal but there is also a wide gap in the understanding of how to handle public health.”

The next wave of infections is likely to hit rural areas in late winter, the British health analytics company [Airfinity predicts](#), and could affect even more people than the one racing through cities now.

The toll may be worsened by the government’s abrupt shift in propaganda messaging about Covid. The virus had been presented as a menace to be avoided at almost any cost, but now Chinese citizens are told it is little worse than a cold.

“My home town has quietly changed the way they talk about getting sick,” said the person posting on WeChat from Henan. “Every family has caught the cold’, so there is nothing to be afraid of.”

That position means there is little official promotion of basic measures such as social distancing that could slow the spread of the disease and possibly buy time for overwhelmed hospitals.

Jeremy Wallace, a professor of government at Cornell University, said: “I’m very surprised that the messaging seems to be denial of the depth of suffering from this wave and, as far as I’ve seen, no communication about [flattening the curve](#) to reduce pressure on its overburdened health systems. As such, I would expect staggering death totals, as predicted by models looking at the experience of Taiwan, South Korea and Hong Kong, on the order of 1 million.”

In some urban areas, Covid has spread so fast that infections may soon reach a peak, analysts believe, although the course of the disease is difficult to trace because when China cut back on disease controls, it also cut back on publishing Covid statistics.

China was once proud of its Covid statistics. Then, as deaths and infections mounted, the National Health Commission (NHC) said it would no longer publish a daily death toll.

On Friday, despite widely circulating images and stories of hospitals unable to cope with the influx of patients, the NHC said there had been one Covid death and 5,500 new cases in the last 24 hours, AFP reported.

By contrast, Airfinity estimates that about 9,000 people a day are dying from Covid in China. Next month that could rise to as many as 25,000 a day, and the company forecasts a death toll by April of up to 1.7 million people.

An NHC spokesperson, Jiao Yahui, admitted this week that China was excluding from tolls many deaths that would be counted in other countries as Covid fatalities, AFP reported.

Elsewhere in the world, any death within 28 days of a positive nucleic acid test is counted. Beijing has decided to count only those who die of respiratory failure caused by the virus.

“China has always been committed to the scientific criteria for judging Covid-19 deaths, from beginning to end, which are in line with the international criteria,” Jiao said.

While China’s propaganda systems are claiming the government’s sudden pivot on the pandemic – from harsh controls to letting the disease rip – has been managed perfectly, social media is filled with the grim realities of life mid-pandemic.

Chinese authorities are normally quick to stifle online dissent and criticism, but a surprising number of posts discussing the reality of Covid in China today are making it online and staying up for some time, said Charlie Smith, a co-founder of Greatfire.org, a censorship monitoring site.

“Most of these posts are surviving because the censorship boundaries are changing so quickly and the censors cannot keep up. But it also makes sense that the real humans who are behind censorship can see for themselves that current Covid management is all over the place,” he said. “They must be asking themselves how they could possibly censor Covid-related posts when everyone has Covid.”

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Headlines tuesday 27 december 2022

- [BP Criticism over plan to spend billions more on fossil fuels than green energy](#)
- [Climate crisis Biggest toll in year of 'devastating' disasters revealed](#)
- ['Blizzard of the century' US braces for more deaths as winter storm grips nation](#)
- [Live Russia-Ukraine war: Russian forces 'suffer greatest losses in Bakhmut and Lyman', says Ukraine](#)

BP

BP criticised over plan to spend billions more on fossil fuels than green energy

Company's oil and gas investments for 2023 will be as much as double those on renewables



Friends of the Earth says of BP's plans: 'Where you spend your money says a lot about your priorities.' Photograph: Frank Augstein/AP

[Alex Lawson](#) *Energy correspondent*

Tue 27 Dec 2022 01.00 EST

BP has been accused of prioritising fossil fuels over green energy as it plans to spend as much as double the amount on oil and gas projects than on renewable investments next year.

The FTSE 100 company has earmarked up to \$7.5bn (£6.2bn) for oil and gas projects, compared with a range of \$3bn to \$5bn for green energy.

BP expects to increase spending on “resilient hydrocarbons” – oil and gas, refining and bioenergy projects – by up to \$1bn in 2023.

In 2021 the company’s capital expenditure was \$12.8bn and it expected to spend \$14bn-15bn this year, and then \$14bn-16bn a year between 2023 and 2025.

Within this, investment into “resilient hydrocarbons” will increase from \$9bn in 2022 to “\$9bn to \$10bn a year” from 2023 to 2025, including \$7.5bn a year on oil and gas projects.

BP intends to invest \$3bn to \$5bn a year on “low-carbon” energy projects between 2023 and 2025, rising to \$4bn to \$6bn a year in the second half of the decade.

BP also plans to spend a further \$2bn to \$3bn in its convenience and mobility division, which includes its fuel forecourts and electric vehicle charging businesses.

However, the firm has been criticised for not moving faster into renewables.

“Where you spend your money says a lot about your priorities,” said Mike Childs, the head of policy at [Friends of the Earth](#). “It’s astounding that in the middle of a climate emergency BP is planning to invest billions more dollars on planet-warming fossil fuels than on clean, green renewables.”

BP has racked up bumper profits this year after a rise in wholesale gas prices, fuelled by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

Energy firms warned that a windfall tax on their profits could harm investments into green energy. However, the BP chief, Bernard Looney, [admitted there were no UK investments that he would not make](#) if a windfall tax was implemented.

A tax on North Sea oil and gas operators was later introduced by Rishi Sunak, and dubbed the [“Looney levy”](#).

Looney has attempted to boost BP’s green credentials since taking charge in February 2020, setting a target of making the company net zero by “2050 or

sooner”.

The £86bn company has declared that investment in upstream oil and refining must pay back in less than 10 years, while gas projects must pay back within 15 years.

“This focused and disciplined capital frame together with a deep hopper of attractive investment opportunities in oil and gas is expected to maximise returns,” the company said in its annual report.

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In a major investigation into “carbon bombs”, the Guardian [reported](#) in May that oil and gas majors are planning scores of vast projects that threaten to shatter the 1.5C climate goal.

The chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, [toughened the windfall tax](#) on North Sea oil and gas firms last month. However, it includes an investment allowance for new projects.

“The government must stop pandering to the fossil fuel giants with its weak windfall tax,” Childs said. “Ministers should increase the rate and close the loophole that encourages companies to invest in more gas and oil. More gas and oil will lead to more of the extreme heat and devastating forest fires, floods, and storms we’ve seen in 2022.”

BP [spent more than £800,000](#) on social media influence ads in the UK that champion the company’s investments in green energy earlier this year.

The Green party co-leader Adrian Ramsay said: “Despite the greenwash we see from these fossil fuel giants, it’s clear they remain intent on making as much money from oil and gas as they can, and are willing to send us all to hell in a handcart in the process.

“Time and again these corporations have shown us that they are not willing to change their actions in line with what the science demands, so it is vital that governments step up and do what is necessary to give us the best possible chance of protecting the environment for ourselves and future generations.”

BP said it expected spending in non-oil and gas projects – including renewables, hydrogen and bioenergy investments – to grow to more than 40% of its total investment by 2025 and to about 50% by 2030.

In October it bought the US biogas company Archaea Energy for \$3.3bn plus \$800m of debt. Looney is expected to give an update on BP’s investment plans in February. The company plans to spend £18bn in the UK by the end of 2030.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/dec/27/bp-plan-spend-billions-fossil-fuels-green-energy-oil-gas-renewables>

Climate crisis

Biggest climate toll in year of ‘devastating’ disasters revealed

Most expensive storm cost \$100bn while deadliest floods killed 1,700 and displaced 7 million, report finds



Hurricane Ian’s impact in Fort Myers, Florida. Its destructive force, which ravaged parts of the US and Cuba in September, cost about \$100bn. Photograph: Tannen Maury/EPA

PA Media

Tue 27 Dec 2022 01.01 EST

The 10 most expensive storms, floods and droughts in 2022 each cost at least \$3bn (£2.5bn) in a “devastating” year on the frontline of the climate crisis, a report shows.

Christian Aid has highlighted the worst climate-related disasters of the year as more intense storms, heavy downpours and droughts are driven by rising global temperatures as a result of human activity.

They include storms and drought in the UK and Europe, along with major events on every inhabited continent.

Hurricane Ian caused the biggest financial impact – \$100bn – when it hit the US and Cuba in September.

The toll included 130 deaths and the displacement of more than 40,000 people, a report from the aid agency said.

The biggest impact in terms of human costs were the Pakistan floods in June to September, which scientists found were significantly more likely because of the climate crisis, causing 1,739 deaths and displacing 7 million people.

The financial costs were \$5.6bn – though that was only insured losses, and the true cost of the floods was estimated to be more than \$30bn, Christian Aid said.

Alongside the 10 most costly events, the report from the charity highlights other noteworthy climate-related incidents that also caused deaths, displacement, devastation and environmental damage.

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They include floods in Malaysia, Brazil and west Africa, long-running drought in the Horn of Africa, heatwaves in India and Pakistan, the Arctic and Antarctica, wildfire in Chile, storms in south-east Africa and the Philippines, and a tropical cyclone in Bangladesh.

The events also include February's Storm Eunice, which hit the UK, Ireland and other parts of Europe, causing 16 deaths and costing \$4.3bn.

Europe's drought this summer – made several times more likely because of climate change – racked up costs of \$20bn, hitting crop yields, driving up prices, affecting energy plants and disrupting shipping.

Droughts in China cost \$8.4bn and in Brazil \$4bn).

Floods in Australia in February to March led to 27 deaths. In South Africa in April, 459 people died in flooding. Both events displaced tens of thousands of people and cost billions.

Hugely expensive floods also hit China this year.

Christian Aid's chief executive, Patrick Watt, said: "Having 10 separate climate disasters in the last year that each cost more than \$3bn points to the financial cost of inaction on the climate crisis.

"But behind the dollar figures lie millions of stories of human loss and suffering. Without major cuts in greenhouse gas emissions, this human and financial toll will only increase.

"The human cost of climate change is seen in the homes washed away by floods, loved ones killed by storms and livelihoods destroyed by drought.

"This year was a devastating one if you happened to live on the frontline of the climate crisis."

He noted the need for UK government policies to reflect the reality. "The UK did not escape the ravages of climate change in 2022 with both Storm Eunice and the summer heatwave taking their toll," he added.

“This underlines the need for policies to accelerate the transition to net zero and the folly of the decision to open a new coalmine in Cumbria.”

Christian Aid also said the report showed the importance of the fund created at the Cop27 international talks this year to compensate people in poorer countries for the loss and damage they suffered from the climate crisis – which they have done least to cause – and the urgency of getting it up and running.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/dec/27/biggest-climate-toll-in-year-of-devastating-disasters-revealed>

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[US news](#)

US braces for more deaths as ‘blizzard of the century’ grips nation

Rescue crews struggle to reach stranded residents in Buffalo, New York, where dozens have been killed in winter storms

Drone footage shows city in New York state buried in snow – video

Agence France-Presse

Mon 26 Dec 2022 20.27 ESTLast modified on Tue 27 Dec 2022 05.59 EST

Emergency crews in [New York](#) were scrambling to rescue marooned residents from what authorities called the “blizzard of the century,” a relentless storm that has left 27 dead in the state and taken at least 60 lives nationwide, according to an NBC News tally.

In New York state, authorities have described ferocious conditions, particularly in Buffalo, with hours-long whiteouts, bodies being discovered in vehicles and under snow banks, and emergency personnel going “car to car” searching for more motorists, alive or dead.

On Monday night, US president Joe Biden issued a federal emergency declaration for the state of New York, authorising government assistance to bolster state and local recovery efforts.

Freezing storm kills dozens of people and brings disruption across US – video report

“My heart is with those who lost loved ones this holiday weekend. You are in my and Jill’s prayers,” Biden said in a Twitter message earlier in the day.

New York governor, Kathy Hochul, emphasised that it remains important for people to stay home and remain off the roads. “Anyone who declares victory

and says that it's over, it is way too early to say," Hochul said, adding, "The storm is coming back, we're expecting another six to 12 inches."

Hochul said some western New York towns got walloped with "30 to 40 inches (0.75 to 1 meter) of snow overnight."

"Certainly it is the blizzard of the century," Hochul told reporters, adding it was "way too early to say this is at its completion."

Hochul, a native of Buffalo, said she was stunned by what she saw during a reconnaissance tour of the city.

"It is (like) going to a war zone, and the vehicles along the sides of the roads are shocking," Hochul said, describing eight-foot (2.4-meter) drifts against homes as well as snow plows and rescue vehicles "buried" in snow.

'Blizzard of the century': too early to declare the threat has gone, warns NY governor – video

"This is a war with mother nature," she said.

The perfect storm of fierce snow squalls, howling wind and sub-zero temperatures forced the cancellation of more than 15,000 US flights in recent days, including at least 2,600 on Monday, according to tracking site Flightaware.com.



Members of the New York National Guard help to free a car stuck in the snow in Buffalo, New York. Photograph: Joed Viera/AFP/Getty Images

The National Weather Service forecast up to 14 more inches Monday in addition to the several feet that have already left the city buried in snow, with officials struggling to get emergency services back online.

Erie County executive Mark Poloncarz told a press briefing that the county's death toll will probably surpass that of Buffalo's blizzard of 1977, when nearly 30 people died.

"We do expect that there will be more" deaths from the ongoing storm," he said.

The extreme weather sent temperatures to below freezing in all 48 contiguous US states over the weekend, including in Texas communities along the Mexico border where some newly arriving migrants have struggled to find shelter.

Storm-related deaths were reported all over the country: 10 in Ohio, including an electrocuted utility worker and those killed in multiple car crashes; six motorists killed in crashes in Missouri, Kansas and Kentucky; a Vermont woman struck by a falling branch; an apparently homeless man

found amid Colorado's subzero temperatures; and a woman who fell through Wisconsin river ice.

In Jackson, Mississippi, city officials on Christmas Day announced residents must boil their drinking water due to water lines freezing and bursting.

At one point on Saturday, nearly 1.7 million customers were without electricity in the biting cold, according to tracker poweroutage.us. That number has dropped substantially, although there were still 50,000 without electricity midday Monday on the US east coast.

Road ice and whiteout conditions also led to the temporary closure of some of the nation's busiest transport routes, including part of the cross-country Interstate 70 highway.

Drivers were being warned not to take to the roads – even as the nation reached what is usually its busiest time of year for travel.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/dec/27/us-braces-for-more-deaths-as-blizzard-of-the-century-grips-nation>

[Ukraine war live](#)Ukraine

Russia-Ukraine war live: air raid warning across Ukraine; Russia bringing in large reserves near Kremlinna, local official says – as it happened

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‘I was hot-glue-gunning hair to my head’: Emma D’Arcy on their House of the Dragon audition

[Hollie Richardson](#)



Emma D'Arcy as Rhaenyra Targaryen in House of the Dragon. Photograph: HBO

From viral cocktails to being scared to Google themselves, the actor's role as Rhaenyra Targaryen in the Game of Thrones prequel has made them huge. They talk violence, childbirth – and why those incest scenes are OK



Tue 27 Dec 2022 04.00 ESTLast modified on Tue 27 Dec 2022 05.32 EST

Emma D’Arcy achieved a lot in 2022, but going viral was the least expected. “Negroni sbagliato – with prosecco in it,” D’Arcy, who uses they/them pronouns, coolly answered when asked by co-star Olivia Cooke what their drink of choice was. The bewitching video sent people wild and has since had more than [100m views on TikTok](#). “I’m thrilled that drink is finally getting the recognition it deserves,” they say in those now-famous velvety tones. “And my mum is thrilled about me becoming a meme! It’s very flattering.”

It happened while doing publicity for [House of the Dragon](#) – HBO’s highly anticipated prequel to Game of Thrones, based on George RR Martin’s book Fire and Blood. D’Arcy plays Rhaenyra Targaryen, who is named heir to the iron throne but is constantly challenged by those who do not believe a woman should sit upon it. As the death of King Viserys, her declining father (played by Paddy Considine) draws closer, the chambers and corridors of the Red Keep are thick with plotting and backstabbing – everything Game of Thrones fans had been missing since 2019.

The role of Rhaenyra required an actor who could handle a baptism of dragonfire. Enfield-born D’Arcy, 30, started out in theatre and set design, starring opposite Ben Whishaw in the 2017 production of *Against* at the Almeida theatre. They continued to act alongside big names in small TV parts, including Toni Collette in the BBC’s relationship drama *Wanderlust*, and Simon Pegg and Nick Frost in 2020 supernatural comedy *Truth Seekers*. It was at the onset of the pandemic that D’Arcy first auditioned for Rhaenyra. After making a few tapes with their partner, who they live with in their cosy London home with a playful cat, showrunners were instantly keen. But they had one more hurdle to jump.



D'Arcy as Princess Rhaenyra with her uncle, later husband, Daemon Targaryen (Matt Smith). Photograph: Ollie Upton/AP

D'Arcy was asked if they had a Targaryen white wig to do the final audition tape with. "I had a bag of hair extensions from another job," they say, today sporting a short pink crop. "For 24 hours my partner and I tried to hot-glue-gun hair to weird grips. We'd be like, 'Yeah, we've nailed this!' But I'd send a photo to Miguel Sapochnik [the show's co-director] who would very politely tell us we had *not* nailed it."

They managed to pull it off. When they were cast, D'Arcy had yet to watch a single episode of [Game of Thrones](#). "I got to encounter the 'drug' of the show so close to shooting," they say, recalling an intense binge-watch. "I could ride the wave of adrenaline of the old series into shooting a new one." But it wasn't their character's descendant, Daenerys Targaryen, they enjoyed watching most: "I had a real soft spot for the Hound!"

When *House of the Dragon* aired in the summer, the global anticipation was enormous. D'Arcy endured an extra level of apprehension as they had to watch the reception of the first half of the series while "young" Rhaenyra was played by 22-year-old Milly Alcock. "It is a weird thing. We shared custody of this person," they say. "As we got closer to episode six I was

quite anxious; people had just lost actors they'd spent five hours with and connected to."

After a mid-series time jump, D'Arcy's first scene as Rhaenyra was extreme. She gives birth, immediately gets dressed and shuffles up to the queen's rooms to show her the baby, all within about seven minutes. It's one of a number of contentious childbirth scenes in the series – another saw Rhaenyra's mother die after an emergency caesarean she didn't consent to, and in a third, we saw Rhaenyra cradle her stillborn child after a bloody premature birth.

The Game of Thrones franchise has always faced criticism for its gratuitous violence against women. Another argument, however, is that this simply reflects the reality of women's lives in a patriarchal world – so why ignore it? "It is a really natural process and one that has historically had an incredibly high mortality rate for women," D'Arcy says on the traumatic births. "It is telling and interesting that that's the thing we prefer not to see on screen. I guess the questions it poses to me are: what *do* we want to see? What *are* we comfortable with seeing female characters doing?"



D'Arcy in a scene in which their character, Rhaenyra, accompanied by husband Laenor Velaryon (John MacMillan) struggles to present her newborn baby to Alicent Hightower. Photograph: HBO

This takes us on to another hotly debated issue in Westeros: the amount of incest, specifically the marriage between Rhaenyra and her older uncle Daemon (Matt Smith).

“I think he is a deeply problematic character,” says D’Arcy. “Getting to see Rhaenyra being groomed as a child by her uncle confirms it, and refuses to allow an audience to wholly ignore the problematic nature of their relationship.”

And yet, Daemon has somehow become the show’s lovable villain – Etsy is overflowing with T-shirts bearing slogans such as [“mentally dating Daemon Targaryen”](#). Why? “Within cinema, there is a long history of creating love interests out of problematic – particularly male – characters,” says D’Arcy. “What’s interesting in House of the Dragon is that it utilises that same trope. You know, like audiences have responded to Matt playing Daemon as this ‘very sexy, masculine love interest’, but simultaneously, I hope that the show is continually acknowledging the problematic nature of it all.”

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Amid such divisiveness, though, Rhaenyra’s friendship with Alicent Hightower (Cooke) is at the heart of the show – and the fact they were always destined to become enemies in order to survive a man’s world. “It serves the patriarchy to consolidate male power,” says D’Arcy. “So, where you have the possibility of two strong and potentially powerful women becoming allies, it is in the interest of the patriarchal structure to drive a wedge in and pitch women against each other.”

The GoT prequel was always going to ignite a thousand thinkpieces; that's the nature of the beast. And, for many fans, reading hot takes is half the fun. It's understandable, then, that D'Arcy has done very little Googling for the sake of their sanity: "I just have to keep a safe distance."

Being catapulted into global stardom, they say, has forced them to "create some new tools for dealing with new aspects in your day-to-day reality". They add: "I only realised very recently that at no point had I been able to take a long view at what was ahead, because it's unimaginable until you've done it. It was a bit like playing Frogger – jumping as and when you're required to."

The second season – filming begins next spring – will pick up after that incredible finale, in which Rhaenyra looked as if she was about to unleash hell after discovering that her son had been gobbled up by the dragon of Alicent's son Aemond. "She is trying to navigate her own Targaryenism," says D'Arcy. "She has been trying to work out how best to mitigate that very volatile fire in her blood. But when Luke dies, the control required to dampen that inner fire suddenly runs out."

Rhaenyra's ultimate fate is already known by those who have read the book or listened closely to Joffrey Baratheon in Game of Thrones – including D'Arcy. "It's a good old antihero storyline," they say, not wanting to spoil anything for anyone. "What a privilege to follow that all the way to the end."

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Lightening in a bottle: why 2022 was the year we all went blond



Marilyn Monroe, Paris Hilton, Emma D'Arcy in *House of the Dragon*, and Diana, Princess of Wales. Composite: Guardian Design; Michael Ochs

Archives; Mario Anzuoni/Reuters; HBO; Tim Graham Photo Library/Getty Images

Blondness is back. Post pandemic, tweed blond, ice cube blond and rose gold blonds have been everywhere from celebrities and influencers to schoolkids and footballers. Why this colourful saturation?



[Hannah Jane Parkinson](#)

[@ladyhaja](#)

Tue 27 Dec 2022 03.00 EST

My favourite Paris Hilton quote (yes, I have a favourite Paris Hilton quote) is when, in 2006, she [told the Sunday Times](#): “There’s nobody in the world like me. I think every decade has an iconic blond, like Marilyn Monroe or Princess Diana. And right now, I’m that icon.”

It’s an impressive level of chutzpah, and yet, she isn’t wrong. The examples Hilton gave are particularly pertinent in 2022; a recent “fictitious” biopic of Monroe, [Blonde](#), has become one of Netflix’s most-watched originals, and Diana is front and centre in the most recent season of [The Crown](#) (in which Elizabeth Debicki appears in a coiffed wig).

In the 1930s, it was [Jean Harlow](#) who inspired film fans – and many of her fellow female actors after a brunette-dominated 20s – to hit the bottle. [Veronica Lake](#)'s long, blond hair lit up the 1940s, and Grace Kelly became the archetypal “Hitchcock blond” (of which more later) in the 1950s. Dusty Springfield and Twiggy headed up the British invasion in the swinging 60s, while Debbie Harry shot to stardom in the 1970s; in the 80s we had Madonna.

The 90s saw a brief era of light-haired boyband frontmen (the Backstreet Boys' Nick Carter and 'N Sync's Justin Timberlake) adorning bedroom walls. Then, after Hilton and Nicole Richie's 00s [Simple](#) Life, something of a fallow period, with the likes of Cate Blanchett and Gwyneth Paltrow bravely holding the fort.



Backstreet Boys' Nick Carter in 1999. Photograph: Graham Whitby-Boot/Sportsphoto/Allstar

Every decade has its blonds but now, as we've stepped blinking into the sunlight post-pandemic, blondness is back. The revolution started a little before: Billie Eilish ditching her black-and-green signature hair last year on a classic Hollywood-style [Vogue cover](#) was a big moment, and in summer 2019 [Pinterest saw a 308% rise](#) in searches for “mushroom blonde” – a sort of blond-brunette hybrid also known as “bronde” – while “blond hair” [was](#)

[one of the top search terms on Google and YouTube](#). Let's not forget Kim Kardashian, who is (at time of press) somewhere between honey and ice.

This year, “tweed blond”, “ice cube blond”, “rose gold blond” – alongside staples such as ash and platinum – have been everywhere, from celebrity heads to Instagram influencers to sixth-formers and footballers (check out Brazilian stars [Neymar and Richarlison](#)'s World Cup looks). So, what's behind this blond saturation?

[Tom Smith](#) is one of the world's leading hair stylists, with more than 78,000 followers on TikTok, a roster of VIP clients, and plenty of television and film work. He posits that, aside from celebrity and cultural influence, the pandemic and the bleak state of the world has had an accelerant impact on those initial shoots.

“There's evidence throughout history that during times of economic downturn requests for blond hair increase in popularity,” he tells me. “My theory on this is that blond feels bright, bold and happy. When real life starts to get a little dull, brightening up our hair is one of the easiest and most effective ways of giving us a boost of energy.”

Smith also thinks the uplift in blond-requesting clients is because, during the pandemic, people felt a “newfound appreciation” for their hairstylists and so are now willing to trust them more. This means they are less nervous to try new things – and going blond can be a radical change. “It's also about hair science,” he says. “New technologies mean that blond is a more viable option for more people.”

Pity the Greeks and Romans, who poisoned themselves with [lead in their concocted dyes](#), or those in medieval times who used pigeon droppings and horse urine as colorants. L'Oréal's founder, Eugène Schueller, building on the work of an English chemist, William Henry Perkin, created the first chemical dye in the early 20th century and double-processing soon followed. Clairol popularised home colouring in the 1950s, and the science has not stopped evolving since; [balayage](#) – the painting of colour by hand – was born in 1970s Paris, but has exploded as a technique in the past decade, while [foiling](#) emerged in the 1980s.

