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Sunak says he wants more information before decision on Braverman's alleged breach of ministerial code – as it happened

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/live/2023/may/22/suella-braverman-rishi-sunak-speeding-row-ministerial-code-ethics-inquiry-keir-starmer-uk-politics-live>

Braverman says she regrets speeding but denies breaking ministerial code – video

[Suella Braverman](#)

‘Nothing untoward happened’ over speeding fine, says Braverman

Home secretary confirms she has accepted points on her licence but denies breaking ministerial code

[Peter Walker](#) *Deputy political editor*

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Mon 22 May 2023 08.02 EDTFirst published on Mon 22 May 2023 03.16 EDT

Suella Braverman has insisted that “nothing untoward happened” over claims she broke the ministerial code in allegedly asking civil servants to assist over a speeding fine.

Her comments came after No 10 confirmed [Rishi Sunak](#) has spoken to his ethics adviser over the issue, although no formal inquiry has yet begun.

Speaking on a visit to a charity on Monday morning, Braverman confirmed that she had accepted a fine and points on her licence for speeding last summer but denied any wrongdoing over the ministerial code.

“What I will say is that in my view I am confident that nothing untoward happened,” she said after being repeatedly pressed on the issue in a brief TV interview. She was later seen arriving at Downing Street.

A spokesperson for Sunak said the prime minister, who returned from the G7 summit in Japan overnight, had been “availing himself of the information” over reports Braverman broke rules by asking Home Office civil servants for special treatment [after she was caught speeding](#).

Sunak had spoken to Sir Laurie Magnus, his adviser on ministerial interests, the spokesperson said. However, it is understood the PM has not yet ordered Magnus to begin a formal investigation, something the adviser cannot do on his own.

“The prime minister is availing himself of all the information,” the No 10 spokesperson said. “I obviously wouldn’t get into specific conversations. The prime minister, as you would expect, is in regular conversation with the home secretary. If anything changes or I can provide an update, I will.”

In a development first reported by the Sunday Times and the Mail on Sunday, it was alleged that Braverman sought help from Home Office civil servants to try to avoid attending an in-person speed-awareness course after being caught speeding, or doing an online course where her name and face would be visible to other participants.

Suella Braverman 'time and again tries to think she's above the normal rules', says Labour – video

Braverman [was sacked](#) during her first stint as home secretary, under Liz Truss, because she sent an official document from her personal email to a fellow MP, a breach of ministerial rules.

Speaking earlier, [Keir Starmer](#) said Sunak must immediately begin a formal investigation into whether Braverman broke the ministerial code, and that she should leave her job if it finds that she did.

“The prime minister needs to launch an investigation into this. I think he’s said he’s going to see his ethics adviser today, to have a meeting with him. What he needs to do – what I would do – is to say to that adviser: you need to investigate this,” the [Labour](#) leader told BBC1’s Breakfast programme.

“From what we know, it looks as if inappropriate action took place from the home secretary that needs to be fully investigated. And I think that’s what many people are expecting from the prime minister this morning.

“The ministerial code is pretty clear that if you break it, you’re supposed to go. But I don’t want to get ahead of myself. I don’t know all the facts. I

don't think anybody knows all of the facts. It looks as if some of the facts are still emerging. So the right thing to do is a proper investigation.”

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Pressed on whether Braverman should leave her job if she was found to have breached the ministerial code, Starmer said this was the case.

“The prime minister did stand outside Downing Street when he became prime minister and say that he was going to bring about change, much-needed change, under this government and have accountability, honesty and transparency,” he said.

“An investigation obviously comes first and then it’ll be up to the prime minister to take appropriate action, but the usual consequence of breaching the code is, of course, that you go.”

Dave Penman, the head of the FDA union, which represents senior civil servants, rejected the idea that Braverman was being targeted by officials. “This is about ministerial misconduct. It’s not about anyone coming for anyone,” he told Sky News.

If Braverman had sought officials’ help over the speeding fine, Penman said, it would appear to have breached the code. “The ministerial code is

clear that you have to separate out your private interests as a minister from your public duties, including the perception of any conflict in that,” he said.

“A speeding fine is an entirely personal matter, so if she’s asked civil servants to intervene in any way on that, that would be a breach of the ministerial code.”

A finding that she had broken the rules would not necessarily mean she had to step down, he added: “The ministerial code allows for a rap across the knuckles, or potentially resignation. It depends what she is found to have done.”

Separately, the Mirror [reported on Monday](#) that Braverman’s special adviser, a political appointee rather than a civil servant, told the paper six weeks ago that it was “nonsense” the home secretary had been caught speeding.

The adviser denied this four times, calling the claims “scurrilous” rumours, according to what the paper said was a transcript of the exchanges.

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Suella Braverman needs to be told ‘she is either a team player or a backbencher’, says one Tory MP. Photograph: Tom Nicholson/Shutterstock

[Suella Braverman](#)

[Analysis](#)

A second reprieve for Suella Braverman could be a tall order

[Pippa Crerar](#) Political editor

Home secretary has won little good will from colleagues since she was last – briefly – forced from office

Sun 21 May 2023 15.41 EDTLast modified on Sun 21 May 2023 16.28 EDT

When Suella Braverman’s career as home secretary was last on the ropes – for sending an official document from her personal email in a serious breach of the rules – she received little support from cabinet ministers. “She’s a joke,” one said at the time. “She shouldn’t be anywhere near high office.”