Most recently, Smith noticed something he calls “ReBirth blond”, maintaining hair that had been naturally lightened in the summer. It is, Smith says, a subtler take, “a nod to the seamless and organic highlights that children have”.

I was one of those children, until, as is common, my colour dimmed to the much-maligned “mousy brown”. But I have been platinum blonde since I was 18. I was preparing to move abroad and, given that my life was about to change dramatically, I felt my look should too.

Cue my older sister snapping on the latex gloves that came with a shop-bought box dye. The first time resulted in a Ronald McDonald hue, and my scalp felt as though it were on fire. But, otherwise, it did exactly what I was hoping for: announced me as renewed and revitalised, the sort of effect Smith describes. I have been blond ever since.



House of the Dragon. Photograph: HBO

But maintenance isn’t easy – and it’s expensive. Today, I alternate between salon sessions and DIY; my sister is now a dab hand. The dedication required is something the directors at the award-winning [Four](#) salon in Mayfair – who look after the hair of Yasmin Le Bon, Nigella Lawson and Anne-Marie Duff among others – tell me is key for people to consider before

choosing to go blond. “We are very mindful of the colour choices and the positioning of the colour application. A big factor is how often the client can visit the salon – it must be manageable for them in terms of maintaining the beauty of the hair colour.”

In other words; it’s a lifestyle. Something I know only too well. Four recommends [Color Wow Root Cover-Up](#), a powder designed to sustain between salon visits, and advises avoiding harsh shampoos, which can easily strip colour. Smith also emphasises the importance of treatment protocols at home. It’s imperative to protect hair from heat (“yes, that includes hot showers!” he says). Reparative masks also help.

The vast majority of blonds will recognise these routines, as [just 2-3% of the world’s population](#) is naturally blonde. Blondism – which is the lack of a pigment called eumelanin – is most prevalent in Nordic countries; Finland has the world’s highest incidence [at 80% of the population](#). One theory is that people who grew up in places with little sunlight evolved light hair and skin to aid the synthesis of Vitamin D. Pockets of natural blondism do exist elsewhere – including, perhaps surprisingly, in the archipelagos of the South Pacific.

Blondism has convoluted, and often contradictory, connotations in the western canon. It has, for hundreds of years, been associated with purity, fertility, innocence and beauty, as in much of [Norse mythology](#). In fairytales, innocent blondes abound (think Goldilocks and Rapunzel). In men, blond hair represented health and youthful vigour. It probably doesn’t need to be spelt out that blond as the ideal has [led to some dark outcomes](#).

But in modern times, the ditzy/dumb blond trope is one of the first things that comes to mind. Though one of the first dumb (literally) blonds was French courtesan [Rosalie Duthé](#), who paused for such long times before speaking that she was satirised in a 1775 play. Paris Hilton gave that quote back in 2006 to kick back at a characterisation of vapidty, when she was someone who had shrewdly built up a business empire (and is responsible for [Stars Are Blind](#), which remains an absolute banger).

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Marilyn Monroe, who flew her colourist halfway across the country every weekend, was a voracious reader – Dostoevsky was one of her favourites – but she was portrayed as having about two brain cells. I can't be certain, but when I started out as a young journalist and was met with occasional dismissive attitudes by – mostly male – older colleagues, I did wonder whether it wasn't just a mix of ageism and misogyny, but also had something to do with my blondness.



Marilyn Monroe was a voracious reader but denigrated as a 'dumb blonde'.
Photograph: Everett Collection Inc/Alamy

Meanwhile, the motif of sexually voracious bombshell – announced in Jean Harlow's 1933 [film of the same name](#) – represents a subversion of the blond as innocent and pure. Perhaps more than anybody, Alfred Hitchcock is

responsible for shifting the cultural portrayal of blond women to sexualised and cunning. His obsession with blonds onscreen reflected his appetite for them offscreen. (This was not a healthy obsession, [but a controlling and abusive one](#).)

But do [gentlemen really prefer blonds](#)? Anita Loos told an amusing origin story for the title of her 1925 novel. Travelling by train she was unimpressed to find that while she was “allowed to lug heavy suitcases ... while men sat about and failed to note my efforts”, when a young, blond woman “happened to drop the novel she was reading, several men jumped to retrieve it”.

When I ask psychologist and Harvard professor Nancy Etcoff about the perceived attractiveness of blondness, she directs me to a section in her seminal book [Survival of the Prettiest: The Science of Beauty](#). While the rarity is undoubtedly an allure, and the idea of blond women standing out goes [right back to Palaeolithic times](#), her book suggests that – perhaps unsurprisingly in a continuing world of racist hierarchies and inequality – blond hair has endured not because of the hair itself, but the accompanying white skin.

Rather fascinating is where the stereotype of blonds as dumb collides with the perception that blonds are more attractive, when repeated studies have shown [attractive people are subconsciously judged as more intelligent](#). As Etcoff’s book asserts, good-looking people often have a much smoother path in life, including professionally.

[One study](#) found that [blond women earn 7% more](#) than their brunette peers. And while one successful Silicon Valley CEO [admitted she dyed her naturally blond hair brown](#) in attempts to avoid prejudice, [a 2016 study](#) found that, out of a US population that is 5% naturally blonde, 48% of female chief executives of [S&P 500](#) companies, and 35% of female senators, were blond.

This disproportion doesn’t exist with men. Which leads to another, more depressing, [theory](#): that blond women get ahead in the workplace not because they are viewed as more attractive and therefore more intelligent, but the opposite: because their apparent docile and pliant natures allow them

to be easily controlled, even when at the top of professional tree. We're back to the ditzy blond.



RuPaul performs in 1993. Photograph: Porter Gifford/Getty Images

Personally, I can't imagine not being blond. I know it's probably in my head, or more accurately on my head, but I feel the phrase Clairol invented in the 1950s might hold true: blonds really do have more fun. (I also wouldn't turn down a 7% pay rise.) Or, as RuPaul puts it, blond hair just "pops".

Smith doesn't think blond is going anywhere in 2023. He predicts that when the [new Barbie](#) film drops next summer there will be a clamour for Margot Robbie-inspired locks. Four thinks that brondes and honey blonds will continue to go strong. But I note that Emma D'Arcy, [lover of negroni sbagliatos](#) and member of television's most iconic blond clan, the Targaryens, [hit a red carpet last month with a blaze of matching hair](#). Meanwhile, Jenna Ortega's [jet-black plaits](#) have cast a dark spell over viewers of Wednesday, the hugely popular Addams Family spin-off.

As the Four stylists tell me: "We love celebs who are chameleons when it comes to their colour. It inspires clients to want to change too."

Not me though. Blond for life.

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A glamorous and gilded New Year's Eve to you: how UK's wealthy can usher in 2023



Gleneagles promises New Year's Eve guests that the hotel will be transformed into 'a magical winter hideaway and a cosy home from home' where 'your every wish and desire is taken care of'. Photograph: Ken Crocket/Alamy

From a Bond-themed party on a superyacht hotel to a £7,585 Gleneagles stay, money seems to be no object



[Rupert Neate](#) *Wealth correspondent*

[@RupertNeate](#)

Tue 27 Dec 2022 02.00 EST

From a James Bond-themed ball on a superyacht, to a champagne and jazz party up London's Shard skyscraper and even dinner and magic on a 1920s train ride – the wealthy are planning some outlandish New Year's Eve celebrations.

Despite the cost of living crisis forcing many households to cut back this festive season, money – it seems – is no object for the wealthy wanting to wave goodbye to 2022 in style.

It is too late to join in the extravagant celebrations at Scotland's five-star Gleneagles hotel, where all rooms have sold out despite costing a minimum of £7,585 for a three-night NYE break to "ring in the bells and celebrate Hogmanay in style".

Gleneagles, [which hosted world leaders for the G8 summit in 2005](#), promises guests that the hotel will be transformed into "a magical winter hideaway and a cosy home from home" where "your every wish and desire is taken care of".

There are still rooms up for grabs for a "house party" at Whatley Manor, a luxury hotel and spa in the Cotswolds that is hosting a black tie gala dinner on Saturday as part of three-night breaks costing as much as £5,200 – plus an extra £300 if you want to bring your dog.

Eloise Gordon, the sales and marketing manager at Whatley Manor, said the package includes plenty of bottles of complimentary English sparkling wine, dinner at the hotel's Michelin-starred restaurant on the Friday night, the gala dinner on New Year's Eve and a relaxed dinner on the Sunday accompanied by the jazz duo Gilmore n' Jaz.



Whatley Manor is hosting a black tie gala dinner on Saturday as part of three-night breaks costing as much as £5,200. Photograph: urbanbuzz/Alamy

“We’ve had a New Year’s Eve house party every year since 2003 – except during the pandemic – and it’s always a really nice event and atmosphere with all the guests getting to know each other,” she said. “There’s a lot of food and wine, fireworks and jazz, and a trip to the magical tree garden at Westonbirt arboretum. You’d be hard pushed to fit much else in.”

Gordon said there were a couple of rooms still available but most of the 23 rooms had been booked up months in advance. “A few people come every year; there are also new people every year, both couples and family groups,” she said. “People really get to know each other, there’s a nice house atmosphere, and everyone sees each other for breakfast after the night before.”

There are also expensive NYE hotel packages at Cliveden House in Berkshire, Dormy House in Worcestershire and the Royal Crescent hotel in Bath.

In London, the Ritz is hosting not one but two black tie dinners accompanied by a regimental marching band and a lone piper. “The splendid opulence of the Michelin-starred Ritz restaurant, with its spectacularly glamorous and gilded decor, offers the perfect surrounding for our extremely popular New Year’s Eve black tie gala dinner,” [the hotel says on its website](#). It costs £1,900 per adult, or £850 per child.

The Shangri-La hotel in the Shard is also throwing a party that it says will have the best view of the fireworks in central London. Tickets start at £250 per person.



The Shangri-La hotel in the Shard is throwing a New Year's Eve party.
Photograph: Leon Neal/Getty Images

East along the Thames, a “five-star superyacht hotel” is hosting a 007-themed party including “a cocktail reception, five-course à la carte supper at Lands End restaurant, featuring dishes such as smoked salmon paupiette with pickled ginger and cucumber and warm spiced apple crumble with clotted cream, live tunes, casino tables and dancing”. It costs a minimum of £658.

The yacht, however, will stay stationary in Royal Victoria Dock near the Excel centre. If you want your NYE party to really move, head to Victoria station where a train pulling 10 British Pullman dining cars will leave the platform at 18.45.

For [£565 a person](#), passengers will be taken “back in time to the glamorous 1920s” aboard “beautiful vintage carriages”. The adverts say: “Liveried stewards are on hand to take care of your every need as you indulge in a sumptuous five-course dinner, complete with champagne and fine wine.”

Craig Moffat, the train's general manager, said the NYE midnight express has been running since 1992 and some people have joined it every year. “As

well as the five-course gala dinner, we have jazz singers, burlesque dancers and a magic circle magician going from carriage to carriage,” he said.

In previous years, he said, some groups had hired out whole carriages to party together but this year the biggest group booking was for 12 people – or half a carriage.

Moffat said guests were a varied bunch but stressed they were not train geeks. “It’s a real mix of people from London foodies who come for the culinary aspect of it, to people who can’t be bothered with being in central London on New Year’s Eve and want to have a very fun, luxury, high-end experience without the crowds.

“It isn’t train enthusiasts. We have had [Francis Bourgeois](#) on our trains but not for New Year’s Eve.”

The train will set out for Rainham in Kent before circling through Margate and Canterbury, and back to London. At midnight the train should be passing Crystal Palace. “We never say we can guarantee fireworks,” Moffat said. “But if you’re on the right side of train you will see them.”

[Celebrity how we met](#)[Life and style](#)

How Adjoa Andoh met Howard Cunnell: ‘I saw her coming down the stairs and I lost my head’

Actor Adjoa, 59, met Cunnell, 58, when he was running a bookshop in the 1990s. They live together in London



‘We found it very easy to talk to each other’ ... Adjoa Andoh and Howard Cunnell in Greece, 2020.

[Lizzie Cernik](#)

Tue 27 Dec 2022 01.00 ESTLast modified on Tue 27 Dec 2022 07.44 EST

Actor [Adjoa Andoh](#) first recalls meeting the author Howard Cunnell at the Battersea Arts Centre’s bookshop in 1994. “I had a theatre company called Wild Iris,” she says. “We had a tiny little office at the centre. One of our directors came in one day to say someone was taking over the bookstore downstairs, and that he was tasty.” She and her colleagues rushed to see if

they could spot him. “We went in and there was Howard. He was this very smiley man behind the till in a patch of sunshine.”

She wasn’t aware that Howard had already caught a glimpse of her before, when he was moving into the shop. “There was a lovely staircase that went up to the offices. I’d seen Adjoa come down those stairs and I lost my head,” he says.

Over the next few months, the pair forged a strong friendship. “We started talking to each other as though we’d known each other for ever,” says Howard. Adjoa, who has a daughter from a previous relationship, would regularly bring her little girl to spend time in the bookstore. “She loved it there and Howard would often be telling children’s stories. He also started to give me discounts on books,” she says. “That’s a way to a girl’s heart: childcare and books.”

But it wasn’t until the end of 1995 that their relationship shifted from friendship to something more. Adjoa had been travelling the country for a play called *Death Catches the Hunter*, and Howard came to watch her perform in London. “That was the first time I saw her on stage and it was an electrifying moment,” he says. “I thought, not only is she beautiful and smart, she’s also brilliant.” When a positive review of the show was published in the *Guardian*, Howard cut it out and kept it in his wallet.

Soon after, he invited Adjoa to an Arsenal football match. “One of the things we bonded over was football,” says Adjoa. “We went to Highbury together. It was really romantic.” Their bond quickly grew and, just before Christmas, Howard came to her home to suggest they give things a real go. As well as going to matches together, they also enjoyed theatre, literature and live gigs.



‘It’s a grownup love’ ... The couple in Mallorca, in 2000.

They had two children, in 1996 and 1997, and moved into a housing association property together in Brixton, along with Adjoa’s older daughter. “It was a self-enclosed multiracial community with beautiful arches and a central courtyard,” says Howard. “It was like a commune, where the kids grew up freely. Every night you might have four kids in your house, or someone else would have your kids.” Despite having little money, he says it was “a magical time” to be in Brixton. “We moved in just after Labour won the election and there was a lot of hope,” says Adjoa.

In 2000, Adjoa landed a big break in the hospital TV show *Casualty*, which meant regular travel. “I looked after the kids, which I absolutely loved,” says Howard. “I think, because we are both artists, we have this shared understanding that, at some point during a project, the art would come first,” says Howard.

As well as writing, he also trained as a scuba diving instructor and a lifeguard. In 2001, they married at St Saviours Church in Herne Hill. At the same time, Adjoa trained to become a lay reader for the church. “When my mum died six years ago, not only was Adjoa incredibly supportive, she was able to lead the service, which was hugely significant for me,” says Howard. The couple, who live in Sussex, both describe being with each other as like

“being home”. They regularly give honest feedback on each other’s work, and say they bring out the best in each other. “There’s a feeling of being loved for who you are,” says Howard. “It’s a grownup love and the thing I cherish the most.”

[The Painter’s Friend](#), a novel by Howard Cunnell, is out now (Picador). Adjoa Andoh will direct and play Richard III at the Playhouse, Liverpool, and Rose theatre, Kingston, in the spring.

Want to share your story? Tell us a little about yourself, your partner and how you got together by filling in the form [here](#)

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2022.12.27 - Opinion

- Can Keir Starmer match the success of the left in Australia? If he learns these lessons he just might
- The theatre that inspired me to be a performer – and let me share my grief
- King Charles' speech left the Tories squirming: he preached the values they've abandoned
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[Starmer's path to power](#)[Keir Starmer](#)

Can Keir Starmer match the success of the left in Australia? If he learns these lessons he just might

[Katharine Murphy](#)



Labour's leader should take note of the quietly confident approach to government that served Anthony Albanese so well

- Katharine Murphy is Guardian Australia's political editor



‘Anthony Albanese styled himself as persuader, not polariser, in an implicit rebuke of the rampant politicking of the incumbent.’ Photograph: James D Morgan/Getty Images

Tue 27 Dec 2022 01.00 EST Last modified on Tue 27 Dec 2022 16.54 EST

On a visit to London shortly after Anthony Albanese, a [veteran of the centre-left Labor party](#), won the Australian elections, progressives peppered me with questions. How had the Labor leader pulled this off? Was Labor’s victory, following Joe Biden’s triumph over Donald Trump in the US, a harbinger of a progressive renaissance? Could Keir Starmer replicate this with a Tory-felling success?

Albanese had managed to [defeat Scott Morrison](#) – a polarising antipodean echo of Trump and Boris Johnson pumped up by the Murdoch media machine – despite the Labor party recording its lowest primary vote since the 1930s.

How did he pull it off? In the run-up to May 2022, Labor felt the surest path to victory involved keeping the focus squarely on a prime minister rendered deeply unpopular by accumulated pandemic fatigue, his own character flaws and by the Liberal-National Coalition’s consistent failure to offer serious solutions to the big challenges Australia faces.

Like the Tory party in Britain, the conservative side of politics in Australia had used leadership changes over the past 10 years to tighten its grip on the government benches, fielding three leaders over three terms. Tony Abbott was so diabolically bad at being prime minister he would have struggled to win an election in 2016, but he was replaced by Malcolm Turnbull, who won the contest that year by a whisker. Turnbull – a progressive in Liberal party terms – was [then ejected](#) by the right wing of his own party and replaced by Morrison, who [won the 2019 contest](#) by styling his Coalition as an insurgent opposition challenging a Corbynite Labor government in exile.

Albanese offered voters a positive Labor alternative. An Albanese government would bring down the curtain on Australia's version of Brexit – the decade-long climate wars that poisoned politics and polarised the country. Albanese styled himself as persuader, not polariser, in an implicit rebuke of the rampant politicking of the incumbent. He also promised to legislate a federal anti-corruption commission to bring integrity back to politics. Morrison had made voters a similar promise in 2018, but reneged. Labor would end the culture of “rorts” – corruption – and “waste”, a pitch that had salience because of the accumulation of high-level audits excoriating the Coalition's mismanagement of discretionary grants programmes.

So there was a Labor programme, and a big-picture pitch for reconciliation and renewal. But Albanese did not seek to dominate the national conversation with Labor's policy offering, lest that crowd out the political reckoning brewing for Morrison. As Labor's [campaign review](#) ultimately concluded: “Although several factors contributed to the [election] outcome, the unpopularity of Scott Morrison and his government was the most significant.”

At this point in the story, a famous quip from the late Australian media mogul Kerry Packer springs to mind. After Packer sold his commercial television network to a business rival in 1987 for just over A\$1bn and then bought it back for A\$250m three years later, [he declared](#): “You only get one Alan Bond in your lifetime, and I've had mine.”



‘Sunak is on the clock now’: King Charles greets Rishi Sunak and Keir Starmer at the Houses of Parliament on 14 December. Photograph: Jessica Taylor/Reuters

Albanese had Morrison – the best political foil he could have hoped for – but it is not clear that Rishi Sunak is Starmer’s Morrison. Indeed, given what I’ve witnessed here, it’s possible that a dose of Sunak – after the flamboyant impulsiveness of Johnson and the hectic incompetence of Liz Truss – delivers the required regeneration trick. I recently read [a piece in the New York Times](#) speculating that dullness could be Sunak’s secret weapon, as it has proved to be for Biden – and that the two leaders were both letting “the steam out of their countries’ hothouse politics by making a virtue of being, well, a little boring”.

But the Albanese victory suggests that piercing the right’s longevity strategy is possible, and that Starmer and British [Labour](#) do have something to learn from Albanese’s approach to taking back government after a decade of Coalition rule.

The first point to make is that Sunak is on the clock now. He won’t face voters until late 2024 or early 2025. Two years out from the contest, Morrison wasn’t yet the Morrison Albanese faced in May 2022. Morrison peaked politically in 2020, then corroded precipitously. He was convicted in

the court of public opinion in the year and a half leading up to the 2022 contest. Time is not your friend in politics, particularly after a long stretch in power.

The second lesson is that Albanese and his campaign team made smart choices. One was Albanese's early call to engage women, both with policy (a big spending childcare commitment [was one of his first decisions](#)) and significantly, with a less testosterone-charged leadership style. Albanese appeared to listen as often as he spoke. These instincts were the correct ones. The Liberal party's post-election research shows the party [failed to win a majority of female voters](#) across all age cohorts in 2022. Only 25% of female voters aged between 18 and 34 voted Liberal on 21 May.

I suspect the British Labour party, after the failed experiment of Jeremy Corbyn, could be tempted to revert to conventional New Labour presidential styling, pitching Starmer as the next Tony Blair. Labour might believe it needs to engineer the big change moment, a sense of a charismatic prime ministerial aspirant, promulgating transformational policy, surfing a wave of manifest destiny, to have any hope of blasting the Tories out of office.

Perhaps Starmer will need to inculcate that presidential-style New Labour moment to be the next prime minister of Britain. But the lesson from Australia is perhaps he won't – that instead, voters are open to a different kind of change moment: something quieter, something modest, something inclusive, something team-oriented, rather than presidential.

Approaching government quietly also helps after the transition. It seems to have [extended the Albanese government's honeymoon](#) with voters. When Labor last took office in Australia, back in 2007, deploying New Labour-style razzle-dazzle in the form of the change agent Kevin Rudd, the country thrummed with hope. The zeitgeist was very different in 2022. The Albanese victory was met with relief.

That difference in the starting point matters. Rudd enjoyed stratospheric voter approval, which meant he had a long way to fall when the post-election substance fell short of the pre-election styling. Albanese will fall eventually too. Obsolescence is the way of politics.

But for now, a majority of Australian voters are enjoying seeing a new Labor prime minister prosper in the top job, perhaps surpassing some of their initial expectations about his capabilities. In Australia, as in the UK, proportionate voter expectations are a solid foundation for a progressive government that wants to command public confidence for long enough to legislate its agenda, and live to fight another day.

- Katharine Murphy is Guardian Australia's political editor, and the author of *Lone Wolf*, *Albanese* and *the New Politics*, published by Black Inc
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Snapshot of 2022Stage

The theatre that inspired me to be a performer – and let me share my grief

[Richard E Grant](#)



As a child from Swaziland, I was bowled over by seeing Max Bygraves at the Palladium. This year, I took to the stage myself

- What was the image on your phone that defined 2022? [Writers give their perspectives](#)



Richard E Grant's one-man show, *A Pocketful of Happiness*, at the London Palladium, October 2022. Photograph: Richard E Grant

Tue 27 Dec 2022 03.00 EST Last modified on Thu 29 Dec 2022 00.11 EST

When I was 12 years old, in 1969, my father decided that as Swaziland (now Eswatini) had only one cinema, one amateur theatre club and no television, I would benefit from an injection of culture in the northern hemisphere.

We flew to London and the culture shock was immediate and unforgettable. Emerging from Piccadilly Circus tube station, I saw the Eros fountain crowded with hippies, strongly smelling of patchouli oil. Walking through Soho and Carnaby Street, I saw mini-skirted women with see-through blouses. Until then, the only naked adults I'd ever seen were in National Geographic magazine. We went to the Shaftesbury theatre to see the musical *Hair*, which featured the entire cast standing stark bollock naked for a few seconds, just before the interval. In other words, I got to see Elaine Paige's front bum. (We've since become friends and I can officially say that I've never seen it since.)

Then it was off to see Ginger Rogers in *Mame* at the Theatre Royal on Drury Lane, which featured a 15-year-old Gary Warren playing her nephew, a year before he starred in *The Railway Children*. He convinced me that it was

possible to become a child actor. This was confirmed the following day on seeing Mark Lester and Jack Wild in the film version of *Oliver!* at the Odeon Leicester Square. It was all topped off by watching Adrian Hall and Heather Ripley on screen as the Potts siblings in *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*.



Comedian and singer Max Bygraves. 'I'd never heard of him but his easygoing charm and rapport with the audience was extraordinary.'
Photograph: David Redfern/Redferns

My father insisted that we go to the Palladium no matter who was performing as, according to him, it was *the* landmark theatre in London. Which is how we got to see the legendary Max Bygraves.

I'd never heard of him, but his easygoing charm and rapport with the audience was extraordinary. He did impressions, jokes and sang his signature hit *Tulips from Amsterdam*, with the entire audience singing along to the chorus. The foyer had photos of all the legendary singers who had performed there, including Judy Garland and Frank Sinatra.

My fiercely held secret dream of becoming an actor was fired up by seeing all these shows and films. However, I never once considered I would find myself on the Palladium stage. So when producer Alex Fane suggested

booking the theatre this year for my one-man show, [A Pocketful of Happiness](#), based on my memoir, I was flabbergasted.

He calmly countered my panic-stricken “But it’s over 2,000 seats, Alex. I’ll never be able to fill it,” with a panto chorus of “Oh, but you will!”

His faith prevailed and the performance on Sunday 30 October was jam-packed. The acoustics were perfect and despite being on three levels and seating so many people, it felt intimate. Despite the profound grief I’ve felt since my wife died last year, performing my tribute to her and celebrating our lives together in this iconic venue felt truly extraordinary.

It’s one thing to dream of becoming an actor having grown up in one of the smallest countries in the southern hemisphere, but another thing entirely to have that fantasy become a reality, complete with standing ovation. Pocketfuls of happiness, beyond measure.

- Richard E Grant is an actor. His memoir, *A Pocketful of Happiness*, is out now

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OpinionKing's speech

King Charles's speech left Tories squirming: he preached the values they've abandoned

Stephen Bates



Lauding public sector and voluntary workers, he evoked the compassionate conservatism the government has expunged from its ranks and rhetoric

King Charles pays tribute to his mother in first Christmas message as sovereign – video

Mon 26 Dec 2022 08.17 ESTLast modified on Mon 26 Dec 2022 12.45 EST

Do people still rise out of their [Christmas](#) Day torpor to listen to the monarch's message to the nation at 3pm? It used to be the one immutable point of the day: the only time in the year when the Queen – and it was always the Queen in living memory – spoke directly to the nation in her own words, unscripted by ministers. Yet its familiarity and – let's face it –

frequent vacuousness make it feel less relevant or significant to many these days.

Although in her later years the Queen often used the broadcast to speak movingly of her own faith, she steered, you might say religiously, clear of politics. But was there a slight tremor of difference [this year](#) in the new king's lauding of public sector staff and voluntary workers – those who help at food banks and deliver aid to disaster zones across the world?

Speaking of the armed forces and emergency services' "selfless dedication" in working tirelessly to keep the nation safe, he added: "We see it in our health and social care professionals, our teachers and indeed all those working in public service whose skill and commitment are at the heart of our communities. And at this time of great anxiety and hardship – be it for those around the world facing conflict, famine or natural disaster or for those at home finding ways to pay their bills and keep their families fed and warm – we see it in the humanity of people throughout our nations and the Commonwealth who so readily respond to the plight of others."

Did Conservative ministers shift slightly uneasily in their armchairs at such references, made at a time of public sector strikes, the increasing use of food banks even by those committed workers and cuts to overseas aid? You can imagine some vacuous Tory backbencher telling the king to stick to saying what he's told to, or a minister going on the Today programme to proclaim how much the government already spends on this or that, and that more money for those keeping the services going is simply unaffordable. Meanwhile, off the record they will be muttering that Charles does not know what he's talking about.

Of course Charles is not going to join a picket line or publicly criticise the cruelty of the government's immigration policy (he knows the constitutional limits) but he can – and, it is now clear, will – voice concern and present a more unifying image than ministers can be bothered to promote. It's a one nation small c-conservatism of a sort that the Conservative party under Boris Johnson, Liz Truss and Rishi Sunak has wilfully expunged from the party's ranks and rhetoric.

Throughout the 90 years of Christmas Day broadcasts, a succession of monarchs have spoken about what unites rather than divides. Old George V wheezed and coughed his way live from a cubbyhole under the stairs at Sandringham about broadcasting enabling his voice to be heard across the empire “through one of the marvels of modern science” to people cut off by snows, deserts or sea. In the early months of the second world war, George VI evoked the largely forgotten verse of Minnie Louise Haskins, a former sociologist at the London School of Economics, to drum up courage and resolve in what was then a largely Christian country: “I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year: ‘Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown’”.

The king has his own problems: a younger son [raising grievances](#), and an institution that will need to step out of the darkness into a lighter and more responsive future. There was no mention of Prince Harry’s concerns or Prince Andrew’s future in yesterday’s broadcast – it was neither the time nor the place to sort out those family problems, much though some followers of the royal soap opera, not to mention tabloid editors, might have relished it.

Instead, Charles was speaking to an equally anxious nation, doing the unity thing. It’s the king’s role and he did it rather gracefully. The king will never speak out explicitly against the government, but if he is occasionally a little less anodyne in his pronouncements than his mother ever felt able to be, so much the better.

- Stephen Bates is a former Guardian royal correspondent and author of *Royalty Inc: Britain’s Best-Known Brand*

Economics viewpointEconomics

The pendulum swung against globalisation in 2022 – and that's no bad thing

[Larry Elliott](#)



Climate crisis, Ukraine invasion and China-US tensions are challenging assumption free markets are best



A container ship moored at the port of Los Angeles, US. Photograph: Damian Dovarganes/AP

Mon 26 Dec 2022 08.57 ESTLast modified on Mon 26 Dec 2022 15.41 EST

This was supposed to be the year when things returned to normal. After the collapse of activity during the months of lockdown in 2020 and the supply bottlenecks of 2021, the hope was that 2022 would call time on an era of seemingly permanent crisis. It hasn't quite turned out like that.

Indeed, 2022 is shaping up to be a pivotal year for the global economy, taking its place alongside the end of the Bretton Woods fixed exchange rate system in 1971, the reunification of Germany in 1990 and the near collapse of the banks in the financial crisis of 2008.

For one thing, the past 12 months have brought to an end the cheap money regime that lasted for nigh on a decade and a half until central banks took fright at rising inflation. For most western countries, 2022 was the year when cost of living pressures hit a [40-year high](#), prompting the US Federal Reserve, the European Central Bank and the Bank of England to slam on the brakes. Threadneedle Street's monetary policy committee met eight times in 2022 and [raised interest rates](#) each time.

The return of tougher monetary policy was, though merely an adjunct to a bigger story: the dawning of a new age of self-sufficiency caused in part by the legacy of the Covid-19 pandemic, in part by the impact of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on energy prices, and in part by the growing rift between the US and [China](#).

China is going to remain the world's biggest exporter

When the pandemic began in early 2020, the World Health Organization – in a break with previous policies – advised the rest of the world to follow Beijing's hardline lockdown model for tackling Covid-19, including contact testing and rigorously policed periods of isolation. The year ends with China having just abandoned its [zero-tolerance approach](#), Covid infections soaring, suspicions growing that the origin of the virus was a Wuhan laboratory, and countries that followed the WHO advice to the letter counting the economic and social cost of lockdowns. Amid all this, President Xi Jinping has made himself China's ruler for life. In the circumstances, it is hardly surprising that relations between the world's two biggest economies are frosty.

That's not to say globalisation is finished because it clearly isn't. Western corporations have invested too much in low-cost, offshore production centres for that to be the case. China is going to remain the world's biggest exporter. Countries will still trade with each other but they are going to be choosier about with whom, and wary about opening up strategically important sectors to competition from states perceived to be a threat.

It seems unlikely, for example, that Britain would face another pandemic as ill-prepared with protective equipment for health workers as it was in the spring of 2020. Or that Germany would leave itself at the mercy of the Kremlin for its gas supplies. Or that the US would be entirely comfortable relying on Taiwan for high-grade computer chips, given China's aggressive stance towards the island.



The Bank of England's monetary policy committee met eight times in 2022 and raised interest rates each time. Photograph: John Walton/PA

Back in the 1990s, when optimism about the new post-Soviet Union world order was at its height, the assumption was that countries would never go to war with trading partners. Protectionist policies would be whittled away by rounds of liberalisation negotiations orchestrated by the World Trade Organization (WTO), capital would flow to the parts of the globe where it could be used most efficiently, and consumers would benefit from lower prices. The mood is somewhat different now. What looked like an enduring certainty – free markets are always better than closed markets – has had a reality check.

The EU and the UK have taken issue with the US over the Biden administration's [Inflation Reduction Act](#), which involves a massive package of subsidies designed to green the economy. Companies aiming to cut carbon emissions will be eligible for tax credits provided they invest in American production facilities.

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Claims that the subsidies run counter to WTO rules are unlikely to have any impact on US policy. There has always been a latent protectionism in the US (as there has in the EU as well) and it is becoming more pronounced. Biden wants to shore up his support in blue-collar communities that see themselves as the victims of globalisation. What's more, he could only get action on climate change through Congress if it was seen to be good for American jobs. The fact that a more aggressive industrial policy goes with the grain of US geopolitical objectives is the icing on the cake.

There is no chance of the EU successfully prosecuting a case at the WTO against the US because Washington has refused to allow the appointment of new judges to the Geneva-based body's court of appeal, thus making it toothless. Brussels is likely to respond with industrial subsidies of its own, leaving the UK with a dilemma. Should it offer green subsidies as part of an interventionist, post-Brexit industrial strategy or should it stick by its commitment to free trade?

Opting for a broadly non-interventionist approach certainly goes against the current trend. The production bottlenecks of 2021, the heavy carbon footprint from moving goods around the world, and the struggle for strategic supremacy between the US and China all point towards shorter supply chains and onshoring.

Deglobalisation comes at a cost. Trade theory suggests go-it-alone strategies lead to higher prices as countries cease to specialise in what they are most efficient at producing. Inflation may prove to be a more enduring problem than central banks think. But full-fat globalisation came at a cost, too. It is really no real surprise that the pendulum has swung in 2022, and will continue swinging. Nor is it a bad thing.

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Israel

Israeli politician suggests doctors could refuse to treat gay patients

President condemns anti-LGBTQ rhetoric after comment by Orit Strook, which she later said referred to certain procedures



A demonstration in Jerusalem in 2021 against Israeli lawmakers who oppose gay rights. Photograph: Emmanuel Dunand/AFP/Getty Images

Ben Lynfield in Jerusalem

Mon 26 Dec 2022 11.32 ESTLast modified on Mon 26 Dec 2022 15.42 EST

A suggestion by one of Benjamin Netanyahu's incoming ministers that Israeli doctors should be allowed to refuse treatment to LGBTQ patients on religious grounds has heightened fears that the new government poses an unprecedented threat to gay rights.

The Israeli president, Isaac Herzog, has weighed in to condemn the growing anti-LGBTQ rhetoric, saying: "The racist pronouncements of recent days

against the LGBTQ community and other sectors of the public make me extremely worried and concerned.” The president, whose post is largely ceremonial but who commands a degree of authority, added that such rhetoric undermined Israeli “democratic and moral values”.

Netanyahu – who called Strook’s remarks “unacceptable” – denies his new government will pose a threat to gay rights but critics say he is too weak to control his ultra nationalist and ultraorthodox coalition partners pushing Israel to increasingly adopt what they view as divinely ordained religious heritage.

In a radio interview on Sunday, the incoming national missions minister, Orit Strook, of the Religious Zionist party, was widely understood as implying that Israeli doctors would be able to refuse treatment to LGBTQ patients in the spirit of legislation her party is drafting and in accordance with coalition agreements that provide for amending an anti-discrimination law.

Strook specified that a doctor could refuse care to a patient if doing so violates his religious beliefs “as long as there are enough other doctors who can give this service”.

After sharp criticism of her remarks, Strook, a leader of the illegal Israeli settler community in Hebron, later tweeted that she had been referring to medical procedures that would be religiously objectionable, not LGBTQ individuals. She did not specify which procedures they might be but stressed that it was inconceivable to force a Jewish doctor to violate Jewish law in a Jewish state “that was established after 2000 years of exile due to Jews who sacrificed their lives for the fulfilment of Torah”.

Strook’s party is advancing an amendment to an anti-discrimination law that allows exceptions to service providers where religious beliefs of the provider would be violated. This principle is also specified in Netanyahu’s coalition agreement with the ultra-Orthodox Torah Judaism party.

Another Religious Zionist legislator, Simcha Rothman, said on Sunday that under the change, hotel owners would be able to refuse rooms to gay groups. “Freedom of occupation means that someone is allowed to act not nicely to the assortment of customers and to boycott or not to boycott them.”

The changes to the law, if they materialise, are also expected to impact on Israel’s Arab minority citizens and pave the way for further inroads by the Jewish fundamentalists of Religious Zionism, who also support annexation of the occupied West Bank. Netanyahu reiterated a pledge that his government would not harm the LGBTQ community, but tellingly, members of his Likud party ruled out changing the coalition agreement.

Ofer Newman, the chief executive of Igy (Israel Gay Youth), termed the statements and legislative plan “dangerous”. He predicted more violence and abuse against his community. “We’re in a new situation in which politicians who want to push people back to the closet possess ministerial power. We are in a frightened and alert mindset.”

Alon Shachar, executive director of Jerusalem Open House for Pride and Tolerance, said: “The changes the new government seeks to lead are liable to bring us to a situation in which LGBTQ people return to living in a reality of fear, violence and racism.

“If these ideas materialise and become reality in deeds they will effect not only the gay community but all Israeli society.”

Yossi Beilin, a former minister of justice, stressed that since Netanyahu needed the extreme right parties to help legislate a weakening of the judiciary so that corruption proceedings against him would be cancelled, he might accommodate their demands.

“Since Netanyahu is very, very weak he has no option [of handling] these extremist forces, some of whom are lunatics,” Beilin said. “Maybe he intends not to implement these things but I’m not sure he can avoid doing so. These people are really zealots.”

“We have never been in such a situation. The jury is out. We may be facing a different Israel with halacha [Jewish law] as a point of interest that people

living in darkness will support.

Netanyahu intends to hold a vote in parliament on his new government on Thursday 29 December, just days before his mandate to do so expires, the speaker of parliament said on Monday.

Netanyahu's bloc of rightwing and religious parties won a parliamentary election last month, but the veteran leader has had a harder time than expected in finalising coalition deals.

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[Serbia](#)

Serbia puts troops on high alert as tensions with Kosovo rise

Belgrade has put the army on a heightened state of alert due to tensions with neighbouring Kosovo multiple times in recent years

Serbia puts troops on ‘highest level of alert’ as tensions with Kosovo rise – video report

Agence France-Presse

Mon 26 Dec 2022 23.05 ESTLast modified on Tue 27 Dec 2022 12.44 EST

Serbian armed forces were on “the highest level” of alert, said the defence minister, Miloš Vučević, highlighting the Balkan country’s increasingly strained relations with neighbouring [Kosovo](#) over recent shootings and blockades.

Kosovo declared independence from [Serbia](#) in 2008, but Belgrade has refused to recognise it and encouraged Kosovo’s 120,000 ethnic Serbs to defy Pristina’s authority – especially in the north where ethnic Serbs make up the majority.

The Serbian army has been put on a heightened state of alert over tensions with Kosovo multiple times in recent years – the last time in November after the government claimed that several drones entered Serbian airspace from Kosovo.

On 10 December, Serbs in northern Kosovo [set up barricades to protest against the arrest of an ex-policeman](#) suspected of being involved in attacks against ethnic Albanian police officers.

The blockades coincided with a rise in reported shootings, the latest on Sunday, according to Nato-led peacekeeping force KFOR.

“Serbia’s president ... ordered the Serbian army to be on the highest level of combat readiness, that is to the level of the use of armed force,” Vučević said in a statement on Monday.

He added that the president, Aleksandar Vučić, also ordered the special armed forces to be beefed up from the existing 1,500 to 5,000.

Serbia’s interior ministry also announced that “all units [will] immediately come under the command of the chief of general staff”.

These orders from Vučić come after army chief general Milan Mojsilović was dispatched to the border with Kosovo on Sunday.

“The situation there is complicated and complex,” Mojsilović said Sunday.

Northern Kosovo has been especially on edge since November when hundreds of ethnic Serb workers in the Kosovo police as well as the judicial branch, such as judges and prosecutors, walked off the job.

They were protesting a controversial decision to ban Serbs living in [Kosovo from using Belgrade-issued licence plates](#) – a policy that was eventually scrapped by Pristina.

But the mass walkouts created a security vacuum in Kosovo.

Pristina attempted to schedule the 18 December local elections in Serb-majority municipalities – but they were postponed after the announcement caused widespread outrage and the main Serb political party said it would stage a boycott.

Then on 10 December, an ex-policeman suspected of involvement in attacks against ethnic Albanian police officers was arrested, outraging ethnic Serbs who erected barricades that paralysed traffic around two border crossings.

Just hours after the barricades were erected, Kosovo police said they suffered three successive firearm attacks on one of the roads leading to the border.

KFOR, which has increased its presence and patrols in the region in recent months, said the latest bout of violence came Sunday, when shots were fired in the direction of Latvian soldiers embedded with the force.

KFOR said it was investigating the incident, and added there were “no injuries or material damage”.

Serbian prime minister Ana Brnabic said last week the situation with Kosovo was “on the brink of armed conflict”.

But Kosovo’s security council – which met Monday – blamed Serbia for the latest deterioration in relations.

It accused Serbia of “acting with all available means against the constitutional order of the Republic of Kosovo”.

Serbs account for about 120,000 of Kosovo’s 1.8 million population, which is predominantly ethnic Albanians.

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Japan

Fourth member of scandal-hit Japanese cabinet resigns

Reconstruction minister quits amid accusations of election law violations and ties to Unification church



Reconstruction minister Kenya Akiba was effectively ordered to resign by prime minister Fumio Kishida. Photograph: Issei Kato/Reuters

[Justin McCurry](#) in Osaka

Tue 27 Dec 2022 04.53 ESTLast modified on Tue 27 Dec 2022 16.32 EST

Japan's prime minister, Fumio Kishida, has ended the year facing fierce political headwinds after his reconstruction minister became the fourth member of his scandal-hit cabinet to resign in two months.

Kenya Akiba announced his resignation on Tuesday after opposition MPs accused him of election law violations and of having ties to the Unification

church, a controversial religious group whose [connections to the ruling party](#) have sent Kishida's approval ratings to record lows.

"I take my responsibility very seriously as the person who makes appointments," Kishida told reporters after Akiba had quit. "By rising to my political responsibilities, I hope to be fulfilling my duties as prime minister."

Kishida effectively ordered Akiba to resign, according to Japanese media reports, in part to prevent the scandal from interfering with upcoming parliamentary debates over a budget bill, which includes a [dramatic rise in defence spending](#) that Kishida has argued is essential to counter growing threats to [Japan's](#) security from China and North Korea.

Akiba has denied allegations of mishandling political and election funds and of having ties to the Unification church – more commonly known as the [Moonies](#).

Revelations that the ultra-conservative religious group has connections with large numbers of Liberal Democratic party (LDP) politicians have dogged Kishida since the [assassination](#) in July of the former prime minister Shinzo Abe.

Tetsuya Yamagami, who is suspected of shooting Abe as he made an election speech in the western city of Nara, has told investigators that he targeted the politician because he believed he had ties to the church, which he blamed for bankrupting his family.

Akiba has denied any links with the church but acknowledged that the LDP branch he leads paid ¥48,000 (£299) to two entities associated with the group that he claimed were magazine subscriptions, according to Kyodo news agency.

Kishida has [ordered an investigation](#) into the Unification church's finances and organisation, and this month backed a new law to [help victims of its controversial fundraising methods](#), but Akiba's resignation has prompted renewed criticism of his political judgment.

The economic revitalisation minister, Daishiro Yamagiwa, resigned in October after failing to explain his ties to the church. Last month, the justice minister, Yasuhiro Hanashi, quit after making a poorly judged joke about the death penalty, while the internal affairs minister, Minoru Terada, was effectively sacked over a political funds scandal.

The continuing controversy over the Unification church is expected to continue into next year, just as the cabinet's approval ratings approach the "danger level" of 30% and with Kishida's party facing potentially damaging local elections in the spring.

Support for the cabinet has slumped to 33.1%, according to a Kyodo poll conducted last week – its lowest level since Kishida [became prime minister](#) in October last year.

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Republicans

As Trump's star wanes, rivals signal presidential nomination campaigns

Republicans vying for the party's nomination have taken the ex-president's midterm losses as a sign for them to step up



Donald Trump's 2024 campaign has been fraught with setbacks and scandals. Photograph: Olivier Douliery/AFP/Getty Images

[Edward Helmore](#)

Tue 27 Dec 2022 02.30 ESTLast modified on Tue 27 Dec 2022 07.30 EST

Potential rivals to [Donald Trump](#) for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination will this week be reading the runes of political fortune with their families ahead of the New Year – typically the time that nomination contenders begin to make themselves formally apparent.

Amid a lackluster start to Trump's own campaign and a string of scandals and setbacks to hit the former US president due to his links to far-right extremists and his own legal problems, a field of potential rivals is starting to emerge for a contest that only a few months ago many thought was Trump's alone for the taking.

They include multiple ex-members of Trump's own cabinet, including his own former vice-president, his former UN ambassador and his former spy chief. Adding to that are a raft of rivals with their own political power bases, such as Florida's increasingly formidable rightwing governor, [Ron DeSantis](#).

Now the hints of ambitions to taking on Trump are coming thick and fast, especially in the wake of the defeat of a host of Trump-backed candidates in November's midterm elections which have triggered a reckoning with Trump's grip on the Republican party.

"I can tell you that my wife and I will take some time when our kids are home this Christmas – we're going to give prayerful consideration about what role we might play," former vice-president Mike Pence, 63, told CBS's [Face the Nation](#) last month.

Maryland's term-limited Republican governor, Larry Hogan, and [Nikki Haley](#), South Carolina's former governor and US ambassador to the UN, have said the holidays would also be a time for deliberation.

"We are taking the holidays to kind of look at what the situation is," Haley said in November. Hogan, a fierce critic of Trump, [told CBS last week](#) "it won't be shocking if I were to bring the subject up" with his family during the break. Come January, he said, he would begin taking advice to "try to figure out what the future is".

"I don't feel any pressure or any rush to make a decision ... things are gonna look completely different three months from now or six months from now than they did today," Hogan, 66, added.

Others in the running are also readily apparent. Former secretary of state Mike Pompeo's team has reached out to potential campaign staff in early primary states, [the Washington Post reported over the weekend](#). "We figured

by the first quarter next year, we need to be hard at it if we're going to do it," Pompeo, 58, said in an interview with [Fox News](#).

The [Arkansas](#) governor, Asa Hutchinson, is reportedly talking to donors to determine his ability to fund the 18-month "endurance race" of a nomination process. Hutchinson has said that Trump's early declaration, on 15 November, had "accelerated everyone's time frame".

America does better when its leaders are rooted in today and tomorrow,
not today and yesterday

Stephen Schwarzman

"So the first quarter of next year, you either need to be in or out," the outgoing, 72-year-old governor [told](#) NBC News earlier this month.

New Hampshire's governor, Chris Sununu, 48, said this week he did not believe Trump could win in 2024. He has [voiced](#) concerns that the Republican party could repeat the nomination experience of 2016, when he was a contender, when a large, divided field allowed Trump's "drain the swamp" insurgent candidacy to triumph.

"We just have to find another candidate at this point," Sununu [told CBS News](#). While Trump could be the Republican nominee, he added, he was "not going to be able to close the deal".

The [Virginia](#) governor, Glenn Youngkin, 56, has said he is "humbled" to be part of the 2024 discussions but in the convention of most candidates, he says he is focused on his day job.

Youngkin telegraphed his fiscal conservative credentials to wider Republican big-money interests by pushing \$4bn in tax cuts through the Virginia legislature and meeting with party mega-donors in Manhattan in June.

"2024 is a long way away," he recently told Fox News. "We'll see what happens."

Helping to break the gender-lock on potential candidates is also the [South Dakota](#) governor, Kristi Noem. Her name has emerged as a potential Trump running mate, but she recently said he did not present “the best chance” for Republicans in 2024.

“Our job is not just to talk to people who love Trump or hate Trump,” Noem, 51, told the [New York Times](#) in November. “Our job is to talk to every single American.”

The biggest dog in the potential race – aside from Trump himself – is by far Florida’s DeSantis, who recently won re-election in his state by a landslide. Some of the Republican party’s biggest donors have already transferred their favors from Trump, 78, toward the 44-year-old governor.

The Republican mega-donor and billionaire Ken Griffin, who moved his hedge fund Citadel from Chicago to Miami last year, [described Trump](#) as a “three-time loser” to Bloomberg a day after the former president’s declaration.

“I don’t know what he’s going to do. It’s a huge personal decision,” Griffin said of DeSantis. “He has a tremendous record as governor of Florida, and our country would be well-served by him as president.”

The country would be better off if each party’s standard bearer came from a new generation

Karl Rove

Similarly, Stephen Schwarzman, CEO of the private-equity giant Blackstone, told [Axios he was withdrawing his support from Trump](#) for 2024 but stopped short of backing DeSantis. “America does better when its leaders are rooted in today and tomorrow, not today and yesterday,” he said. “It is time for the Republican party to turn to a new generation of leaders.”

DeSantis has yet to rule a run in or out, but has signaled his interest by beginning to plant ads on [Google](#) and Facebook that target an audience beyond Florida.

But in the post-midterm political environment, with Trump-backed candidates performing poorly in most contests, and the former president besieged by investigations and questions about his associations, the running is open.

Maryland's Hogan has described Trump as vulnerable, and "he seems to be dropping every day". Hutchinson has said "you never know when that early frontrunner is going to stumble". Polls suggest Trump trails DeSantis in a nomination head-to-head, but leads over Pence and Haley.

Other potential names in the pot include the Texas governor, Greg Abbott, 65; Florida senator Rick Scott, also 65; former New Jersey governor [Chris Christie](#), 60; and Texas senator Ted Cruz, 52, who ran for the Republican nomination in 2016.

In a provocatively titled "[OK Boomers, Let Go of the Presidency](#)" column last week, former George W Bush adviser Karl Rove warned that 2024 may resemble 1960 when voters were ready for a generational shift. In that year, they went for the youngest in the field, John F Kennedy, aged 43.

"Americans want leaders who focus on the future," Rove wrote in the Wall Street Journal. "The country would be better off if each party's standard bearer came from a new generation ... It's time for the baby boomers and their elders to depart the presidential stage. The party that grasps this has the advantage come 2024".

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/dec/26/trump-presidential-campaign-republican-rivals-announcement>

China

Rush to book flights as China scraps Covid travel restrictions

China to lift quarantine requirement for inbound travellers and resume issuing visas for overseas travel from 8 January



Commuters ride a subway train during the morning rush hour amid the coronavirus disease outbreak in Beijing. Photograph: Josh Arslan/Reuters

Timmy Shen in Taipei and agencies

Tue 27 Dec 2022 10.33 EST First published on Tue 27 Dec 2022 02.32 EST

Chinese people have rushed to book overseas travel as authorities scrapped the last big plank of the country's zero-Covid policy despite reports of hospitals being overwhelmed nationwide.

Late on Monday [health authorities announced](#) they would no longer require inbound travellers to go into quarantine, then on Tuesday the immigration authority said it would resume issuing visas for mainland residents to travel overseas from 8 January.

China has been rapidly reversing the strict Covid curbs in place since early 2020 after protests that broke out in November in the Chinese mainland's biggest show of public discontent since President Xi Jinping took power in 2012.

His subsequent abrupt U-turn on the curbs, which have battered the \$17tn (£14.14tn) economy, means the virus is now spreading largely unchecked across the country of 1.4 billion people.

The National Health Commission (NHC) announced over the weekend that it had [stopped publishing](#) daily Covid data, and official statistics showed only one Covid death in the seven days to Monday, fuelling doubts among health experts and residents about the government's data. The numbers are inconsistent with the experience of much less populous countries after they reopened.

Reports suggest hospitals across China have become overwhelmed with patients and that the virus is also spreading rapidly through frontline medical workers.

On Tuesday doctors told Reuters that the hospitals they were working at had been overwhelmed with up to six times more patients than usual, most of them elderly.

In a sign that the death toll from Covid is also rising, local media reported that the Peking and Tsinghua universities in Beijing have posted a growing number of obituary notices of mostly elderly staff and faculty members over the past month.

The decision by the world's second-largest economy to open its borders, coupled with a [lack of data transparency](#), has worried some of China's regional neighbours.

The Japanese prime minister, Fumio Kishida, said on Tuesday his country would require Covid tests for all visitors from China as a temporary emergency measure from Friday. Those who test positive will have to quarantine for seven days at designated facilities and their samples will be

used for genome analysis. The Japanese government also plans to limit airlines increasing flights to China.

“There are growing worries in Japan,” Kishida said. “We have decided to take a temporary special measure to respond to the situation.”

A lack of information and transparency on the part of China was making it difficult to come up with safety measures. There were huge discrepancies between information from central and local authorities, and between the government and private organisations, he said.

Data from the Chinese travel platform Ctrip showed that searches for popular cross-border destinations had increased 10-fold within half an hour of the quarantine news breaking on Monday night. Macau, Hong Kong, Japan, Thailand and South Korea were the most sought-after destinations, according to Ctrip. Data from Trip.com showed outbound flight bookings were up 254% early on Tuesday from the day before.

While many in China reacted to the relaxation of travel rules with joy, many more were scrambling to get hold of medical supplies to fight Covid. Authorities have introduced measures to properly allocate medical resources, including requisitioning the production of medical supplies.

Nurses and doctors have been asked to work while sick and retired medical workers in rural communities were being rehired to help, state media reported. “Some places are facing great pressure at hospital emergency wards and intensive care units,” an NHC official, Jiao Yahui, told reporters.

The country’s banking and insurance regulator said on Tuesday it would ramp up financial support to small and private businesses in the catering and tourism sectors, which were among the hardest-hit industries amid the pandemic.

China’s shortages of Covid-related medicines have triggered a run for painkillers in neighbouring Taiwan. Two Taiwanese who work in Beijing and Shenzhen and are on vacation in Taipei [told the Guardian](#) last week that they planned to stock up on Panadol and related drugs when they return to the mainland in several weeks.

In response to increasing demand, the Taiwan government considered placing a curb on bulk-buying of certain painkillers last week, but the chief of its food and drug administration told reporters on Monday that the authority would not impose a compulsory curb on purchases after meeting representatives of pharmacies and retailers.

Reuters and Agence France-Presse contributed to this report

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Russia-Ukraine war: Belarus summons Ukrainian ambassador over missile incident – as it happened

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[UK news](#)

Elle Edwards: third person arrested over fatal shooting

Police say 31-year-old man from Tranmere held on suspicion of conspiracy to murder over Christmas Eve shooting



Floral tributes lay outside the Lighthouse pub, where Elle Edwards was fatally shot on Christmas Eve. Photograph: Christopher Furlong/Getty Images

[Josh Halliday](#) *North of England correspondent*

Thu 29 Dec 2022 03.57 EST Last modified on Thu 29 Dec 2022 17.05 EST

A third person has been arrested over the death of Elle Edwards, who was shot dead at a pub on Christmas Eve.

Merseyside police said a 31-year-old man from Tranmere had been arrested on suspicion of conspiracy to murder. He is in custody, where he will be questioned by detectives.

Edwards, 26, was celebrating Christmas with friends at the Lighthouse pub in Wallasey Village when she was fatally shot just before midnight on 24 December.

The beautician was an innocent bystander in the attack, which also left a 28-year-old man fighting for his life and three others hurt.

The force has been given more time to question a 30-year-old man from Tranmere, arrested on suspicion of murder and attempted murder, and a 19-year-old woman from Rock Ferry, Wirral, arrested on suspicion of conspiracy to murder and they both remain in custody.

Police have renewed their appeal for information about the shooting as they attempt to trace the gun used in the attack.

Ian Critchley, deputy chief constable, urged people to contact the police if they know who was responsible for “pulling that trigger in the most indiscriminate, most appalling way” and “anybody who knows where the weapon is, anybody who has harboured or has any information at all. We still want to hear from them.”

Critchley said investigators were working “round the clock” to work out what happened before, during and after the attack.

He said: “We have made great strides forward but I am appealing for further information.”

Critchley said work was ongoing to establish whether the weapon used in the attack, which injured four men, could be connected to any other incidents.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/dec/29/elle-edwards-1-third-person-arrested-over-fatal-shooting-wallasey>.

Hospitals

Hospitals in England taking care of record number of patients

Across country last month, almost 14,000 people were ready to be discharged but could not be sent home or into care



Hospitals in the south-west, south-east and north-west of England are taking care of a record number of patients. Photograph: Peter Byrne/PA

[Pamela Duncan](#) and [Matthew Weaver](#)

Thu 29 Dec 2022 01.00 EST

More people could be spending the time between Christmas and new year in hospital in parts of England this year than at any time in the past decade, as [NHS](#) trusts struggle to find social care places for patients medically fit for discharge.

The latest figures for December to date show an average of 94,200 patients were in hospitals across England, more than 93,000 of them in acute settings, the highest in seven winters.

Hospitals in the south-west, south-east and north-west, the areas with the highest proportion of medically fit patients who cannot be discharged [due to an acute lack of social care](#), are taking care of a record number of patients.

The chief executive of NHS England, Amanda Pritchard, admitted the health service could be facing the “most challenging winter in our history”, even worse than the height of the pandemic.

In a Christmas thank you message to staff she said: “I always thought that, difficult as those initial waves of Covid were, and they really were, actually it would be dealing with the ongoing pressures, that could be even tougher – that combination of recovering services whilst also dealing with continuing Covid and everything else that winter throws at us.

“We’re facing record demand for many services from GP services, to mental health services and of course, urgent and emergency care. But despite these pressures, NHS staff are rising to the challenge every single day.”

NHS colleagues are working hard in what is proving to be the most challenging winter ever, and I want to take some time to reflect on the incredible work you do and thank everyone who helps the NHS continue to care for more than 1.3 million people every day.
pic.twitter.com/YlfU2QcFsG

— Amanda Pritchard (@AmandaPritchard) [December 23, 2022](#)

The figures, which reflect the situation in the weeks to 18 December, show the scale of the challenge facing trusts, which were asked to undertake a “[rapid discharge of medically fit patients](#)” before last week’s ambulance strikes.

The NHS is experiencing a winter of discontent, with strikes by nurses and ambulance staff and multiple pressures affecting the service, including

[record ambulance delays](#), [ever growing waiting lists](#) and thousands of beds required for flu patients, as the virus has begun circulating widely after the Covid pandemic.

Across England 13,697 patients were ready to be discharged but could not be sent home or into other care settings in the week to 18 November, according to the NHS, equivalent to around one in seven people in hospital.

In the same week last year that figure stood at 10,694, meaning the number has risen by more than a quarter (28%) according to figures provided by the NHS.

However, the south-west – where more than one in five patients are stuck in hospital despite being medically fit to leave – is particularly badly affected, with 44% more patients taking up beds than the pre-Covid average.

Almost two-thirds (64%) of the region's 14 acute hospital trusts had higher occupancy rates than the English average in December, while close to half experienced their highest levels of occupied beds for at least the past decade.

An NHS spokesperson said: "There is no doubt the NHS is under considerable pressure – the latest figures show 19 in 20 beds occupied amid rising numbers of flu cases in hospital and that's on top of record A&E demand, increasing staff absences and over 13,000 patients each day in hospital despite being medically fit for discharge.

"Thanks to the efforts of staff and our recent drive on this there has been a reduction in the number of delayed discharges within NHS control, and the NHS continues to work closely with social care colleagues to ensure as many patients as possible can make it home in time to spend Christmas and new year with their loved ones."

The British Medical Association doctors' union said patients deserved better. Prof Philip Banfield, its chair of council, said: "Christmas should be a time people can spend with their families and loved ones and the thoughts of doctors and nurses will be with those who remain in hospital."

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He added: “With years of chronic underfunding and dreadful workforce shortages across the NHS and social care, this sadly comes as no surprise. There simply isn’t the capacity in the system to efficiently discharge people who could otherwise be cared for at home or in other settings.

“In 2023 the government can’t afford to bury its head in the sand, ignore healthcare workers and expect patients to put up with the NHS, once the envy of the world, collapsing around them.”

The NHS Confederation, which represents hospitals, predicts fewer patients will be kept in beds this Christmas than the figures suggest.

Its chief executive, Matthew Taylor, said: “There will undoubtedly be patients stuck in hospital this Christmas due to unavailability of social care packages, where they could otherwise be moved back home or into a residential setting.

“Some NHS leaders are telling us today that the strikes have led to a slowdown in patients being discharged from hospital. The strikes aren’t helping, but this has been a longstanding issue.

“That said, significant and effective preparatory work went into discharging those who no longer need to be in NHS beds ahead of the strikes. Although there has been a slowdown since the strikes, we think and hope that the situation may be better than what is outlined in these latest figures.”

But Taylor said more investment in social care would be needed to help free up hospital beds in future. He said: “The NHS and social care are working closely together to improve discharge rates but this is an ongoing challenge.

“We welcomed the government’s recent extra investment in social care, but that now urgently needs to be converted into more care packages for vulnerable people who desperately need social care support. Otherwise they will continue to suffer and the NHS will continue to have too many patients occupying beds that don’t need to be stuck in hospital.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/dec/29/hospitals-in-england-taking-care-of-record-number-of-patients>

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[TUC](#)

Labour can't 'turn on the taps from day one' on spending, says new TUC leader

Paul Nowak says party can 'set a very clear direction of travel' for public services if it wins next election



Incoming TUC general secretary Paul Nowak says fixing 12 to 13 years of neglect by the Conservatives will take time. Photograph: Graeme Robertson/The Guardian

[Pippa Crerar](#) and [Larry Elliott](#)

Thu 29 Dec 2022 01.01 ESTLast modified on Thu 29 Dec 2022 02.13 EST

[Labour](#) will not be able “turn the taps on from day one” on public spending if it wins the next election, the new leader of the TUC has acknowledged, suggesting the party’s attempts to manage expectations are working.

The incoming general secretary, Paul Nowak, said a Labour government would not be able to fix the Conservatives’ “neglect” straight after coming

to power but suggested it could still “set a very clear direction of travel” for public services.

It follows Keir Starmer’s warning in his conference speech that although he would “love to stand here and say Labour will fix everything” that was wrong with the country, so much damage had been done to the economy that a recovery would take time, in what was interpreted as a message to the unions not to expect immediate radical change should the party win power.

In an interview with the Guardian, Nowak acknowledged: “Who knows what economic mess Labour is going to inherit. It’s not going to be able to turn the taps on from day one. It’s not going to be able to fix our public services.

“What you can’t fix is 12 or 13 years of neglect on day one but you can set a very clear direction of travel. No one believes that you can fix our NHS, fix our schools, fix our civil service on day one of a Labour government because you’re undoing years of neglect ... But you can certainly begin to do things that would give confidence.”

Nowak was cautiously supportive of Labour’s position “in the round” on industrial action after some unions criticised Starmer over his reluctance to overtly back striking workers, instead focusing on laying the blame on the Tories for walkouts.

“I obviously want any political party, when workers take that very difficult decision to take industrial action, to understand why they’re doing that and support them. But I recognise that Keir’s job is different to my job,” he said.

He highlighted the party’s commitment to measures including repealing anti-strike legislation and bringing in a “new deal” for workers in the first 100 days of a Labour government, but he added: “Does that mean we’re going to agree on every issue? Absolutely not.”

Sharon Graham, the general secretary of Unite, has been particularly [outspoken in her criticism of Starmer’s Labour](#). Nowak, however, said: “Where me and Sharon would be absolutely aligned is that sense that we

need political change in this country and that Labour is our best chance of that political change.

“The idea that we have another term of Conservative government, after what it’s done to our public services and what it’s done to the jobs of our members, that’s not a vision that any of us would sign up to.”

He employers recognised that the “political wind is changing” and that it could, therefore, be more difficult politically for Rishi Sunak to get his anti-strike legislation through parliament.

“When we’re in the midst of [this cost of living crisis](#), with the pressures on the UK economy, to spend precious parliamentary time taking another kick at unions, rather than trying to resolve underlying issues, just seems absolutely ludicrous,” he said.

“The government will pay a political price for it because I think there will be a lot of ordinary people looking at it saying, hang on, this just doesn’t seem right.”

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TUC

Rishi Sunak needs ‘exit strategy’ from ‘1980s playbook’ on strikes, says TUC

Incoming general secretary, Paul Nowak, says PM has overestimated public support for confronting unions



Paul Nowak takes over as Britain’s top union leader next month.
Photograph: Graeme Robertson/The Guardian

[*Pippa Crerar*](#) and [*Larry Elliott*](#)

Wed 28 Dec 2022 19.01 EST

Rishi Sunak needs an “exit strategy” from ongoing industrial disputes to avoid them escalating in the months ahead after overestimating public support for his “1980s playbook” approach to widespread strikes, the incoming TUC general secretary has said.

Paul Nowak, who takes over as Britain's top union leader next month, predicted the government's "war of attrition" against the unions would fail and accused ministers of having their "hands over their ears" about the severity of the situation.

He urged the government to negotiate fair pay deals as he ruled out re-writing the remit of pay review bodies for next year – which the government is believed to be considering – as a "starting point" for negotiations because public sector workers need more support to cope with Britain's cost of living crisis now.

In an interview with the Guardian before starting his new role, he said: "The government is going to have to take responsibility. The public will clearly identify where the responsibility lies.

"Maybe they'll try and brazen it out until the spring and to the budget but I just don't think our members are going to sit quietly waiting for that to come. I don't think promises of jam tomorrow will cut it with people."

Nowak's intervention comes as the country faces a further wave of strikes in the new year, with rail, Border Force nursing and ambulance workers expected to take more action, bringing parts of the public sector to a standstill. More days were lost to strikes in October than for a decade and the industrial action has intensified since then.

Downing Street insisted on Wednesday that there was no need for the prime minister to get personally involved in the issue and it was not for the government to get involved in negotiations on pay.

Rishi Sunak's deputy official spokesperson said: "What we can't do is allow for double digit pay rises that will embed inflation going forward ... The prime minister wants to see employers and unions reach a fair agreement. We believe in terms of rail that there is an [offer] on the table that is there for unions to agree."

The new [TUC](#) leader rejected the prime minister's claim that the country could not afford pay rises for public sector workers because of inflation,

suggesting business profits, dividends and City bonuses were responsible for driving that up instead. Some unions have now indicated they could accept an improved pay deal below inflation.

“If you’re in the public services feeling hard-pressed it feels like the only solution being put forward by government is that you’re expected to show a little bit of pay restraint. You’re the one supposed to suffer. It doesn’t feel like this is a burden fairly shared across the country,” he added.

The TUC is gearing up for a second battle with the government in early January as ministers prepare to push anti-strike legislation through parliament, which would ensure minimum service levels on transport networks – and potentially other services – during strikes.

Nowak warned that unions would be willing to pursue legal action, right up to the European court of human rights, to guarantee workers’ right to strike. “We wouldn’t rule anything out, I think we’re prepared to take it on politically and legally,” he said.

“It is potentially for us a claim to the ECHR. We won’t leave any legal stone unturned. We’ll have to see what the actual proposals are but I think there would be a real appetite among our unions to take on the government in the courtrooms.”

The TUC chief said he believed it was “all still to play for” as he urged ministers to sit down with union leaders and negotiate a fair settlement. This should be “something that recognises that there’s a particular set of pressures on people right now”, he added, pointing to private sector firms that had offered one-off payments, reopened pay negotiations and brought pay rises forward.

However, he ruled out the government focusing on simply changing the remit for pay review bodies next year, as ministers have hinted they could do, as it failed to address the urgency of the situation. And he criticised them for “hiding behind” the bodies for this year’s below-inflation offers, despite the fact they set the remit.

“I don’t think that just looking at the remit for next year would be an acceptable starting point. The reality is our members in public services are facing real pressures right now on their family incomes.

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“I don’t think our members can wait that long and I don’t think they’re going to be prepared to sit on their hands until the budget and then any subsequent pay review process in order to try to secure a decent outcome on pay.”

Nowak suggested that Sunak, a millionaire, and his cabinet failed to understand the pressures faced by people during the cost of living crisis. “I don’t think it’s just him. We’ve got a cabinet of people that don’t rely on public services in a way that the vast majority of people do. Do they send their kids to state schools? Are they reliant on public hospitals? Wealth can insulate you against lots of things.”

TUC analysis shows that UK workers have lost an average of £20,000 in real wages since 2008 due to pay not keeping up with inflation, the equivalent of £1,450 a year. The pay squeeze has been even worse for some, with nurses losing an equivalent of £42,000, or £3,000 a year, and paramedics £56,000 or £4,000 a year.

There is more pay misery ahead with estimates that average earnings are set to fall by £79 a month in real terms over the course of 2023, and public sector pay by £100 a month – with pay levels not expected to recover to their 2008 level until 2027.

Nowak defended the union campaign for the national minimum wage, which is currently £9.50 and goes up to £10.42 in April, to increase to £15 an hour as soon as possible, as part of wages rising across the piece. Nowak claimed the proposal was “very realistic” after being told the target of reaching two-thirds of median earnings was too ambitious, yet will be achieved by April 2024.

Recent polls suggest that more people blame the government than the unions for the wave of strikes, with [support for NHS workers particularly high](#). “They thought this was one straight from the 80s playbook where they could drive a wedge between groups of working people,” Nowak said.

“They have overestimated the level of support they’d have on this and that’s part of the reason why they now need to think: what’s our exit strategy?. At the moment they’ve got their hands over their ears, refusing to listen to what their own workforce, public servants, are telling them.”

He defended the rail unions, despite public support for RMT action falling, accusing the government of “sabotaging” a deal by making driver-only trains an 11th hour pre-condition of any deal when they would be impossible to achieve within the lifetime of existing franchises.

“It was deliberately provocative and was, I think, deliberately designed to undermine any potential settlements ... There is no way that would be possible and the government knows that,” he said.

The TUC has had “no contact” from Sunak or other senior ministers, despite working together during the pandemic. “It seems a long way away from us being invited round for bacon butties with Boris Johnson and his little dog. He didn’t learn, and the government didn’t learn, lessons about the value of working together to address a national crisis.”

2022.12.29 - Spotlight

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- [Power, corruption and fury The killing of Percy Lapid](#)
- ['It's me against the road' Meet the marathon man of west Cumbria](#)
- [The showbiz quiz of the year How did Justin Bieber describe sex and who had a dig at Taylor Swift?](#)

The best new music to look forward to in 2023

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Power, corruption and fury: the killing of Percy Lapid

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‘It’s me against the road’: meet the marathon man of west Cumbria



Pupils from Workington Academy accompany Gary McKee (front, red beanie) on part of a run at Cleator Moor. Photograph: Christopher

Thomond/The Guardian

Gary McKee has run a marathon a day throughout 2022 on his Three Six Five Challenge for charity

[*Mark Brown*](#) *North of England correspondent*

[@markbrown14](#)

Thu 29 Dec 2022 01.00 EST

Lots of people enjoy a run before work in the morning. But how about a marathon before work? Every day? For a year?

“You do have to be committed,” said Gary McKee about his [Three Six Five Challenge](#) for charity. “But then it’s no good telling people you’re going to do something and then finding an excuse not to do it.

“I find a reason to do it. If you break it down, it is just me against the road and there’s only one winner.”

McKee, 53, has run a marathon every day since 1 January, raising more than £400,000 for Macmillan Cancer Support and Hospice at Home West [Cumbria](#).



McKee gets a high-five as he passes through Mirehouse on his daily run.
Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

It is an extraordinary achievement, but not out of character. McKee is a man who has climbed Kilimanjaro, trekked through New Zealand, run from Land's End to John o'Groats, done the Three Peaks Challenge in less than 24 hours, jumped out of planes and walked across hot coals. When he took part in his first London marathon he ran to the capital from his home in Cleator Moor, Cumbria.

McKee has been raising money for Macmillan Cancer Support for two decades, a mission he traces back to his father's cancer diagnosis in 1997.

His father, Victor, survived and was known for his positive attitude. "He didn't sweat the small things. He was a giver; he helped anybody who needed help." McKee's father eventually died in 2005 from an unrelated illness.



McKee has witnessed the changing seasons in all their glories. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

“I wanted to do something in his memory so I became a fundraiser for Macmillan,” said McKee. “The first thing I did was a cycle ride through Brazil, 70 miles a day in 40C temperatures. It raised a lot of money and it gave me the impetus to carry on.”

McKee has previously run 100 marathons in 100 days and 110 marathons in 110 days. This year he decided to run a marathon every day.

He has to fit them around work at the Sellafield nuclear plant so he normally starts at 6am to give himself plenty of time to start his shift at 2pm. On weeks of annual leave he starts at 8am.



Stopped for tea and cake at the halfway mark of a run. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

Apart from five organised marathons, McKee always follows the same route. He starts and finishes at his home and runs on a former railway line that is now a cycle path. Halfway round he is greeted by committed well-wishers with tea and cake.

The route has great views of the Lake District's western fells and it has allowed him to see the changing seasons in all their glories. "I've seen lambs being born, I've seen chicks on the path, I've seen the geese come and go. Over the past few days there's been snow and frost on the trees; it has been like a winter wonderland, it's beautiful."

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At the start of the year McKee thinks he was running too quickly which resulted in a hamstring injury. But he carried on. “I went from eight-minute miles to 11-minute miles,” he said.



A mural dedicated to McKee along his route. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

McKee is particularly proud of the ripple effect his challenge is having. When the Guardian spoke to McKee he had just completed another 26.2 miles which took him to a total of more than 9,100 miles for the year. He was joined that day by two people who had never run a marathon before. They were 133rd and 134th on the list of people to accompany him this year.

Some of them found it helped with mental health issues. “They saw it as better than going to the doctor’s. It has been a bit of a journey for everybody ... good journeys.”

Never once has he woken up and thought “oh no, not today”, he said. “I suppose it is like being a carer. If you asked a carer that, that they can’t be bothered to look after the person they care for ... the thought would never enter their head.”



Gary McKee with his wife, Sue, and children (L-R), Beau, Minnie and Alfie, after completing a marathon a day for 110 days in 2021. Photograph: Gary McKee/PA

McKee said he had had fantastic support from his wife, Susan, and three children Alfie, 16, Beau, 13, and Minnie, nine, and, having missed out on a family holiday to Turkey, he was looking forward to one in the new year to New York.

The finishing line is in sight for the marathon man of west Cumbria. “I am looking forward to a beer on New Year’s Eve and I’m looking forward to a cooked breakfast.”

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[Celebrity](#)

The showbiz quiz of the year! How did Justin Bieber describe sex and who had a dig at Taylor Swift?



(Clockwise from bottom left) 50 Cent, Holly Willoughby, Phillip Schofield, Kourtney Kardashian, Travis Barker and Chris Rock. Composite: Guardian Design; Burak Çingir/Redferns; Ray Burmiston/Save The Children/PA; REX/Shutterstock; Robyn Beck/AFP/Getty Images

From reality stars to the fall of Phil and Holly, how closely have you followed the gossip this year? Prove yourself a true celebrity obsessive

[Joel Golby](#)

Thu 29 Dec 2022 03.00 EST

1. Which Britpop artist did Taylor Swift end up in an unlikely back-and-forth beef with in January and why?

Jarvis Cocker said her cats' names were "pretentious"

Geri Halliwell said something long and rambling about "not respecting" F1

Damon Albarn said "she doesn't write her own songs"

Liam Gallagher said All Too Well (Taylor's Version) was "20 minutes too short"

2. In February, we were just coming to the end of Ye and Julia Fox's ultra-visible, extremely short-lived romance. How did Julia Fox describe herself in a Cut profile that came out the day they broke up?

"The best thing to happen to mascara since Cleopatra"

"New York Classic"

"Sort of like Kanye's babysitter, but in a sexy way"

"Julia Jox"

3. Will Smith slapped Chris Rock at the Oscars and we all had to talk about it for weeks afterwards. But what did Rock say to inspire the slap?

"Carlton deserved to be the break-out star of Fresh Prince and we all know it"

"Remember Bright (2017)? Does anyone want to talk about Bright (2017)?"

"Jada, can't wait for GI Jane 2"

"Jada, can't wait for Bright 2"

4. In an interview in April, Justin Bieber referred to sex with the words:

"Yummy Time"

"Splish Splosh"

"God's Will"

“Just (getting it) In”

5.The Kardashians returned this year for a new Disney+ series where we see their lives play out a couple of months after we’ve already seen the headlines about them. In the first series, newly loved-up Kourtney Kardashian said a doctor recommended her what to help on her fertility journey with Blink-182 drummer Travis Barker?

To stop making out in front of everyone at dinner – you’re 43 years old

Wake up at dawn every day and sunbathe your crotch for an hour

Drink a shot of Travis’s semen four times a week

Refer to a hypnotherapist to deal with an underlying fear of getting pregnant

6.How was Seth Green negatively affected by the crypto space this year?

Mark Zuckerberg preemptively blocked him from the metaverse because he didn’t like his portrayal in Robot Chicken

Elon Musk simply tweeted the word \$Greencoin, which tanked the value of the actor’s burgeoning cryptocurrency

A viral TikTok captured the moment he tried and failed to pay for an In-N-Out burger using Ethereum

His Bored Ape, which was slated to appear in a cartoon series alongside other NFTs (non-fungible tokens) owned by the actor, was stolen from his cryptowallet

7.Which Hackney restaurant was former prime minister Boris Johnson booed out of this year?

Mare Street Market, where he was just trying to get a big sourdough and a can of Deya

Morito Hackney Road, where he ate £100+ worth of tapas but still had to get chips on the way home

Sonora Taqueria, where he used his police escort to help jump the Saturday lunchtime queue

Tramshed Shoreditch, where a waiter attempted a citizen’s arrest on him

8.Hey – what is a “Try Guy”?

A normal man who comments with the heart-eyes or fire emoji on Dua Lipa’s Instagram posts as if she’s ever going to see them

A derogatory Hollywood shorthand for Pete Davidson

A term used to describe a former professional rugby player who goes on to appear on reality TV

A BuzzFeed-adjacent YouTube channel where they eat everything on the Taco Bell menu, or something

9. Lawyers representing rapper 50 Cent had to refute which bizarre insinuation made against him by a surgeon?

That he had undertaken penis enlargement surgery in Miami

That he had received a “gentleman’s BBL” in Mexico

That he'd had all his teeth replaced with slightly bigger ones in Geneva

That he'd had his bottom two ribs removed in LA

10. What finally turned public opinion against This Morning’s Phil and Holly?

Phillip Schofield appeared in too many bloody adverts

They both pretended to be hosting while “still drunk!” after the National Television Awards one time too many

Everyone realised that Rylan and Alison Hammond are better anyway

The queue thing

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2022.12.29 - Opinion

- Ignore the purists – listening to a book instead of reading it isn't skiving or cheating
- This year, I only needed to open my window in Brazil to witness the climate crisis
- Predictions that global economy is heading for a recession are premature
- More girls playing football is hard-won progress – but there is still a long way to go

OpinionAudiobooks

Ignore the purists – listening to a book instead of reading it isn't skiving or cheating

[Gaby Hinsliff](#)



From audiobooks to podcasts and voice notes, there's a steady generational shift in the way we understand the world



‘When the world seems to be falling apart, it’s comforting to let someone else tell you a story.’ Illustration: Nate Kitch/The Guardian

Thu 29 Dec 2022 01.00 EST Last modified on Fri 30 Dec 2022 08.36 EST

Insomniacs do it in the middle of the night. Dog owners do it while trudging round the park. Some people do it in the gym, but lately I’ve taken to doing it alone in the car, on long journeys north through the dark when I need distraction from everything circling round my head.

Listening, that is; and perhaps more specifically, listening to things you might once have read instead. The growth of audiobooks, podcasts and even [voice notes](#) – those quick self-recorded clips that are steadily taking over from typed messages on WhatsApp and range, depending on the sender, from something like a brisk voicemail to a rambling internal monologue – reflects a steady generational shift away from eyes to ears as the way we take in the world, and perhaps also in how we understand it.

Reading instinctively feels like the higher art, perhaps because bedtime stories used to be strictly for children and oral storytelling is associated with more primitive cultures in the days before the printing press. But is that fair? If the effort involved in sitting down and decoding written words with your actual eyes were to gradually fade away in years to come – just as the old-

fashioned tether of a landline phone gave way to the freedom of a mobile in your pocket, and cash yielded to the clinical efficiency of credit cards – what exactly would we have lost?

Reading is still very far from dead. Lockdown rekindled the love of curling up with a good novel, to publishers' delight, with more than a third of people claiming to be [reading more](#) to fill their days. But the audiobook market, while still small, also notched up its seventh year of [double-digit growth](#) in the pandemic year of 2021. Podcasting is growing faster than any other media, with almost one in five Britons listening at least once a week now according to this summer's [Rajar survey](#).

When the world seems to be falling apart it's comforting to let someone else tell you a story, even if it is a faintly apocalyptic one, given the dominance of news and politics at the top of the Apple podcast charts. Millennials in particular seem to be all ears; Katie Vanneck-Smith, the former Wall Street Journal president and cofounder of the "slow news" website Tortoise, [admitted recently](#) that when its members (who are mostly under 39) were asked what they wanted to read, the consensus was "actually, I listen, I don't read".

To some, that may sound irritatingly goldfish-brained. But that was me when I was on maternity leave, and couldn't seem to find 10 uninterrupted minutes to sit down with the paper, so kept Radio 4 on half the day for some semblance of adult conversation. It was also my old next-door neighbour, a once voracious reader who was by then almost blind but could listen contentedly to old-fashioned audiobook tapes for hours, so long as someone occasionally helped her find the next cassette. It's kids with their earbuds permanently jammed in, all the better not to hear their parents.

But it's their parents too: all the overloaded, frantically multitasking midlifers trying to keep up with whatever zeitgeist they're afraid of missing out on in an information-saturated world, while going for a run or cooking dinner. Having spent this year alternating between writing about politics and helping make the Guardian's Politics Weekly podcast, the issues are the same. It's just that I know from experience the podcast audience is more likely to be simultaneously stacking the dishwasher.

Yet the idea prevails that listening is flighty or unserious, strictly for skivers who can't be bothered putting in the hard yards. A sniffy [55% of respondents](#) to one YouGov survey back in 2016 deemed audiobooks a "lesser" way of consuming literature, and only 10% thought listening to a book was wholly equal to reading it. The view that listening is cheating prevails even though nobody thinks it's lazy for a student to sit through lectures, and going to the theatre isn't considered intellectually inferior to reading the play at home.

One [study by Beth Rogowsky](#), associate professor of education at Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania, asking students either to read a nonfiction book or listen to the audio version, found no significant differences in how much of it they absorbed. (Although when it comes to something complex or unfamiliar, the US psychologist and expert in reading comprehension Daniel Willingham suggests [reading in print](#) may be useful for going back to reread the difficult bits you didn't quite get the first time, or stopping to think it all through.)

There's an intimacy too to listening, a confessional air that suits soul-baring interviews and taboo-busting discussions about sex or menopause or parenting. And to hear a book read by its author is sometimes to understand, by the inflections of their voice, a meaning you wouldn't otherwise have picked up. Voice notes suit the perennially anxious young in much the same way because they're less intrusive than a phone call, and harder to misunderstand than texts; people can hear when you're being ironic, lessening the risk of accidentally causing offence.

What troubles me most about listening, I suppose, is that it's harder to share. You can recommend a podcast to a friend but you can't leave it on the train seat for the next person when you get off, as I've done all my life with finished newspapers (well, who knows what may spark a lifelong Guardian habit?). You can't give your goddaughter your dogeared, spine-cracked copy of an audiobook that meant everything to you when you were her age. You'll never buy an old audiobook from a secondhand store and find somebody else's faded notes scribbled in the margin, or a long forgotten postcard used as a bookmark that makes you want to know more about the life of the person who sent it. You can't eye up a stranger across a train aisle, and take for or against them on the strength of the podcast you can't actually tell

they're listening to. Paper doesn't render itself useless in a power cut, and it leaves no electronic trace in times and societies where information of which the regime does not approve has to be passed on covertly underground.

All of which makes me think reading will never yield to listening completely; that like vinyl, handwritten love letters and cinema in the age of television, it will live on for pleasure or for romance but also because there are times when nothing else quite fits the bill. But if it turns out I'm wrong – well, you didn't hear it from me.

This article was amended on 29 December 2022 to correct the name of Bloomsburg University.

- Gaby Hinsliff is a Guardian columnist

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Snapshot of 2022Climate crisis

This year, I only needed to open my window in Brazil to witness the climate crisis

[Eliane Brum](#)



My snapshot of 2022 shows the Amazon burning – but what it doesn't communicate is the pain



‘If we have any respect for future generations, it is time for the markets to be silent and for nature to be heard.’ Photograph: Jonathan Watts

Thu 29 Dec 2022 03.00 EST Last modified on Thu 29 Dec 2022 11.01 EST

I have covered the Amazon as a journalist for almost 25 years. It started in 1998, with a trip along the Trans-Amazonian Highway. In 2017, I moved to the city of Altamira in Pará, northern Brazil; it is the centre of the deforestation, forest fires and social devastation [caused](#) by the Belo Monte hydroelectric dam. I moved here because I no longer wanted to be just a “special correspondent to the Amazon”, but so I could describe what was happening to the largest tropical forest on the planet from the inside. Despite this long experience, 2022 was the first year in which I watched the forest burn from the window of my home. I didn’t need to go to the fire, as journalists normally do. The fire had come to me.

The photo I’ve chosen, taken by my husband, is from the night of 27 August. Later, Brazil’s National Institute for Space Research revealed that it was the [worst August for fires](#) in the Amazon since 2010. Fires and deforestation [rose considerably](#) under Jair Bolsonaro who, this year, was narrowly defeated in the presidential election by Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, or Lula, as he is better known.

Watching the forest burn from my window is, for me, like some kind of anti-metaphor. When [Greta Thunberg said](#): “Our house is on fire!”, in the Amazon the image is literal. It already feels like a cliché to say we don’t need to read scientific reports to understand the climate crisis, we just have to open our windows. International agencies [list](#) Brazil among the countries with the highest number of murders of environmental defenders, or of people killed in “conflicts” over land. For me, it is more than a statistic. I know people who have died, I have suffered with their families. And I reject the word “conflict”. “Massacre” would be more appropriate.

The lack of difference between the metaphor and the literal demonstrates the need for an urgency that has unfortunately been lacking at climate summits and other global events. This is why calls for the UN’s Cop summit to be held in the Amazon, on the forest floor, make complete sense. It is vital that negotiations advance at the speed the climate catastrophe demands. Knowing – from books, newspapers or scientific reports – is not the same as living. I know that, on a planet in a state of climate collapse, the real centres of the world are where life is found – not where the markets are.

In the global climate negotiations, however, the markets still speak louder than the people who remain among nature. If we have any respect for future generations, it is time for the markets to be silenced and for nature to be heard. We will not escape the abyss that “we have dug with our own feet” (as the Brazilian singer Cartola put it) with the same thinking that has brought us to that abyss. It is obvious, but the obvious has so far been ignored.

What my image here doesn’t communicate on its own is the pain. The forest is not an object and it is not only the trees that burn. The forest is a composition of living beings that exist in a constant state of exchange, in noisy conversation. Every time a tree dies, a world of non-human people burn along with her. I watched that fire and knew that no one would do anything for those who at that moment were suffering excruciating pain before their deaths. And the day after, there was silence. Silence, because this is the sound of the forest in death. This strengthens my conviction that in the 21st century, democracy will only make sense if it also includes the non-human species, from termites to primates, from fungi to corals.

Capitalism, invented as we know and understand it in the country of the Guardian, has corroded the survival instinct of most of humanity. We must recover it. If, in the coming year, urgency is not met with urgency, you can be sure that my photo of 2022 will be yours one day soon.

- Eliane Brum is one of the creators of the trilingual news platform Sumaúma and the author of Banzeiro Òkòtó: the Amazon as the Centre of the World, which is published in the UK in 2023. This article was translated by James Young

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[Project Syndicate economists](#)[Global economy](#)

Predictions that global economy is heading for a recession are premature

[Jeffrey Frankel](#)

Despite many forecasts, a worldwide downturn in 2023 is not inevitable – and it can be avoided



A trader works on the floor of the New York stock exchange. Photograph: Michael M Santiago/Getty Images

Thu 29 Dec 2022 02.00 EST

The world's leading economists spent most of 2022 convincing themselves that, if the global economy was not already in a recession, it was about to fall into one. But with the year's end, the global slump has been postponed to 2023.

Clearly, [the reports that](#) the US was [in recession](#) during the first half of the year [were premature](#), especially given how tight the country's [labour market](#) is. And, despite the [confidence](#) with which many again proclaim the inevitability of a downturn, the chances of one in the coming year are well below 100%. But, owing to the [rapid interest rate rises](#) by the US Federal Reserve and other big central banks, there is something like a 50% chance of a recession in 2023 and a 75% chance of it happening at some point during the next two years.

Europe, hit hard by soaring energy prices, is more likely to head into a recession, which conventional wisdom [defines](#) as two consecutive quarters of GDP decline. China, however, seems in even worse shape. It has the same problems as Europe, plus a [collapsing property sector](#) and soaring Covid-19 cases, owing to the Chinese government's [recent decision](#) to reopen the economy without a sufficient vaccination push.

While China's growth next year is expected to be [far slower](#) than the historic pace it has become accustomed to over the past four decades, it is unlikely that its GDP will contract for two quarters. After all, even an eight-percentage-point [decrease](#) in Chinese GDP growth during the peak of the 2008 global financial crisis was not enough to cause its domestic output to shrink in absolute terms. This is [yet another example](#) of the flaws in defining recession by the rule of [two consecutive quarters](#) of negative GDP growth.

Moreover, many countries' current economic woes are self-inflicted, owing to policy errors that have been as harmful as they were predictable. Between 2011 and 2021, for example, Europe [needlessly deepened its dependence](#) on [Russian natural gas](#), leaving it exceedingly vulnerable when the Kremlin launched its war against Ukraine. Likewise, China's [draconian zero-Covid policy](#) came at a high economic cost, while the absence of a plan for how to ease pandemic restrictions meant its containment strategy merely postponed Covid mortalities.

The US, for its part, has made numerous mistakes, including willingly relinquishing its [leadership](#) of the liberal international order and ignoring the World Trade Organization and the trade frameworks that its members had negotiated over many years. Donald Trump's tariffs were wrong, yet Joe

Biden has done little to [reverse them](#). In fact, the “buy American” provisions in his otherwise-laudable Inflation Reduction Act [flout](#) WTO rules.

While the expected adverse effects of higher interest rates are not yet evident, there are signs that the “[everything bubble](#)” has finally burst. US [stock prices peaked](#) in January 2022 and have been trending downward since. [Bonds](#), [real estate](#) and [emerging-market assets](#) are all down for the year as well.



Airline personnel wearing protective suits check on passengers upon arrival at the Xiamen Gaoqi international airport, China, earlier this month. Photograph: Mark R Cristino/EPA

In July 2021, I argued that there was a [90% chance](#) that the asset bubbles [dominating financial markets](#) would burst. Historically high valuations – relative to [dividends, earnings, or incomes](#) – were an obvious indicator, although real and even nominal interest rates were zero or negative this time last year. A low discount rate meant that virtually any asset-price level could be rationalised as the present discounted value of future income.

This year began with four kinds of assets more clearly screaming, “I am a bubble”: [meme stocks](#) such as [GameStop](#), [cryptocurrencies](#), [NFTs](#), and

[special-purpose acquisition companies](#). Each was [innovative](#), although not necessarily in a good way, and all collapsed by the end of the year.

But should savvy investors see these declines as opportunities and “buy the dip”? Given that stock prices are [not yet back](#) to where they were three years ago, on the eve of the pandemic, it is reasonable to assume that they might fall further before they are in line with economic fundamentals. The same might be said of cryptocurrencies, which have no fundamental value whatsoever.

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While next year will be rough for the world economy, the coming slump probably should not qualify as a recession, even considering that the two-consecutive-quarters criterion is too narrow. [Global growth](#) in the postwar period has seldom fallen below zero for a single quarter, let alone two. By that measure, the severe oil-shock-induced downturns of 1974 and 1981 do not qualify as global recessions. Even in times of apparent recession, positive growth among emerging and developing economies tends to outweigh advanced economies' negative growth, the two notable exceptions being the 2008 global financial crisis and the 2020 Covid-19 crisis. While the [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development](#) and [International Monetary Fund](#) expect global growth to [plunge to 2.2-2.7% in 2023](#), from 6.1% in 2021, that still leaves the world economy unlikely to shrink for consecutive quarters.

Even if we adopt [less strict measures](#) of defining a global recession, such as a decline of GDP growth below 2.5%, a 2023 global recession is hardly a

foregone conclusion. Is it possible? Of course. But it is also entirely avoidable.

Jeffrey Frankel is a professor of capital formation and growth at Harvard University. He served as a member of President Bill Clinton's Council of Economic Advisers.

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SportblogWomen's football

More girls playing football is hard-won progress – but there is still a long way to go

Baroness Campbell

We must give children a voice and a choice about sport; it's the key to helping more children enjoy sport and physical activity



Baroness Sue Campbell (right) and the England manager, Sarina Wiegman, observe an England training session at St George's Park. Photograph: Alamy

Thu 29 Dec 2022 03.00 ESTLast modified on Thu 29 Dec 2022 03.33 EST

Sport teaches you so many important life skills and one of the most essential is resilience. My life has been dedicated to one simple mission – changing girls' and women's lives in sport and through sport. It has not been easy and there have been many setbacks, but the strength of my purpose has helped me to recover and continue the journey.

I started my professional career as a PE teacher in Manchester and later became chief executive of the Youth Sport Trust and chair of UK Sport, supporting our Olympic and Paralympic teams to achieve success at London 2012.

For the past seven years I have been director of women's football at the FA. Throughout that time there have been many barriers to overcome and challenges to meet. Being resilient has allowed me to keep moving forward to ensure all girls and women have the opportunity to enjoy being physically active, and, for those with talent and ambition, that they can achieve success at the highest level. Witnessing the [Lionesses sweep to Euros victory](#) was a wonderful example of a group of women who have not allowed prejudice and barriers to stop them achieving success so they can make their dreams come true.

The adage "You cannot be what you cannot see" rings true: as the visibility of women's football has increased, more girls feel it is a space they can be in.

We are now seeing great changes in grassroots girls' football. Sport England's latest Active Lives Children's survey has found that, since 2017, more teenage girls are now active and playing sport – with an increase of more than 100,000 girls now playing football.

This type of change isn't quick, but there is still much work to be done for all girls to have the same opportunities as boys. It's why initiatives such as the FA's Squad Girls' Football programme, supported by Sport England, are vital. Coaches are trained to ensure every girl has a voice and choice during their session, ensuring their needs are met and giving them confidence.



Baroness Sue Campbell watches as schoolchildren play football during the Women's Football Strategy Launch at Wembley Stadium in 2017. Photograph: Matt Lewis/The FA/Getty Images

Studio You, from the This Girl Can campaign, is another great example of giving children a choice to support them to be active. It's a range of videos of fun activities like yoga and boxing, co-designed with girls, that PE teachers can use – a change from traditional PE offerings which don't appeal to all teenage girls.

Choice and voice are essential – because if every child and young person has positive experiences with sport and physical activity, they are more likely to grow into active adults. With increasing reports that children's mental health is in crisis, and the latest Active Lives Children & Young People survey finding that more children than ever are using sport and activity to help manage their wellbeing, it's never been more important for everybody to prioritise the experience of children in sport.

So I am delighted that Sport England's survey also found that children's activity levels have recovered to pre-pandemic levels. This is testament to everyone who worked hard to make this happen.

But sadly the recovery hasn't been equal. Too many children are still missing out on the benefits of sport and activity. Activity levels haven't recovered for children from lower income families or those going to school in deprived areas. Sadly it is still the case that children from culturally diverse communities are less likely to be active. We have a collective responsibility to tackle the inequalities that cause this.

And fewer children are saying they enjoy or feel confident about sport and physical activity now than before the pandemic – showing that the disruption of Covid-19 is still having an effect. Active children have higher levels of physical and mental wellbeing, leading to them feeling happier and less lonely.

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Joy from sport comes in many forms. It's not all about winning. It's about feeling a sense of community or achievement at overcoming obstacles. It strengthens our bodies and minds – and we can see that through the way the Lionesses lifted the mood of a nation and put the wheels in motion for a women's football revolution in England.

Physical activity can also help pupils' academic achievement and help them develop essential life skills. Schools are under a lot of pressure after the pandemic and I am so grateful to all our dedicated and committed teachers. Following the pandemic there has been a massive push to ensure children catch up on their academic subjects; we now need to do the same for their participation in physical activity.

Providing a range of opportunities in schools for young people to adopt an active lifestyle requires careful planning and consultation with pupils. There is much to learn and enjoy through a well delivered, high-quality physical education and sport programme for every child.

Providing an active start to life is not a “nice” to do – it is a “need” to do.

Baroness Campbell is the director of women’s football at the FA.

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China

Rural China races to boost medical facilities ahead of expected Covid surge

Poorly resourced regional hospitals brace for flood of cases during upcoming lunar new year holiday as infections soar



A patient attends a mobile fever clinic, converted from a nucleic acid testing booth, in Huzhou, Zhejiang Province of China, on Wednesday. Photograph: China News Service/Getty Images

Reuters

Wed 28 Dec 2022 22.47 EST Last modified on Thu 29 Dec 2022 03.27 EST

China's sprawling and thinly resourced countryside was racing to beef up its medical facilities amid a surging Covid-19 wave as hundreds of millions of migrant factory workers prepare to return to their families for the lunar new year.

Each year, hundreds of millions of people, mostly working in factories near the southern and eastern coasts, return to the countryside for the lunar new year festivities, due to start on 22 January next year.

The travel rush is expected to last 40 days, from 7 January to 15 February, the Ministry of Transport said this week.

Having imposed the world's strictest Covid regime of lockdowns and relentless testing for three years, China abruptly reversed course earlier this month towards living with the virus, leaving its [fragile health system overwhelmed](#).

The lifting of restrictions, after widespread protests against them, means Covid is spreading largely unchecked and likely infecting millions of people a day, according to some international health experts.

China officially reported one new Covid death for Wednesday, down from three on Tuesday, but some foreign governments and epidemiologists believe the numbers are much higher, and that more than 1 million people may die across the country next year.

China's dropping of zero-Covid rule sparks concern about new variants – video report

Hospitals and funeral homes in major Chinese cities have been under intense pressure, but the main concern over the health system's ability to cope with surging infections is focused on the less affluent and poorly equipped countryside.

State-run China Daily reported on Thursday that rural regions across China were increasing their medical treatment capacities and ensuring availability of life support equipment and critical-care beds.

It said a hospital in a part of Inner Mongolia where more than 100,000 people live in the countryside was seeking bidders for a 1.9m yuan (\$272,300) contract to upgrade its wards into intensive care units.

Liancheng County central hospital in the eastern Fujian province was seeking tenders for ambulances and medical devices, ranging from breathing machines to electrocardiogram monitors.

A hospital in Huailai county, in the Hebei province, also said it needed equipment for its emergency wards.

The world's second-largest economy is expected to suffer a slowdown in factory output and domestic consumption in the near term as workers and shoppers fall ill, but is also predicted to bounce back later next year once the Covid wave eases.

China's re-opening also raises the prospects of Chinese tourists returning to shopping streets around the world, although some countries are taken aback by the scale of the outbreak and are sceptical of Beijing's Covid statistics.

China's official death toll of 5,246 since the pandemic began compares with more than a million deaths in the United States.

The Chinese-ruled global financial hub of Hong Kong, a city of 7.4 million people which lost control over Covid earlier this year, reported more than 11,000 deaths.

The US, India, Italy, Japan and Taiwan said they would [require Covid tests for travellers from China](#). Britain was considering a similar move, the Telegraph reported.

"We have just limited information in terms of what's being shared related to number of cases that are increasing, hospitalisations and especially deaths," a US health official said. "Also, there's been a decrease in testing across China so it also makes it difficult to know what the true infection rate is."

Americans should also "reconsider travel to China, Hong Kong, and Macau," according to a US official travel alert on Wednesday, which cited "reports that the healthcare system is overwhelmed," along with the risk of new variants.

In Italy, Milan's main airport, Malpensa, had already started testing passengers arriving from Beijing and Shanghai on 26 December and the

results showed almost one in two visitors was infected.

China has rejected criticism of its statistics as groundless and politically motivated attempts to smear its policies. It also played down the risk of new variants, saying it expects future mutations to be potentially more virulent but less severe.

Omicron was still the dominant strain in the country, Chinese health officials said this week.

Australia, Germany, Thailand and others said they would not impose additional restrictions travel for now.

For its part, China, whose borders have been all but shut to foreigners since early 2020, will stop requiring inbound travellers to go into quarantine from 8 January.

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Coronavirus

US to require arrivals from China to provide negative Covid test

Other countries including Italy have taken similar steps after Beijing's rollback of 'zero-Covid' policies led to surge in cases



Passengers at Xi'an Xianyang International Airport in northwest China's Shaanxi province in mid December. Photograph: REX/Shutterstock

[Angela Giuffrida](#) in Rome, [Melissa Davey](#) in Melbourne, and agencies
Wed 28 Dec 2022 16.10 ESTFirst published on Wed 28 Dec 2022 13.03 EST

The US has announced all travellers from [China](#) must provide a negative Covid-19 test to enter the country, joining other nations imposing restrictions because of a surge of infections.

The increase in cases across China follows the rollback of the nation's strict anti-virus controls. Beijing's "zero Covid" policies had kept the country's

infection rate low but fuelled public frustration and crushed economic growth.

From 5 January, all travellers to the US from China will be required to take a Covid test no more than two days before travel and provide a negative test before boarding their flight. The testing applies to anyone two years and older.

Other countries have taken similar steps in an effort to keep infections from spreading beyond China's borders. Japan will require a negative Covid-19 test upon arrival for travellers from China, and Malaysia announced new tracking and surveillance measures. India, South Korea and Taiwan are requiring virus tests for visitors from China.

Italy became the first country in [Europe](#) to make it obligatory for people arriving from China to be tested for Covid following Beijing moving to reopen its borders.

Italy's decision to impose testing for all China arrivals comes almost three years after it became the first western country to be hit by the pandemic, which to date has claimed more than 180,000 lives in the country.

"The measure is essential to guarantee the surveillance and identification of any variants of the virus in order to protect the Italian population," said Orazio Schillaci, the Italian health minister.

Italy has already been monitoring swab tests at Rome's Fiumicino airport and Milan's Malpensa airport, where on Monday one in two passengers arriving on flights from China who undertook non-mandatory tests were found to be positive for coronavirus.

The US will [expand genomic sequencing of travellers](#) in an effort to "detect and characterise new and rare" Covid variants, according to its top health authority. Under the program, the US collects anonymous nasal swabs from arriving international travellers on selected flights.

Virologists are watching nervously how China's decision to drop quarantine for overseas visitors from 8 January and from the same date resume issuing

visas to foreigners and passports to its own people may affect the global spread of the disease.

A Downing Street spokesperson said the UK was not looking at travel restrictions on visitors from China.

The end of China's zero-Covid approach comes amid surging case numbers, with low vaccination rates especially among elderly people. Ascertaining the spread and severity of Covid is more difficult than ever as Beijing has stopped publishing daily case numbers and ended mass testing.

“They’ve changed very quickly from a zero Covid approach to completely relaxing things, so maybe that’s happened too quickly to keep up,” said Australian infectious diseases expert Prof Dominic Dwyer, one of the team tasked with travelling to Wuhan early in 2021 to investigate the origins of the pandemic in a report for the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO).

“We don’t know what variants are circulating in China at the moment ... [and] whether those variants are different in terms of their response to vaccination.”

While official statistics from China report just three new Covid deaths for Tuesday after Beijing changed the way it recorded Covid-19 deaths to include only those who die from respiratory failure or pneumonia, the British health data modelling firm Airfinity [estimates](#) there are now more than 1m cases and more than 5,000 deaths each day.

Experts say the lack of data is likely to be masking the number and severity of cases, and physicians in China are reporting a massive infection and death surge. Howard Bernstein, a Beijing-based doctor, told Reuters that patients are arriving sicker and in greater numbers, and that the ICU ward where he works at the Beijing United Family hospital was full.

Nearby countries are taking their own measures to prevent a surge of infections. Japan’s prime minister, Fumio Kishida, on Tuesday announced that from 30 December, arrivals who have been in mainland China at any time in the seven days prior will need to provide a negative Covid test on arrival or quarantine for seven days.

Having eased its own border restrictions in October, Japan is capping the number of arrivals from China. “Concern has been growing in Japan as it is difficult to grasp the detailed situation,” Kishida said as he announced the measures.

Japan also said it would limit flights from Hong Kong, Macau and mainland China to four airports. Hong Kong’s government on Wednesday asked Japan to drop the airport restriction, saying the decision will impact about 60,000 passengers.

Taiwan’s government said on Wednesday that it would test arrivals from China from 1 January and that it will conduct virus sequencing for those who test positive to track new variants. In Malaysia, the ministry of health is preparing for a feared Covid surge by pushing for people to get booster doses and promoting antiviral drugs.

An Australian government spokesperson told the Guardian that while the department of health “continues to monitor the global situation, travel arrangements for Australians and visitors to the country remain unchanged”.

China’s decision to resume issuing passports for the first time in almost three years could allow large numbers of Chinese tourists to travel abroad for next month’s lunar new year holiday. Travel services companies Trip.com and Qunar said international ticket bookings and searches for visa information on their websites rose five to eight times after Tuesday’s announcement, with top destinations including Japan, Thailand, South Korea, the United States, Britain and Australia.

The WHO director general, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, has called on China to share data and conduct relevant studies to help the world understand which Covid variants are circulating. Dwyer said data was crucial because in countries where Covid-19 is out of control, the sheer number of people infected makes it more likely that there will be a rare event that leads to changes in the virus, potentially creating a new variant of concern.

Prolonged lockdowns in China also mean a significant proportion of the population have not been infected with newer variants, and the Sinovac and

Sinopharm vaccines China has relied on appear less effective than mRNA vaccines used elsewhere.

“That is the environment where you’d expect new variants to appear,” Dwyer said. “So therefore monitoring people returning from China who are sick is going to be important. We don’t know ... whether those variants [in China] are any different to what we’ve seen elsewhere.”

China has rejected western reporting of the surge in Covid cases since it dramatically relaxed restrictions. “Currently the development of China’s epidemic situation is overall predictable and under control,” the Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson, Wang Wenbin, said on Wednesday.

“Hyping, smearing and political manipulation with ulterior motives can’t stand the test of facts,” he added.

This article was amended on 29 December 2022. An Airfinity estimate relating to Covid in China should have been given as 5,000 daily deaths, not daily infections.

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Police in China can track protests by enabling ‘alarms’ on Hikvision software



The US government put Hikvision on a commerce department blacklist for its complicity in human rights violations of Uyghurs. Photograph: Carlos

García Rawlins/Reuters

Chinese surveillance manufacturer Hikvision has put in place tools to help police track protest activities

[*Johana Bhuiyan*](#) in New York

Thu 29 Dec 2022 01.00 ESTLast modified on Thu 29 Dec 2022 12.42 EST

Chinese police can set up “alarms” for various protest activities using a software platform provided by Hikvision, a major Chinese camera and surveillance manufacturer, the Guardian has learned. Descriptions of protest activity listed among the “alarms” include “gathering crowds to disrupt order in public places”, “unlawful assembly, procession, demonstration” and threats to “petition”.

These activities are listed alongside offenses such as “gambling” or disruptive events such as “fire hazard” in technical documents available on Hikvision’s website and flagged to the Guardian by surveillance research firm IPVM, or Internet Protocol Video Market. The company’s website also included alarms for “religion” and “Falun Gong” – a spiritual movement banned in [China](#) and categorized as a cult by the government – until IPVM contacted the company.

The findings come a month after mass protests against the country’s zero-Covid policies erupted across China. Though the demonstrations resulted in the government easing restrictions, many [protesters](#) later received calls from police.

The US government has long had its sights set on Hikvision. The company was placed on a commerce department blacklist that restricts the use of federal funds to purchase equipment manufactured by the firm as well as US exports to the surveillance firm for its complicity in human rights violations associated with China’s mass incarceration of Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities.

In [November](#), the Federal Communications Commission also introduced new rules that prohibited imports and sales of future Hikvision

communications equipment in the US.

While Hikvision is best known for its camera equipment, the company has joined other players in developing and providing centralized platforms for police and other law enforcement to maintain, manage, analyze and respond to information collected through the many cameras set up across China. Hikvision pitches its cloud platform, called Infovision IoT, as a means to “provide intelligent public security decision-making and services” for police in order to alleviate “uneven allocation of resources, heavy workload, inability to share data”, [according to the company’s website](#).

The technical document available on the Hikvision website does not give many details about exactly how these alarms work but describes a long list of events or activities under “types” of alarms which include “infringement of property rights”, “stealing”, “trafficking of women and children” and pornography. The document also describes “alarm methods” that include “discovery on duty”, “equipment alarm” and a call to the police.

At least nine alarm types are protest-related, according to a translation of the Hikvision technical guide: “gathering crowds to attack state organs”, “gathering crowds to disrupt the order of the unit”, “gathering crowds to disrupt order in public places”, “gathering crowds to disrupt traffic order”, “gathering crowds to disrupt order on public transport”, “gathering crowds obstructing the normal running of vehicles”, “crowd looting”, “unlawful assembly, procession, demonstration” and a “threat to petition”.



A guard stands near a Hikvision camera at a prison entrance in Hong Kong.
Photograph: Lam Yik/Reuters

Police who are on duty, for example, will be able to report events or incidents as a “503” event – the code that corresponds with “gathering crowds to disrupt order in public places” – which could then trigger an alarm in the system for the rest of the police department, according to Charles Rollet, an IPVM researcher. That would also be the case for the “Falun Gong” alarm.

“It raises significant freedom of assembly and freedom of religion concerns,” Rollet said. “Technically those two rights are in the People’s Republic of China constitution, but in reality, the government cracks down very hard on those liberties. So I am concerned about how technology can facilitate the tracking of repressed groups.”

The “Falun Gong” and “religion” alarm were removed from the website with no explanation after IPVM contacted the company.

The [technical document](#) also illustrates the sheer breadth of data on individuals the company enables its customers to track. Various personal attributes are listed as part of a “personnel dictionary” including political status, religion and ethnicity as well as physical descriptions such as whether

someone has long or short hair or wears glasses, the color of their coats, their age range and whether they smile.

The company has previously come under fire for [developing the capabilities](#) to detect Uyghurs and other minorities. In 2018, it won a [contract to install facial recognition systems](#) at the entrance of 967 mosques as well as re-education camps where Uyghurs and many members of other ethnic minorities have been detained. These are just a small part of the [Chinese government's larger campaign](#) to use technology to monitor and track members of religious and other minority groups. The United Nations said in a report that China's actions against Uyghurs may be considered "[crimes against humanity](#)".

Hikvision has disputed all reports of enabling the Chinese government to target Uyghurs.

Hikvision declined to comment but has previously [told the Guardian](#): "In 2018, a separate recognition function produced by Hikvision, which was not focused on any single ethnic group, was removed through a firmware update and is no longer available, as reported by The New York Times in 2019.

"Hikvision has strictly followed all applicable laws and regulations in the UK and all countries where we operate to ensure complete compliance.

"Hikvision has never knowingly or intentionally committed human rights abuses itself or acted in wilful disregard and will never do so in the future."

But Senator Marco Rubio has called for [sanctions](#) on the company as well as other firms for their role in the repression of the mostly Muslim Uyghur ethnic minority and said in a statement that he would continue to push that bill forward in the new year.

"Hikvision's technology plays a central role enabling the Chinese Communist Party's disgusting human rights abuses and genocide, including against groups such as the Falun Gong and the Uyghurs," Rubio said in an emailed statement.

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[Afghanistan](#)

UN suspends some Afghanistan programs after ban on female aid workers

Many humanitarian activities have to be ‘paused’ as Taliban decision to bar women NGO workers prevents delivery of vital services



The UN has halted some programs to Afghanistan after the Taliban moved to bar female aid workers. Photograph: Wakil Kohsar/AFP/Getty Images

[Patrick Wintour](#) with agencies

Wed 28 Dec 2022 21.44 EST Last modified on Thu 29 Dec 2022 07.02 EST

The [United Nations](#) said that some “time-critical” programs in Afghanistan have temporarily stopped and warned many other activities will also likely need to be paused because of a ban by the Taliban-led administration on women aid workers.

UN aid chief Martin Griffiths, the heads of UN agencies and several aid groups said in a joint statement on Wednesday that women's "participation in aid delivery is not negotiable and must continue", calling on authorities to reverse the decision.

"Banning women from humanitarian work has immediate life-threatening consequences for all Afghans. Already, some time-critical programmes have had to stop temporarily due to lack of female staff," read the statement.

"We cannot ignore the operational constraints now facing us as a humanitarian community," it said. "We will endeavour to continue lifesaving, time-critical activities ... But we foresee that many activities will need to be paused as we cannot deliver principled humanitarian assistance without female aid workers."

The move came as foreign ministers of 12 countries and the EU, including the United States and Britain, urged Afghanistan's Taliban-led government to reverse its decision barring female employees of aid groups.

The ministers from countries including the US, France, Germany, the UK and Australia, said the Taliban's "reckless and dangerous order" has put at risk millions of Afghans who rely humanitarian assistance for their survival.

Almost all the large NGO aid agencies operating in [Afghanistan](#) have suspended almost all their work while talks continue to persuade the Taliban to rescind or clarify their decision. Tens of thousands of aid workers – many of them the chief breadwinners for the household – have been told to stay at home during the suspension, as the UN seeks to persuade the Taliban of the consequences for ordinary people in Afghanistan.

The aid agencies say under Afghanistan's customs they cannot provide vital services to women such as health advice without female staff or doctors.

Not all [Taliban](#) ministries support the ban on women working for NGOs and are looking at a plan that could allow women to continue working in a way that satisfies the conservative-minded leadership in Kandahar. Ramiz Alakbarov, the UN's top humanitarian coordinator in Afghanistan, claimed

the Taliban health ministry had accepted it should continue its health-related work and women could “report to work and discharge their services”.

Other ministries had also contacted the UN directly to say work in the areas of disaster management and emergencies should continue, he added. But there was a lack of clarity about what would be permitted in practice.

Samira Sayed Rahman, a spokesperson for the International Rescue Committee, told the Guardian from Kabul that many of the past issues between aid agencies and the Taliban had been at checkpoints about the lack of a *mahran*, a male guardian, rather than whether our women workers were wearing the hijab, but that was the issue raised by the Taliban in announcing the ban on women workers at NGOs.

“It puts us in an incredibly difficult situation. Aid prevented a famine last winter. We have 28 million people in urgent need of humanitarian assistance, but the de facto authorities made the decision that women cannot work in national and international NGOs.

“It is practically impossible to continue our work without female staff. This is a conservative society and we need female workers to access women. This is a country where men and women do not interact in the public space. We would be cut off from half of Afghanistan.

“The impact is not just in terms of aid, but lost jobs. We have to be hopeful that the de facto authorities understand the implications of this.”

In a rare show of unanimity the 15-strong UN security council agreed on Tuesday and called for the full participation of women and girls in Afghanistan. “These restrictions contradict the commitments made by the Taliban to the Afghan people as well as the expectations of the international community,” the UN said.

It added it was also “deeply alarmed” by the increasing restrictions on women’s education, calling for “the full, equal and meaningful participation of women and girls in Afghanistan”.

The Taliban [have already suspended university education for women](#) and secondary schooling for girls.

Shahabuddin Delawar, the Taliban's acting minister of mining and oil, said that by April a decision would be made regarding the opening of schools and universities for girls, which was in line with both sharia and "Afghan customs".

He told TOLONews TV that the decree of Haibatullah Akhundzada, the leader of the Taliban, regarding the closure of schools and universities might be temporary.

Reuters contributed to this report

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Boxing Day strikes: thousands face travel chaos across Britain as action by railway and Border Force workers continues – as it happened

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[Rail strikes](#)

Thousands face Boxing Day travel chaos across Britain as rail strikes continue

No services on railways as RMT union members strike over pay with Border Force continuing action



Passengers at London Paddington train station on Christmas Eve.
Photograph: Belinda Jiao/Getty Images

[Jane Clinton](#)

Mon 26 Dec 2022 01.00 ESTLast modified on Mon 26 Dec 2022 04.26 EST

Thousands of people face Boxing Day travel chaos across Britain as a rail strike means no services will be running.

Many have been forced to cancel or make alternative plans as the industrial action continues.

Usually hundreds of departures run on 26 December after the Christmas Day shutdown.

However, Network Rail said Britain's railways were closed for a second consecutive day because of a strike by employees who are members of the Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT).

The strike is part of a long-running dispute between the RMT, and the train operators and Network Rail over pay, jobs and conditions.

Thousands of members of the RMT union at Network Rail went on strike over the festive period from 6pm on Christmas Eve until 6am on 27 December.

Disruption was also expected for people travelling to and from airports with no services running on the Stansted Express on Boxing Day.

Planned upgrade work on the Heathrow Express means there are no services on Boxing Day, forcing airline passengers to find other ways of getting to and from Britain's airports.

Rail schedules beyond Boxing Day were expected to experience disruption with trains starting later on 27 December owing to the industrial action.

The lack of trains has meant more people are expected to travel by road, with coach operators National Express and Megabus reporting heavy demand.

The AA expected 15.2m cars to take to the UK roads on Boxing Day as people ventured out for the sales and attended football matches.

A resolution to the rail dispute appears a long way off with the RMT accusing the government ministers of going "missing" after the latest round of talks.

The RMT general secretary, Mick Lynch, said: "Until the government gives the rail industry a mandate to come to a negotiated settlement on job security, pay and conditions of work, our industrial campaign will continue."

Network Rail has said the deal it has put forward is “fair and affordable”.

A Department for Transport spokesperson said ministers had “worked hard to facilitate a fair and reasonable offer”, adding the public “deserve better than to have their festive celebrations impacted by strikes”.

Meanwhile, around 1,000 Border Force staff in the Public and Commercial Services (PCS) union have been on strike since 23 December with members of the armed forces providing cover.

According to Sky News, one Border Force officer at Manchester airport said members of staff had told them that arriving passengers who would normally be questioned are being “waved through in order to avoid queues building up amid strikes”.

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Retail industry

UK retailers face quieter Boxing Day amid cost of living crisis

An estimated £3.8bn will be spent on 26 December, down almost 4% on last year



More than a third of this year's Boxing Day bargain hunting is expected to be done online, where £1.25bn will be spent. Photograph: Joel Goodman/The Guardian

[Sarah Butler](#)

[@whatbutlersaw](#)

Mon 26 Dec 2022 01.00 EST

Retailers are preparing for a quieter Boxing Day this year despite freedom from pandemic restrictions as the cost of living crisis weighs on shoppers' budgets.

Spending is expected to hit almost £3.8bn on 26 December, according to research by GlobalData for Vouchercodes.

That is down almost 4% on last year, which was already a tough one for retailers because of [fears of the Omicron variant of Covid-19](#), which deterred some people from hitting the high street and led to restrictions on store openings in some areas.

That revenue figure indicates a big dive in the volume of items bought, given that inflation is running [at more than 10%](#), so shoppers will be spending more per purchase. More than a third of this year's Boxing Day bargain hunting is expected to be done online, where £1.25bn will be spent.

Adding to the dampener on the traditional post-Christmas shopping spree is the fact that multiple major chains – including Aldi, Iceland, John Lewis, Pets at Home, Poundland and Beaverbrooks – will be closed on Boxing Day. Many are carrying on a tradition started in the pandemic, and in some cases even earlier, of rewarding hard-working staff with a day of rest after the busy festive shopping season.

Richard Walker, the managing director of Iceland Foods, said: “This year has taken its toll on everyone, so officially closing our doors on Boxing Day is just a small token of appreciation to our employees.

“As we move into the winter months the cost of living burden will unfortunately only intensify, and as we work relentlessly to pass on savings and support to our customers, we must also look after our teams who are at the forefront of this crisis every day across the UK.”

The expected fall in Boxing Day trade compared with last year continues a long decline in popularity of the annual shopping tradition, as the rise of the US-inspired November discount day [Black Friday](#) and the move towards starting end of year sales before Christmas Day have combined to steal its thunder.

[Shopping numbers](#)

This year, a total of £1.08bn is expected to be spent online on Christmas Day, for example, when not so long ago almost nothing used to be bought as stores were closed, although this is also a 4% drop on 2021.

Since Christmas Day falls on a Sunday this year, there will be an extra bank holiday when the shops are open – on Tuesday 27 December – meaning the bargain hunting can be spread over more days, further diluting the significance of 26 December takings.

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“The combination of Black Friday and the vast amount of discounts we have had throughout the industry has brought a lot of those potential Boxing Day sales forward,” Richard Lim, an analyst at Retail Economics, said.

However, Lim added that for those in search of bargains, retailers were likely to be discounting heavily in an effort to clear stocks which were ordered at the beginning of the year when “conditions looked much rosier”.

“The Boxing Day and January [price cuts] will be deeper and much more widespread than normal because retailers are going to be desperate to convert stock into cash and shore up balance sheets as we go into a difficult situation with a recession in 2023.”

He suggested that there was a chance that shops could be busier than expected because of a combination of deep discounts and pent-up demand caused by [the mix of strikes and snow before Christmas](#).

However, the expected tricky start to the post-Christmas sales will pile more pressure on retailers already suffering from a lacklustre winter [hit by transport and postal strikes](#), snow and soaring bills for energy and food which have limited spare cash for spending on presents and treats.

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‘I’m extremely interested in deviant behaviour’: Christina Ricci on cannibalism, chaos and childcare

[Coco Khan](#)

With roles in hit cannibal horror *Yellowjackets* and a TV reboot for the Addams Family character that made her name, the actor has had an amazing year – even if she has plenty of regrets ...



‘I’d love to go through life believing this delusion that I still look 27. It wouldn’t harm anyone!’ ... Christina Ricci. Photograph: Daniel Jack Lyons/New York Times/Redux/eyevine



[@cocobyname](#)

Mon 26 Dec 2022 04.00 EST

When I was a teenager and first going to gigs, I was told an unwritten rule: never wear the T-shirt of the act you're going to see. So, I thought long and hard about whether to wear my T-shirt of [Christina Ricci](#) (as Wednesday Addams) to my interview with Christina Ricci. We're due to discuss her far more recent role as Misty Quigley in the macabre survival drama [Yellowjackets](#), when the T-shirt question is taken out of my hands: her publicists insist our video call be voices only. But as I soon learn, Ricci is not someone with whom rules hold much sway. "Rules" suggests definiteness, yet defying other people's definitions has been her lifelong career, and even in our interview – as I press my questions, trying to get a sense of her – she eludes it. "I love chaos," she muses at one point. Yep, I should have worn the T-shirt.

When we connect, Ricci, 42, is in the middle of shooting season two of [Yellowjackets](#), which this time around sees Elijah Wood (Lord of the Rings) and Lauren Ambrose (Six Feet Under) join the cast. "Reading the first two scripts, I was shocked," she says. Which is saying something, given that season one followed a girls' high school soccer team descending into cannibalistic tribes when their plane crashes in the wild. Ricci plays the

adult Misty – a quiet, unpopular kid who finds that the wilderness gives her the social cache she always dreamed of. “So many people will say to me, ‘I am Misty,’” says Ricci. “It’s interesting that people relate to such an extreme character, and that feeling of not being accepted, of feeling alone.” Ricci was instantly intrigued by her. “I’m extremely interested in deviant behaviour,” she says, “and what happens to someone when they feel very small – the pettiness, the control – especially in terms of how it relates to women’s experience.”

While mainstream audiences may be riding the wave of “unlikable” women only recently, Ricci has been at the vanguard for decades. Beginning her career as a nine-year-old, it was her breakout role as Wednesday Addams that propelled her to stardom, playing the pigtailed icon at 11 and 13 in the Addams Family films. Wednesday is currently being rebooted by Netflix, with Jenna Ortega in the titular role – though Ricci also appears. Is it weird for her to talk about Wednesday? “I don’t mind. I talk about her in almost every interview!” she says. “But I think it’s important to note that this new Wednesday is different. Today’s young people deserve to have their own version of Wednesday.”



Ricci as Wednesday in Addams Family Values. Photograph: Paramount Pictures/Allstar

After playing Wednesday, Ricci's star continued to rise as she moved into more adult-oriented parts. There was Tim Burton's *Sleepy Hollow*, and Ang Lee's *The Ice Storm*, in which she played an angsty teen ruining Thanksgiving dinners with lines like: "Thank you ... for letting us white people kill all the Indians ... and stuff ourselves like pigs, even though children in Asia are being napalmed."

Throughout this time she was living in the maelstrom of 90s celebrity culture – a brutal period for young stars – providing an alternative to the perky, peppy ideal.

"I had tons of things written about me that were disgusting," she says. Which may explain why she would sometimes give hostile and inflammatory interviews, including once saying it [was fine to sleep with your parents](#). I mention Britney Spears as an example of the toxic treatment of young women. "I knew her," she sighs. "She was very kind. It was all so horrible and unfair."

Are roles better for women these days? Definitely, she says, though there is still "internalised misogyny" to deal with. She points to the language women use for each other, such as the increasingly common use of "bitch". "When people say to me, 'Oh what's up, B?' I will say, 'Unless you're going to rape me or beat me, please don't call me a bitch.'"

I ask her about fame in youth. It must have been traumatic, I offer. Not really, she says. "At the time I was allowed to be rebellious in a way I don't think a lot of other young women were. And there was no internet then. So I really slid through the whole thing."

"People write things like: 'Christina talks about the trauma of fame,'" she says, sounding frustrated. "It's like, 'No!' When I am talking about childhood trauma, I am not talking about the trauma of fame."



‘I regret everything!’ ... Christina Ricci. Photograph: Alberto E Rodríguez/Getty Images

I want to ask Ricci more about the trauma she is alluding to, to find out if it relates to her oeuvre. After all, the first films I got into as a teenager were dark, scary movies, and years later – when I was trying to process the painful things that happened in my youth – I read [a study](#) that said such movies had been shown to help people process trauma. But when I try to talk trauma, I can feel a resistance.

I tell Ricci that whenever I had previously heard her allude to childhood trauma I had always thought it might relate to sexual harassment or sexual violence. “Was I wrong?” I ask.

“Yeah ... ” her voice falters. “I’ve had a many ... varied ... I’ve had a ... there have been a lot of things, but that’s not what I’m referring to,” she says.

I can’t see her face. I’m wondering if she wants to say more.

“There’s been childhood stuff. Child abuse in my family.”

This isn’t the first time Ricci has mentioned abuse, per se – in 2019, she said in an interview with the New York Post: “I feel it’s child abuse to make your

kid famous.” But as much as I want to find out what she means, and to discuss whether we as audiences need to take responsibility for creating child celebrities, I can tell she does not want to elaborate.

I change the subject. Does she see herself as a role model?

No, she replies. “I feel just very earnestly that I’m a person trying to do the right thing. I don’t think you’d want to model yourself after me. There could be a few cautionary tales in there.”

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Looking back, does she have any regrets?

“I regret everything!” she says. “I’m probably the only person who’ll be honest and tell you – if I could do it again, do it over, I’d do it a better way.” How so? “OK I’m being glib. But it’s an overarching feeling.”

Now it feels like the more we talk, the more my shape of her loses definition. I ask: do you feel that you get to be authentic, or are you always performing?

Authentic. “Though I’m a strongly opinionated person and sometimes I can’t say those opinions. So I am aware of times when I don’t necessarily say what I mean.

“But I have a lot of people taking care of me, who encourage my authenticity and don’t control me, which I dealt with a lot when I was younger.”

I ask her about the celebrity world's obsession with youth – it must be especially acute if you were famous young. “In my mind, I look the way I did at 27,” she says. “I have this very nice filter over myself. So looking at realistic pictures all the time is a little bit of a mindfuck. I’d love to just go through life believing this delusion that I still look 27. It wouldn’t harm anyone!”

But even with the existence of the internet, Ricci seems optimistic about the future youth, especially when talking about her children: she has a one-year-old daughter, Cleo, and an eight-year-old son, Freddie, who “won’t be able to avoid” being a progressive young man.

“My husband, Mark, is, I hate to say it because it sounds really obnoxious, a feminist. And Freddie is going to see that, and see his working mother. I think he’ll see women in a much more layered, complicated way, just by having grown up watching his mom do all this stuff.”



Juliette Lewis as Natalie and Christina Ricci as Misty in *Yellowjackets*.
Photograph: Kailey Schwerman/Showtime

She tells me how Freddie’s childlike questioning has helped her see her own blind spots – perhaps the internalised misogyny she spoke of earlier. “He’s asking questions like, ‘Mom, is that racist?’ Or, ‘Mom, is that OK for

women?’ He’s got this whole thing about not calling objects – like boats – she. He’ll correct me: ‘Women are not objects.’”

Has motherhood changed the sorts of roles she wants to do? “I would never be able to play someone who is mean to a child. I can’t even read it if it’s in scripts. I have a lot less ability to handle extreme misery.”

But wait, *Yellowjackets* is violent? “It is,” she says. “But it’s horror. That’s different.”

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G2 quiz of 2022

The ‘who said it’ quiz of the year! Who claimed to break the rules without knowing – and who enraged social media?

Here are some of 2022’s most memorable quotes on Ukraine, the Queen and Trump, but can you remember who said them?



(Clockwise from top left) easyJet, Queen Elizabeth II, Margaret Thatcher, a cup of coffee and Donald Trump. Composite: Guardian Design; Ben Queenborough/PinPep/REX/Shutterstock; Shawn Thew/EPA; Hulton Archive/Getty Images; Croft/PA; Milyanchikov Sergey/Alamy

[Zoe Williams](#)

[@zoesqwilliams](#)

Mon 26 Dec 2022 03.00 EST

1. “Nobody warned me that it was against the rules, because I would have remembered that.”

Boris Johnson

Rebekah Vardy

Matt Hancock

Kanye West

2. “In a drama, I’m not the person with a knife, I’m the person getting chased. In a comedy, I’m not the person farting, I’m the person who smelled it.”

Larry David

Jason Bateman

Jenna Coleman

Sally Phillips

3. “When I bought my first property, going abroad, the easyJet, coffee, gym, Netflix lifestyle didn’t exist. I used to walk to work with a sandwich. And on payday I’d go for a pizza, and to a movie, and buy a lipstick. I don’t want to belittle those people who can’t do it. But there are loads of people who can do it and don’t.”

Camilla Windsor

Keir Starmer

Kirstie Allsopp

Matt Smith

4. “We have seen Russian tanks hitting the atomic power station and everybody has to understand that this is terror against everyone.”

Joe Biden

Jens Stoltenberg

Volodymyr Zelenskiy

Emmanuel Macron

5. “Christ is risen, Alleluia. He is risen indeed, Alleluia, Alleluia.”

The Pope

Jacob Rees-Mogg

Carrie Johnson

Mario Conti

6. “We have a real, absolute, not relative poverty issue going to come in the UK, with food banks oversubscribed. I am virtually out of tools to help people now.”

Kwasi Kwarteng

Jeremy Hunt

Sajid Javid

Martin Lewis

7. “I think it was Margaret Thatcher who said that every prime minister needs a Willy. A woman like me doesn’t have one.”

Penny Mordaunt

Liz Truss

Kemi Badenoch

Thérèse Coffey

8. “The working class is back. We refuse to be meek, we refuse to be humble, we refuse to wait for politicians and policy-writers – and we refuse to be poor any more.”

Keir Starmer

Mick Lynch

Jeremy Corbyn

Declan Donnelly

9. “Watching those instruments of power, the crown and the orb and the sceptre being taken back, that had been given to the Queen at the coronation and put on the altar – the reign was over. I was very moved by that.”

David Dimbleby

King Charles

Phillip Schofield

Holly Willoughby

10. “The people have spoken. Trump will be reinstated. Vox populi, vox dei.”

Clarence Thomas

Elon Musk

Ron DeSantis

Mia Love

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Espionage

‘Wholly unremarkable’: the suburban couple in Sweden accused of spying for Russia

Pair suspected of illegally gathering intelligence against Sweden and US for more than a decade



The house in Nacka, Sweden, where security service personnel arrested two people on suspicion of espionage. Photograph: Fredrik Sandberg/TT/EPA



[Jon Henley](#) *Europe correspondent*

[@jonhenley](#)

Mon 26 Dec 2022 04.00 EST Last modified on Mon 26 Dec 2022 04.08 EST

For the leafy Stockholm suburb of Nacka, it was a rude, pre-dawn awakening: wailing sirens, two Black Hawk helicopters clattering overhead and special forces in combat gear fast-roping through the windows of an imposing white villa – all at 6.01am.

The raid late last month by Sweden’s security service, police elite units and army, lasting little over a minute, targeted a Russian couple suspected of carrying out “illegal intelligence activities” against [Sweden](#) and the US for more than a decade.

It took place just days before the trial began in Stockholm of two Swedish brothers arrested last autumn and accused of selling secrets to Russia’s intelligence services.

The couple, who have not been named by Swedish prosecutors, arrived in Sweden in 1997, acquiring Swedish nationality about 15 years later.

Described as “wholly unremarkable” by their neighbours, they are listed as running several small companies importing and exporting IT equipment,

electronics for ships and aircraft, and project financing, with a turnover of about 30m kronor (£2.4m) a year. Their 20-year-old son is a student in Stockholm.

Once enthusiastic users of Russian social media – posting photos from the La Scala opera house in Milan and family skiing holidays in Norway – the couple fell off the radar in 2013, at about the time, court documents allege, that they began spying against the US and Sweden.



Officers in Nacka enter the home of two espionage suspects. Photograph: Fredrik Sandberg/TT/EPA

According to Swedish media, the couple first came to the attention of Swedish authorities in 2016, over unpaid taxes at one of their companies – whose name, according to local media, also happens to appear in a June 2022 defence agency report identifying 75 “Russian economic interests” in Sweden after the invasion of Ukraine.

Oscar Almen, one of the report’s authors, told the Svenska Dagbladet newspaper the firm aroused investigators’ interest because it was ultimately controlled by a Cyprus-based company owned by a retired Soviet diplomat and suspected GRU military intelligence colonel who had once been expelled from France for espionage.

After digging into the couple's background in Russia, the online investigative journalism group [Bellingcat also established](#) that they had been listed as owners of a Moscow apartment, at 36 Zorge St, since October 1999, although they may never have actually lived there.

Without formally naming the pair, a Stockholm court has ordered the man held in custody on suspicion of “aggravated illegal intelligence activities against Sweden and a foreign power” but released his wife – suspected of being his accomplice – pending inquiries. Both deny all the allegations.

The public prosecutor, Henrik Olin, has said the husband was “linked to the GRU”, without giving any further detail, and added that the likely charges – in which he said Swedish intelligence had been assisted by the FBI – involved “technical acquisition for the Russian military-industrial industry”.

Tony Ingesson, senior lecturer in intelligence analysis at Lund University, said if the couple were indeed spies, they could have been sent by Moscow or recruited once they were in Sweden. “Either way, they are not classic illegals [undercover sleeper agents], in the sense they were using their own names,” he said. “It’s very like what the Soviets and East Germans used to do during the cold war.”

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The arrests in late November coincided with the trial of Peyman and Payam Kia, aged 42 and 35 respectively, two naturalised brothers who arrived in Sweden with their parents in the 1980s after fleeing Iran, who stand accused of spying for Russia and the GRU between 2011 and late 2021.

Peyman Kia allegedly worked as a mole for the Swedish security and counter-intelligence agency Sapo, but also for armed forces intelligence, including the foreign intelligence agency Must and KSI, a top-secret unit inside the agency dealing with Swedish spies abroad. Payam is charged assisting his brother with logistics.

Joakim von Braun, an intelligence expert, said the case appeared to be one of most damaging in Sweden's history because of the central allegation – strongly denied, along with all other claims of wrongdoing, by both brothers – that a complete list of every Sapo operative was transmitted to Moscow.

“If it is the case that people who work for Sweden in other countries have been named, there is of course a great risk that things could end up very badly for them,” Von Braun told the public broadcaster SVT. “I don’t want to use the word scandal. But I think this is the worst case we have had in Sweden.”

The public prosecutor, Mats Ljungqvist, also described the Kia case as unique, saying Sweden had “not seen anything like it in over 20 years”. The brothers’ trial is largely being held behind closed doors, with media access strictly limited because of national security concerns.

“It is surprising someone appears to have infiltrated to that level,” Ingesson said. “That means we’re unlikely ever to hear very much about it and most of proceedings will be classified. But together, these cases do reflect where we are now: Russia badly needs both political and military intelligence – and since its invasion of Ukraine, it’s got a lot harder to obtain.”

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**I had to turn down a coat with dead fox
draped over it – the Christmas present
I'll never forget**



All wrapped up ... Viv Groskop in Saint Petersburg

I was 20, living in St Petersburg and desperately in need of a warm coat. But as I saw the gift, my face turned ashen



[Viv Groskop](#)

[@vivgroskop](#)

Mon 26 Dec 2022 03.00 EST

In December 1993, I was living in St Petersburg as part of the year abroad for my university course in Russian. This was in the heady days of glasnost, perestroika and [newly opened branches of McDonald's](#) where you met Russians who burst into tears of disbelief when they realised you were from “*tam*” (over there).

It was the innocent time of trading Levi's and hard currency in the street. People would ask endless earnest questions about the Beatles, Deep Purple and King Crimson. With the strains of the Scorpions' Winds of Change ringing in our ears (“Let your balalaika sing / What my guitar wants to say”), it was completely normal to assume that [Russia](#) was on its way to becoming a beacon of democracy and freedom like any other responsible

independent eastern European state, just a rather large one. How times change.

I was travelling to work, teaching English (with great passion but spectacularly ineptly) to Russian adults. I took a tram every morning at 6.30am. It was the most picturesque commute imaginable, with a daily clear view of the Winter Palace. As the dawn broke over the Neva river, I would gaze out of the tram window, marvelling at how the waves had frozen into crests of ice. I could feel my nostril hairs freezing. It was -20C outside. It was time to buy a Russian-issue winter coat.

Through a friend of a friend, I ordered a “simple black winter coat” (my Russian could stretch to this) from someone who worked in a garment factory. I was faintly aware of the fact that by handing over my \$150 cash, I was participating in the black market. But I didn’t feel bad about this because I had not found any shops that sold coats. I also knew that anyone who worked in manufacturing anywhere got by in life by selling items on the side because often their salary would not have been paid for months. (Spoiler alert: a year later I did find a shop called LUXURY, which sold the white ski jacket pictured here. But these events happened pre-LUXURY.)

The coat was delivered in mid-December and much was made of the fact that the seamstress making it was obsessed with “Kreestmas” and wanted me to see this coat as a Kreestmas gift. [Christmas](#) is not celebrated in Russia – and certainly wasn’t during Soviet times. Instead, New Year’s Day is the time when gifts are exchanged. There was glamour and exoticism associated with Kreestmas. The questions about Deep Purple fell away and, instead, people asked about 25 December, turkeys, Father Kreestmas and Coca-Cola. There was great excitement about this coat being ready before Kreestmas; a whole group of people gathered for the unveiling.

As the coat emerged from its ceremonial glittery wrapping paper, well-meaning Russians beaming around me, I felt my face turn ashen. The coat was lavishly trimmed with what had once been several foxes. Because I was a “special foreigner”, they had decided, in the factory, to upgrade this coat by attaching multiple animal pelts to it – a generous festive gift.

Everyone oohed and aahed and wanted to take pictures of me wearing what was an entire zoo of dead animals. Obviously I didn't want to be rude, but I could not accept a coat with dead fox draped all around the edges of it.

At that moment, I finally became an adult. I was 20. I was not used to saying no or speaking up. I got by at that time by nodding a lot, and looking things up in a dictionary later. Now, I realised I had no choice but to be rude to people, disappoint them and possibly make them very angry.

My friend's mother – an extraordinarily beautiful and sensitive woman – cooed words of encouragement about the beauty of the coat and the workmanship. She was doing this to flatter the woman who was delivering it: she could see from my face what I was about to do and she was trying to soften the blow.

I took a deep breath and mustered the best Russian I could to explain that obviously the coat was the most beautiful thing in the entire universe but it would be socially unacceptable to wear it at home in the UK because my people are ignorant and do not appreciate such beauty. (I know. But this would just not have been the moment to explain [Peta](#).)

I think I may have managed to shed a tear. There were gasps, murmurs of disappointment, expressions of disbelief. But, in a precursor to events that would unfold 30 years later, it took about two seconds for everyone to accept the idea that foreigners are profoundly stupid and don't understand or appreciate anything whatsoever. One person murmured that they had seen an item on the news once about protesters in New York who threw paint at people who were wearing fur coats. They had not believed it until now. Because imagine how crazy that would be! There was a lot of tutting. The coat was furled back up into its elaborate packaging with heavy sighs.

It was returned to me a week later, stripped of all animal parts, the package bound in brown paper and string, as if to say: "You wanted something drab and unobjectionable? Well, this is what you asked for. Merry Kreestmas."

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2022.12.26 - Opinion

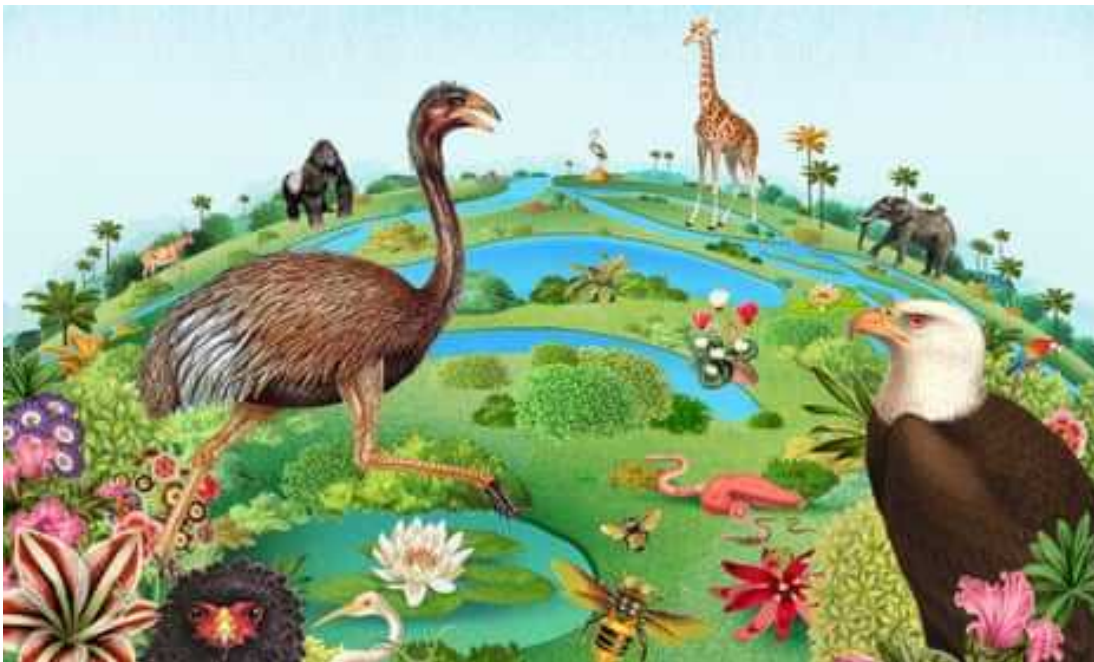
- 2022: the year rewilding went mainstream – and a biodiversity deal gave the world hope
- I felt excluded by football's homophobic lad culture – until I found an LGBT fan group
- What did I achieve in 2022? Erm, let me get back to you on that one
- The winter world may seem gloomy – but look closely, and you'll see nature casting a spell

[The age of extinction](#)[Biodiversity](#)

2022: the year rewilding went mainstream – and a biodiversity deal gave the world hope

[Max Benato](#)

Cop15's long-awaited agreement will be closely watched, says the Guardian's biodiversity editor, but it was by no means the only positive nature news, despite the heartbreaking ravages of avian flu



Rewilding came to the fore in 2022, with projects happening across the globe. Illustration: Valero Doval/The Guardian

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[About this content](#)

Mon 26 Dec 2022 02.00 EST

After 12 years, two years of Covid-related delays and two weeks of intense negotiation in Montreal, the world finally got its [once-in-a-decade deal](#) to halt the destruction of nature. Many lauded this month's agreement at [Cop15](#) in Montreal as "historic"; many are hopeful that its ambition can be achieved; and many are concerned about whether action will meet words: not one of the last set of targets, [set in Japan in 2010](#), was met in full.

But the fact that nearly 200 countries were able to sign off on an international agreement to halt the loss of biodiversity is something to applaud. Few thought it would happen. Now it is all about the implementation. With an estimated 1 million species at risk of extinction and a [69% average plunge in wildlife populations](#) between 1970 and 2018, we must not "pause for a second", warned the UN's environment chief, [Inger Andersen](#).

"We need to change the relationship between people and nature. And if we are honest, time is not on our side," Andersen said in Montreal. "We've backed nature into a corner and it's time to ease the pressure. We also know

it is a remarkable thing and nature is very forgiving. If we give it half a chance, it will bounce back.

“Let’s not pause for a second. Embrace the history we have made in Montreal and let’s get down to the business of delivering the framework.”

Away from Cop15, rewilding came to the fore in 2022, with projects across the globe, from the [reintroduction of bison](#) and [cluster rewilding](#) in the UK to [big ambitions in Argentina](#), [lessons learned](#) in the Netherlands and [the US](#), and the 10th [Rewilding Europe](#) project launched. [Leonardo DiCaprio](#) and [Ellie Goulding](#) were two celebrities who expressed their support for the movement during the Age of Extinction’s [Wild world](#) project.

As we enter 2023, many are gaining inspiration from the past, with an uptick in [regenerative farming](#), the return of ancient crops such as [buckwheat](#) and [Welsh oats](#), and the harnessing of [ancient irrigation systems](#). Others are looking forward, taking innovative steps in conservation, including [collecting fog](#), [turning bus stops into homes for pollinators](#) and utilising [artificial intelligence](#).

Target 6 of the new Kunming-Montreal agreement at Cop15 is to “eliminate, minimise, reduce and/or mitigate the impacts of invasive alien species on biodiversity and ecosystem services”. In Germany, [marbled crayfish](#) have invaded lakes and rivers, while [snakes threaten the wall lizard](#) on Ibiza and disease is [blighting oranges](#) in mainland Spain. But the [success of eradication measures](#) on islands from the [Pacific](#) to the Scillies shows what can be done.

We shone a light on the work of conservation in protecting species, including the [US larch](#), [ospreys](#) in the UK and [caribou](#) in Canada, and reported on the [euphoria](#), [unexpected moments](#), and [special privilege](#) of rediscovering species feared extinct in our [Lost and found series](#). There were also many stories of individual efforts to protect wildlife, including that of the former Weetabix salesman who [has made homes for 60,000 swifts](#) in the UK and the “[winterkeeper](#)” of [Yellowstone park](#) who has observed nearly 50 years of climate change impact on his watch. Keen gardeners [brought a flavour of the Caribbean](#) to London and [a spot of colour](#) to the city’s underground stations.

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The news wasn't all good, perhaps the most devastating was the global loss of a huge number of wild birds, with northern gannets, pelicans, skua and members of myriad other species dying from avian flu. [“It’s just the scale of it which is hard to grasp.”](#) Gwen Potter, a UK National Trust countryside manager working on the Farne Islands, off the coast of Northumberland, told the Guardian.

[Humanity’s track record](#) on its treatment of the natural world is not good. But perhaps the agreement achieved at Cop15 can give us hope that we are ready to start to turn the tide and that 2023 will see concerted efforts to halt the loss of biodiversity.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/dec/26/2022-the-year-rewilding-went-mainstream-and-a-biodiversity-deal-gave-the-world-hope>

[Snapshot of 2022West Ham United](#)

I felt excluded by football's homophobic lad culture – until I found an LGBT fan group

[Luke Turner](#)

For years my bisexual identity and the love of West Ham I shared with my dad seemed irreconcilable. But Pride of Irons changed that



‘At the London Stadium in front of the Pride of Irons banner I felt as sure of who I am as I have ever been.’ Photograph: Luke Turner/The Guardian

Mon 26 Dec 2022 02.00 ESTLast modified on Mon 26 Dec 2022 10.14 EST

Like many of those similarly afflicted, I don't know West Ham without my dad, or my dad without West Ham. My earliest memories of Saturday afternoons are of crackling football commentary on a transistor radio, as his tea cooled in a 70s brown and orange mug – a familiar place of safety and

happiness. Like our shared big noses, my support for West Ham wasn't something I could really choose of my own free will.

As a teenager I was still listening to matches on the radio while I did my homework, but gradually the emotional pull of football waned. The son of one of mum's best friends, who was the same age as me, was murdered in an incident connected to Scottish football sectarianism. I rolled my eyes at the naff jingoism surrounding the 1996 European Championships. Above all, the sport seemed at odds with my growing confusion about my sexuality. During the 1990s, it was a pillar of the homophobic lad culture that I encountered at school, in the media, on the stands when dad and I went to Upton Park, and in the brutal treatment of the gay footballer Justin Fashanu, who died by suicide in 1998. I felt excluded from football, and music took over as my life's passion.

Over the years, however, I couldn't keep my love of West Ham down. I kept track of the Hammers' (mis)fortunes and watched the occasional game. I was an out bisexual male and closet football fan.

This all changed when, a few years ago, I found West Ham's LGBT+ fan group, [Pride of Irons](#). Made up of members who are gay, lesbian, trans, bisexual, non-binary and straight too, it provides a space that offers the rest of society a lesson in how to get through thorny issues with dialogue, humour and acceptance. Whether or not people have boycotted the Qatar World Cup, for instance, has been approached without judgment. I don't get to go to pre-and-post match meet-ups as often as I'd like, but the 2019 Pride march in London, riding in a bus accompanied by West Ham's Hammerhead mascot, was a total hoot, and the Pride of Irons WhatsApp group is the only one I haven't left.

When my son was born in late January 2022, I was surprised that for the first time in years I felt confused about my identity. I was a new dad in a monogamous relationship with a member of the opposite sex. What could be "straighter" than that? Was I letting everyone else down? Bisexual people are frequently erased from the LGBT+ community and I'd grown up with prejudice from gay men as much as I had from the straight world. Would Pride of Irons be accepting?

On a Saturday morning in February I left my boy snuffling in his mum's arms to go and stand in the cold outside the London Stadium as part of a Pride of Irons protest in light of the new Saudi owners of Newcastle United, who West Ham were playing that afternoon. We practised unfurling banners for the cameras as we kept our eyes open for the arrival of the Newcastle team, with a few false alarms as their supporter coaches drove past in a blur of "wanker" fists.

One of the other POI members congratulated me on having a baby, asked how it was all going, and why I hadn't mentioned anything to the rest of the group. I explained my insecurities. He told me I was being daft, spoke about his own kids, and said that I was as welcome or valid as anyone else. Of all the pieces of encouragement anyone has given me over the past 10 months since my son was born, this has meant the most. The next week, when my mate Grant gave me his spare birthday present ticket to the fancy seats for a solid 1-0 win over Wolves, he took this photo of me in front of the Pride of Irons banner at the London Stadium, feeling as sure of who I am as I have ever been.

I often croon the [club song](#), I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles, to my boy as a soothing lullaby: "... fortune's always hiding, I've looked everywhere". It's probably for the best to get him used to it early. If his dad and grandad have now endured over a half century of disappointment then I am afraid it's his destiny too, whoever he turns out to be.

- Luke Turner's second book, *Men at War: Loving, Lusting, Fighting, Remembering 1939-1945*, is out next year
- ***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](#)Life and style

What did I achieve in 2022? Erm, let me get back to you on that one

[Arwa Mahdawi](#)



What healthy habits did I take up in 2022? I'm racking my brain, searching for scraps of self-improvement, but I've had a hard time finding any



‘I had good intentions at the beginning of the year, like we all do.’
Photograph: AaronAmat/Getty Images/iStockphoto

Mon 26 Dec 2022 00.00 ESTLast modified on Mon 26 Dec 2022 03.20 EST

It’s humblebragging season. Around this time of year newspapers are stuffed to the brim with articles about what so-and-so achieved in 2022 and what they hope to achieve in 2023. They read a book a day! They gave up alcohol! They gave up social media! They took up [wild swimming](#)!

Me? I did none of those things. Especially not wild swimming, which is a peculiarly British obsession. There’s nothing Brits love more than turning something objectively miserable into a hobby. Long muddy walks, beans on toast, swimming in freezing cold lakes: if it’s damp and vaguely masochistic, Brits are all over it.

So what healthy habits did I take up in 2022? Good question. I’ve been racking my brain, searching for scraps of self-improvement I can tell everyone about, but I’ve been having a hard time finding any.

This wasn’t on purpose, mind you. I had good intentions at the beginning of the year, like we all do. I was planning on doing lots of yoga and pilates. I thought I’d read important books on important things like monetary policy

and physics. Somehow, though, I seemed to spend the bulk of my free time watching Netflix. That's OK, though: one good thing about the modern world is that you can always rebrand laziness as *self-care*, which sounds a lot more respectable.

And, in my defence, I wasn't completely lazy. I went to a few yoga classes, but they were the sort of yoga classes where people go "Ohmmmm" and breathe out really hard and I managed to get sick after every one of those classes.

When the yogis and their heavy breathing weren't making me sick, my toddler was. My child has officially reached disease-vector age: she goes to daycare, where she mixes with other snot-drenched children, and is constantly doing the most unhygienic things her weird little toddler mind can come up with. The other day she licked the playground. We were just at the playground, hanging out, and she decided to lick the slide and then – while I was still in shock – the swing. This did not turn out well for anyone.

As well as getting sick more times than I ever have in my life, I ticked off a couple of other dubious life achievements this year. I bought a house at what was probably the very top of the housing market, for example. Well done, me! That house, by the way, came with a lot of stairs, which was quite a novelty after years of apartment living. If you combine stairs with absentmindedness then you end up getting a ton of exercise just racing up and down trying to find your keys or your phone or your toddler. Who needs yoga when you've got stairs, eh?

The one problem with stairs is that they can be pretty lethal. I've always thought that if I die an untimely death it would most likely be from tripping over my rat-sized dog (who refuses to walk in a straight line and zig-zags frenetically) or from eating too many [gummy vitamins](#). Now that I've managed to slip down my stairs twice already, however, I'm convinced I'm going to end up like Ivana Trump and be found dead at the bottom of my staircase one day. Just, you know, in a Philadelphia row house, not a Manhattan mansion. And hopefully my spouse won't [bury me on a golf course](#).

Anyway, I'm not trying to dampen the mood here. This column wasn't supposed to be about my untimely death at the bottom of a staircase, it was meant to be about how there is a lot of satisfaction to be had in small things. I may not have learned a new language or read 500 books in 2022, but you know what I did do? You know what I'm actually incredibly proud of? I fixed my kitchen cupboard. I watched a DIY YouTube video, bought some wood glue, felt a little lightheaded after inadvertently sniffing glue fumes, got out a drill and managed to fix my wobbly cupboard.

I then spent the next few months pitching my editors at the Guardian on a column about how I bravely overcame my fear of DIY. They all politely declined. Nevertheless, I persisted.

So there you go. There's my little inspirational message for everyone to carry into 2023: never give up on your dreams. Even if your dreams are just trying to convince someone at the Guardian to let you tell the world how you fixed your kitchen cupboard.

- Arwa Mahdawi is a Guardian columnist

[OpinionEnvironment](#)

The winter world may seem gloomy – but look closely, and you’ll see nature casting a spell

[Lucy Jones](#)

For less than a tenner, do as I do: buy a hand lens, head outside and discover fungi and moulds lighting up the darkness



‘In the woods, there will be much more fungi and even more colour: scarlet elf cup (above), orange witches’ butter, yellow stagshorn, green elf cup, blue roundheads.’ Photograph: fotoco-istock/Getty Images/iStockphoto

Mon 26 Dec 2022 03.00 ESTLast modified on Mon 26 Dec 2022 13.45 EST

The profound therapeutic benefits of connecting with nature and spending time outside are [well known](#). But in winter? When it’s cold, gloomy and everything looks dead? In fact, *especially* in the winter, when we are

susceptible to fatigue, illness and [seasonal low mood](#). And actually there is plenty of life, beauty and wonder right outside our doors, if we look closely.

Come and take a short walk with me in my nearest wild patch – an urban cemetery, a common environment across the British Isles.

It takes a while to persuade my young children into their outdoor paraphernalia, but we are all a bit frazzled, and I know a walk will help, even if it's just for 10 minutes.

The cemetery is quiet and still. At first glance, it seems life is suspended. I look at the synaptic branches of the brittle trees – beech, yew, maple, larch. A friend told me the bare trees remind her to breathe deeper. Since then, I've seen the wintry trees as lungs; I take a deep breath.

Red kites soar high above us and blackbirds rummage around the ivy looking for something to eat. We pause to look at the globular clusters of the fruits. Navy spheres. My eye is caught by the red, orange, yellow of berries that glow in the winter hush.



‘Wet weather makes for particularly juicy moss.’ Water droplets on moss on a wall. Photograph: Niall Carson/PA

A brick wall festooned with moss and lichen is our first destination. If you only associate psychedelic green with spring, forget it. Moss is neon Kryptonite throughout the year. If you look closely you'll see emerging sporophytes. Wet weather makes for particularly juicy moss. Alongside the pincushion mosses are the jade-green pixie cups of *Cladonia* lichen. I could look at these goblet-like structures for a while, contemplating the wonder of symbiosis, but the toddler is running away.

Why do we love circles? Research suggests that from birth we are hardwired to prefer rounded shapes (presumably because they are the shape of eyes and nipples). A [study of brain activity](#) by neuroscientists at Bar-Ilan University in Israel found that sharp-cornered, angular shapes trigger more activity in the amygdala, an area of the brain associated with fear and anxiety. The pleasure of looking at circles in nature may be an ancient cellular response.

I break off a small piece of pine and sniff the sap. I won't have long today to take in the phytoncides – the chemicals emitted by trees – which studies show can have [measurable effects on our health](#), but the sharp-sweet aroma brings me into my body.

In the middle of the cemetery, which is in the centre of town, next to a busy train station and shopping centre, lives an awe-inspiring being: *Myxomycetes*, or slime mould. I've been tracking a large plasmodium – the bright yellow slime in its creeping, predating, animal-like form – for a while. It moves around the logs surprisingly fast until it transforms part of itself into a completely different organism: exquisite fruiting bodies with iridescent outer layers and gold-thread cords. This species – *Badhamia utricularis* – is common and easy to spot. A torch helps, as well as no shame about lying on the floor with your head in some logs.



‘You won’t believe how exquisite slime moulds are.’ Photograph: Alastair Hotchkiss/Woodland Trust/PA

I get out my hand lens, quickly – the kids are cold – and spy more slime moulds that are surviving. I spy a colony – a shimmering? A ghost buster? The collective noun is not yet agreed, but these are some of the best suggestions from an online forum I’m part of – of brown fruiting bodies on stalks, which resemble a forest of tiny chocolate lollipops. Honestly, you won’t believe how exquisite slime moulds are. Look up Barry Webb’s amazing photography [on his website](#). The world is full of them! But you’ll need a hand lens, or jewellery loupe, which is well worth getting if you like having your mind blown daily. This kind of awe isn’t simply nice, it’s good for our health: [a study](#) from the University of Toronto found that the emotion of awe promotes healthier levels of cytokines (proteins important in maintaining our immune system).

We touch the sticky toffee buds of the horse chestnut tree and I have another look at the moss on the brick wall. A red velvet mite! A hand lens allows me to see more of the interconnections and interactions around us. It teaches me how limited my perception and ways of seeing are, and how much I have to learn and discover. It turns this urban park into a rainforest or jungle. For less than a tenner (my hand lens cost about £7).

On the way home, we stroke candlesnuff fungus and watch clouds of spores puff like a magic trick. In the woods, there will be much more fungi – round, whoopee cushion puff balls to tap – and even more colour: scarlet elf cup, orange witches’ butter, yellow stagshorn, green elf cup, blue roundheads, purple jellydisc fungus.

Almost home, I grab a rose hip outside the back door. Tangy, free and full of vitamin C. Choose a slightly darker red, squidgy one and squeeze the orange goo directly into your mouth (don’t eat the seeds, which are covered in hairs that can irritate). Delicious. The kids’ pockets are full of treasures and we all return to the house less irritable and restless.

I walk to balance my nervous system, reduce inflammation, quieten rumination. But, in this liminal space – in both the season and our afflicted world – there is also a sense outdoors of a pause and meaning that can’t be measured in a lab. We can patch ourselves into the vast communion of life, and witness processes of change and transformation that might restore our equilibrium, offer us resilience and, even in the depths of winter, show us the wonder of the world.

- Lucy Jones is author of *Losing Eden* and *The Nature Seed*

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2022.12.26 - Around the world

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- [Rohingya 'Very weak' refugees land on Indonesia beach after weeks at sea](#)
- [Austria avalanche 10 missing skiers found alive, four of them injured](#)
- ['Miracles and heartbreak' Saving orphaned elephants as Kenya's drought devastates herds](#)
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Heavy snow in Japan kills at least 17

Many deaths caused by people falling from roofs or being buried underneath thick piles of snow sliding off rooftops

Heavy snow causes deaths and power outages in Japan – video report

Associated Press

Mon 26 Dec 2022 02.13 ESTLast modified on Mon 26 Dec 2022 15.42 EST

Heavy snow in large parts of [Japan](#) has killed 17 people and injured more than 90 while leaving hundreds of homes without power, disaster management officials have said.

Powerful winter fronts have dumped heavy snow in northern regions since last week, stranding hundreds of vehicles on highways, delaying delivery services and causing 11 deaths by Saturday.

More snowfall over the Christmas weekend brought the number of dead to 17 and injured to 93 by Monday morning, according to the disaster management agency.

Many of them had fallen while removing snow from roofs or were buried underneath thick piles of snow that slid off rooftops.

Municipal offices urged residents to use caution when removing snow and not to work alone.

The disaster management agency said a woman in her 70s was found dead buried underneath a thick pile of rooftop snow that suddenly fell on her in Yamagata prefecture's Nagai city, about 300km (180 miles) north of Tokyo, where snow piled up higher than 80cm (2.6 feet) on Saturday.

Many parts of north-eastern Japan reported three times their average snowfall for the season.

Heavy snow knocked down an electric power transmission tower in Japan's northernmost main island, leaving about 20,000 homes without power on Christmas morning, though electricity was restored in most areas later that day, according to the economy and industry ministry.

Dozens of trains and flights were suspended in northern Japan through Sunday, but services had since mostly resumed, according to the transportation ministry.

In Niigata, known for rice growing, some makers of mochi – sticky rice cakes that are staple for new year celebration meals – said there were delivery delays and their mochi may not reach customers in time.

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[Rohingya](#)

About 180 Rohingya refugees feared dead after boat goes missing

Contact lost for weeks with vessel that left camps in Bangladesh and was crossing Andaman Sea bound for Malaysia



Noor Fatema, five, and Umme Mah, three, who were on the boat bound for Malaysia with their mother, Ayesha Khatoon. Photograph: Family

[Hannah Ellis-Petersen](#) and [Shaikh Azizur Rahman](#)

Tue 27 Dec 2022 00.44 ESTFirst published on Mon 26 Dec 2022 00.01 EST

About 180 Rohingya refugees are feared to have died after their boat went missing in the Andaman Sea, making 2022 one of the deadliest years for the refugees trying to flee the camps in [Bangladesh](#).

In a statement on Sunday, the United Nations said it was concerned that a boat carrying the refugees, which had left the camps in the Bangladeshi city of Cox's Bazar on 2 December bound for [Malaysia](#), had sunk with no

survivors, which would make it one of the worst disasters for Rohingya sea crossings this year.

Another boat carrying nearly 200 Rohingya refugees, which had been adrift for more than a month as they tried to reach Malaysia, washed up in the Indonesian island of Aceh on Monday afternoon.

According to relatives of those on board, at least 20 people had died during the crossing. Mohammed Rezuwan Khan, the brother of one of the women onboard, said he had spoken to his sister and confirmed his five-year-old niece was also alive.

Khan said his sister had relayed the traumatic conditions on board the boat, which had been without food and water for weeks. “She told me that nineteen of them jumped into the sea after they saw another passing boat as they thought that boat would rescue them,” said Khan. “But that boat did not help them, and they were swept away by the strong current. They had no food and drinking water and one of the children died after drinking seawater for two days.”

A separate group of 58 male [Rohingya](#) refugees were pulled ashore by locals in Aceh on Sunday. The boat had set sail for Malaysia but had run into trouble, and the rescued refugees were “very sick” and “very weak from hunger and dehydration”, according to the local police chief Rolly Yuiza Away.

Relatives of those onboard the still missing boat said they had lost contact with the boat on 8 December and had little hope left that any were still alive. Mohammad Noman, who lives in the Rohingya refugee camp in Cox’s Bazar, described how his sister Ayesha Khatoon had boarded the boat with her two daughters, aged five and three, with a dream to reunite with her husband in Malaysia.

“Since the boat left Bangladesh on December 2, every day we called up the boat two or three times on the boatman’s satellite phone to find out if my sister and her two daughters were all right,” he said. “Since December 8, I have failed to get access to that phone.”

He added: “I know some other people in Cox’s Bazar who made phone calls to the boat every day and stayed in contact with their relatives there. None of them has succeeded to reach the phone after 8 December.”

Kefayatullah, the captain of another boat carrying Rohingya refugees that was rescued by the Sri Lankan coastguard earlier this month after it ran into trouble, said he saw the boat carrying the 180 refugees get caught up in high waves during a stormy night some time in the second week of December.

Kefayatullah said: “It was around 2am when a strong wind began blowing and big waves surfaced on the sea. Jamal’s [the captain] boat began swaying wildly, we could gauge from a flashlight they were pointing at us. After some time, we could not see the flashlight any more. We believe the boat drowned then.”

Noman described the devastation in his family at the realisation that the boat carrying his sister and nieces had probably sunk. “My mother has not eaten food for two days now. She is crying continually and fainting time and again,” he said.



A boat aground on Indra Patra beach in Ladong village, Aceh province, Indonesia, which arrived carrying dozens of Rohingya refugees. Photograph: Rahmat Mirza/AP

If the sinking of the boat is confirmed, it would bring the number of Rohingya refugees who have died on sea crossings to Malaysia in 2022 close to 400, one of the worst tolls in recent years, demonstrating the desperation of many of the Rohingya refugees to flee to a new life outside the camps in Bangladesh.

More than a million Rohingya Muslims are now living in the Cox's Bazar camps, where they fled after violence and persecution in Buddhist-majority [Myanmar](#). But they are living in increasingly prison-like conditions with little opportunity for education or livelihoods. Malaysia is a popular destination for Rohingya, especially for women who often travel there for arranged marriages, and human traffickers have a lucrative business organising regular boat crossings on rickety vessels, despite the high risks and hazards involved and the fact that many Rohingya face detention on their arrival in Malaysia.

In November, two boats carrying a total of 229 Rohingya on the way to Malaysia landed in the Aceh province, according to the UN refugee agency.

The UN special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Tom Andrews, last week urged governments in south and south-east Asia to act on the calls of distress from the Rohingya refugee boats.

“While many in the world are preparing to enjoy a holiday season and ring in a new year, boats bearing desperate Rohingya men, women and young children are setting off on perilous journeys in unseaworthy vessels,” Andrews said.

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[Austria](#)

Austria avalanche: 10 missing skiers found alive, four of them injured

Up to 10 people had been feared buried after incident between Zuers and Lech am Arlberg on Sunday

Moment avalanche sweeps over people skiing in Austria – video

Agencies

Sun 25 Dec 2022 21.40 ESTFirst published on Sun 25 Dec 2022 14.00 EST

Ten people initially feared buried under snow after an avalanche swept across ski trails in western [Austria](#) have been found, according to authorities.

Just before 1am on Monday, police confirmed all the missing had been accounted for, the Austria Press Agency [reported](#).

Authorities said four people were injured, including a partially buried man who was rescued and flown to Innsbruck regional hospital with serious injuries. The other six were not affected by the avalanche.

“It can be assumed that no more people are missing,” the statement said. Nevertheless, “a security search will be carried out on Monday for final clarification”.

The avalanche occurred on the 2,700-metre (9,000ft) Trittkopf mountain between Zuers and Lech am Arlberg, at about 3pm local time on Sunday. Local media reported that several helicopters and search teams were deployed soon afterwards.

About 200 people were involved in the search. Rescuers needed headlamps to continue searching after dark, the Austrian Press Agency said.

Lech/Zuers [markets itself](#) as “one of the best ski areas in the world” and a part of the cradle of Alpine skiing. The resort’s website said the ski area was closed as of 5pm on Sunday and that there would be an update on skiing at 8am on Monday. A spokesperson for the resort could not immediately be reached for comment.

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‘Miracles and heartbreak’: saving orphaned elephants as Kenya’s drought devastates herds



Elephants and zebras gather at the water troughs in the Tsavo conservation area during the drought in the northern and eastern parts of Kenya. Photograph: Sheldrick Wildlife Trust

Sheldrick Wildlife Trust is nursing record numbers of young animals back to health but as rains continue to fail, the vulnerable mammals face a challenging future

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[About this content](#)

[Lizzy Davies](#)

Mon 26 Dec 2022 02.30 EST

It had been a tricky shoot for Alvin Kaunda, a young Kenyan television reporter, but finally, after about 10 takes, he was managing to get through it. His subject: a heartfelt dispatch about the plight of elephants caught up in the drought. His backdrop: three dust-red, floppy-eared orphans chomping through the greenery of their Nairobi home.

For about 30 seconds, Kaunda spoke movingly about the impact of human activity on the ecosystem. Then it all started to go awry. First, a trunk appeared in the reporter's left ear, then on his head, then attached itself to his

nose, mistaking it, perhaps, for a spot of lunch. Kaunda, who had soldiered on heroically until this point, collapsed into giggles.

Very impressed with this reporter's professionalism. 😊
<https://t.co/zk3nAtwb4K>

— Keiko (@keikoinboston) [December 3, 2022](#)

The video, cannily released by the Kenyan Broadcasting Corporation, went viral within hours of hitting social media in November, with millions enjoying the reporter's encounter with four-year-old Kindani. But the heartwarming clip belied the poignancy of what he had been trying to report: the difficulties faced by Kenya's elephant population amid the worst drought in 40 years.



Kindani, the elephant who interrupted Alvin Kaunda during his television report from the Sheldrick Wildlife Trust's nursery for orphans. Photograph: Sheldrick Wildlife Trust

“Herbivores are the most vulnerable to drought. However, no creature is more vulnerable than the elephant,” says Angela Sheldrick, head of the Sheldrick Wildlife Trust, from where Kaunda's video was shot.

“It is not so much a lack of water as a lack of food that presents a fatal challenge. Elephants are greedy feeders with a poor digestive system, with much passing through, so they must consume enormous quantities to sustain themselves. During a drought, food sources diminish or disappear altogether, which causes elephants to starve.”

For two years, the northern and eastern [parts of Kenya](#), along with much of the wider region, [notably Somalia](#) and [Ethiopia](#), have been struggling to cope with the cumulative impact of consecutive failed rainy seasons. The drought has forced millions of people from their homes and pushed people across the Horn of Africa into [hunger](#), destitution and death.

Alongside this slow-moving humanitarian catastrophe lies another crisis: the devastating impact on [local wildlife](#), as lack of water combines with more [conflict](#). On the plains of the southern part of the vast Tsavo conservation area in south-east Kenya, “the drought withered nearly all food sources and huge swathes were just bare earth”, recalls Sheldrick. Across the country, more than 200 elephants died due to the drought between February and November, according to the Kenyan wildlife service.

[The windpump on the Ndara plains, Tsavo: first rain then drought](#)

The area surrounding the windpump on the Ndara plains, Tsavo. It was green after rains but then stricken by drought.

There has since been some rain in Tsavo, but the storms have been isolated and “not adequate to see us through until the next rainy season”, Sheldrick says. If, as is feared, the December rains are poor, “we will face increasingly desperate times”.

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The Sheldrick Trust was founded by Angela's mother, conservationist Daphne Sheldrick, and has been rescuing orphaned elephants since 1977. A Kenyan of British descent, Daphne discovered that infant elephants could be nourished with formula containing coconut milk, a breakthrough that enabled her and her colleagues to nurse even the sickest orphans back to health.

Daphne – whose husband, David, was the first warden of Tsavo national park – [died in 2018](#), and their daughter has been CEO of the trust since 2001. This year, she says, the charity has rescued “an unprecedented number” of orphaned elephants from across Kenya – and more in the past two years than in the previous five – finding them in life-threatening conditions and flying them to safety.

“We have witnessed some great miracles; elephants who are as good as dead but manage to come back from the brink. These are the successes that galvanise us, for trying to rescue drought victims is too often a heartbreaking endeavour,” she says.



Elephants in Tsavo near the town of Voi, September 2022. Drought has claimed 109 elephants in the park, Kenya's largest, over the past year. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Sheldrick also attributes the increase in survivals to a “much more sympathetic approach” to conservation in Kenya. “Every day, people are doing their best to raise the alarm,” she says.

There was a time you could say that rains would fall in November and December but now, we can take nothing for granted

Angela Sheldrick

In times of drought, as available water sources begin to dry up, herds must move in search of sustenance, a coping strategy that is becoming increasingly difficult due to the fragmentation of ancient migratory corridors and the building of roads, railways and other developments. Add to this complex navigation the urgency of needing to move in order to survive, and the most vulnerable animals – the very young calves who are not yet strong enough to make the journeys – will not always survive.

That is where – for the lucky ones – conservationists come in. On the afternoon of 24 November 2021, for example, the Sheldrick Trust received a call from scouts in Taita who had spotted an infant elephant alone and in bad shape. It was presumed that, like many calves, Sagateisa had grown too weak to keep up with the herd.



Sagateisa was in poor condition before she was rescued and nursed back to health. Photograph: Sheldrick Wildlife Trust

“She was desperately ravaged by the drought, jutting bones encased in parchment skin ... Even her ears began to droop forward listlessly [when an elephant’s body condition is very poor, the ear cartilage collapses]. Banking on her survival seemed like a hope too far,” the Sheldrick [website says](#). However, survive she did. Angela Sheldrick even has her down as a potential future matriarch.

Sheldrick, 59, does not know what next year will bring: the climate crisis has robbed Kenyans of their confidence in weather patterns, of each year following a predictable ebb and flow. “There was a time you could say that rains would fall in November and December, and there would be no rain in January, but that has all changed now ... we can take nothing for granted,” she says. “We don’t know what lies ahead, but these next few weeks will define the next year.”

In the meantime, the phone will keep ringing, and the elephants will keep coming. To date the trust has successfully raised 316 orphans and seen more than 50 babies born to orphans that were rehabilitated and released back into the wild. “Stories like Sagateisa’s are unfolding every day,” says Sheldrick. “They impel us to always go the extra mile and never give up hope.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/dec/26/miracles-and-heartbreak-saving-orphaned-elephants-as-kenyas-drought-devastates-herds>

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Iran

Seven people with British links arrested in Iran over protests

UK Foreign Office is seeking further information about detainees, who include several dual nationals



A bulletin by Iran's state media claimed the detainees were leaders of the recent protests over the death of Mahsa Amini. Photograph: Wana News Agency/Reuters

[Nadeem Badshah](#)

Sun 25 Dec 2022 14.06 EST

Seven people with links to Britain have been arrested by Iran's Revolutionary Guards over anti-government protests that have snowballed across the country in recent months, according to reports.

The people arrested, some of whom are dual nationals, were detained while trying to leave Iran, according to Reuters, citing a statement published by state media.

The UK's Foreign Office is understood to be seeking further information from the Iranian authorities on reports that British-Iranian dual nationals have been arrested. The statement that was published in state media read: "Seven main leaders of the recent protests related to the UK were detained by intelligence services of the IRGC [Revolutionary Guards], including dual nationals, who were trying to leave the country."

The reported arrests follow [unrest triggered by the death in detention of Mahsa Amini](#) on 16 September. The 22-year-old Kurdish Iranian had been arrested for wearing "inappropriate attire" under Iran's Islamic dress code for women.

Witnesses said Amini was beaten while inside a police van when she was picked up in Tehran. Police have denied the allegations, saying she "suddenly suffered a heart problem".

The protests, in which demonstrators have called for the fall of Iran's ruling theocracy, have posed one of the biggest challenges to the Shia Muslim-ruled Islamic Republic since the 1979 revolution.

The government has blamed the unrest on demonstrators intent on the destruction of public property and has claimed they were trained and armed by the United States, Israel and Saudi Arabia.

Last week, Taraneh Alidoosti, one of Iran's most famous actors, was detained by security forces in Tehran days after she criticised the state's use of the death penalty on protesters.

The Tasnim news agency, which is close to the Islamic Revolutionary Guards, said she had been arrested due to her decision to publish false and distorted content that incited riots and supported anti-Iranian movements.

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