Yet within six days she was back in the job, after Rishi Sunak calculated that it was worth reinstating the leading rightwinger to the [Home Office](#) to win her support for the Tory leadership bid which brought him to No 10.

It has not been a smooth path. Within days of being back at the Home Office, she was fighting for her job for a second time after [she was accused – and denied – ignoring legal advice](#) on keeping asylum seekers at the overcrowded Manston immigration centre in Kent.

As she battled for her survival in the Commons, she angered critics, as well as some on her own side, with her incendiary claim that asylum seekers crossing the Channel in dinghies constituted an “invasion of our southern coast”.

She also bemoaned a “broken” system which meant that “illegal migration is out of control”, with no acknowledgment of who had been running the country over the previous 13 years.

The following months brought more hard rhetoric on immigration, as the government’s headline bill made its way through parliament, and [a trip to Rwanda](#) where she made an off-colour joke that she was so impressed by the decor of the homes being built for asylum seekers deported from the UK that she could use the interior designer.

Yet migrants aren’t the only ones caught up in Braverman’s culture war: environmental protesters, human rights activists and equal rights campaigners have all been in her sights too.

The passage of time, and seven months back in the job, has done little to ease frustration towards the home secretary among her Conservative colleagues.

Just last week, despairing Tory MPs accused her of undermining Sunak’s authority and making a bid for the future leadership of the party with [a partisan speech at the NatCon conference](#). Tory MPs privately condemned her. “Rishi needs to make it clear to her that she is either a team player or a backbencher,” said one.

The latest row over whether she broke the ministerial code by [requesting a private speeding awareness course](#) is seen as a spectacular own goal – with several MPs saying she would deserve her fate if it costs her her job for a second time.

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Even Downing Street insiders now may be starting to go cool, with one telling the Guardian there is [“no appetite” in No 10 to defend the home secretary](#) and Sunak himself stopping short of saying he had full confidence in her.

This failure to give Braverman the benefit of the doubt on the speeding course row is in stark contrast to Sunak’s apparent determination to stand by other beleaguered ministers, including his former deputy prime minister, Dominic Raab, until the very end.

“It’s all about delivery,” says one Tory insider. “If she can get net migration down and start getting to grips with the small boats crisis, then she’ll prove her detractors wrong. But does anybody really think either of those are possible?”

In the meantime, the judgment of Sunak, who by now is surely regretting promising “integrity, professionalism and accountability” at every level of

government when he took office, is once again under question.

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Suella Braverman reportedly wanted to get out of the Commons vote so she could attend a police station for a photo opportunity. Photograph: Wiktor Szymanowicz/Shutterstock

[Suella Braverman](#)

Suella Braverman ‘tried to get out of final vote on small boats bill’

Exclusive: Home secretary’s aides repeatedly requested she be allowed to miss vote on major legislation despite three-line whip

[Pippa Crerar](#) *Political editor*

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Sun 21 May 2023 13.35 EDTFirst published on Sun 21 May 2023 13.00 EDT

Suella Braverman tried to get out of the final Commons vote on the government’s small boats bill despite Conservative MPs being instructed to attend, the Guardian has learned.

The home secretary's aides sent multiple emails over the course of several days to the Tory whips' office requesting that she be "slipped", or permitted to miss, the third reading of [her department's flagship legislation](#).

Sources said the chief whip, Simon Hart, eventually had to call Braverman directly to instruct her to attend the vote on the illegal migration bill, which had a three-line whip. They claimed that Braverman had wanted to visit a police station instead.

One Tory insider said: "The chief is at his wit's end with Suella. She just thinks she can do what she wants. Her office was really hassling the whips' admin team to allow her to miss the third reading vote for what appeared to be a picture opportunity."

Rishi Sunak is facing [growing pressure over the government's handling of migration](#), with the Office for National Statistics publishing data on Thursday which is expected to show that net legal migration has risen from 500,000 and hit an all-time high.

On his final day at the G7 summit of world leaders in Japan, Sunak said that he thought overall migration numbers were "too high" and insisted he was "committed to bringing them down".

But he said that his main focus was on curbing the much smaller numbers of people arriving illegally in small boats across the Channel, which the illegal migration bill was designed to do.

Braverman's attempt to miss the vote is likely to further anger Tory MPs who are already despairing over the home secretary's apparent leadership pitch at the [controversial NatCon conference last week](#), as well as her inflammatory rhetoric around migration.

Braverman visited Northamptonshire to highlight the government's police recruitment programme, and made it back in time for the vote. A source close to the home secretary said: "This is a load of drivel." The Conservative whips' office declined to comment.

Being slipped, or pairing, is a longstanding convention in the Commons where the whips of the government and an opposition party agree to allow MPs from one side to miss a vote because of personal reasons or official business.

Separately, the prime minister is under pressure to launch an investigation by his ethics adviser into whether Braverman broke the ministerial code by asking Home Office civil servants [for special treatment over a speeding fine](#).

Sunak also faces claims by former home secretary Priti Patel that he refused an official request for money to speed up asylum processing while he was chancellor, casting doubts on his commitment to getting to grips with the broken system.

Patel, an ally of Boris Johnson, accused the prime minister of taking a “sticking plaster” approach to clearing the backlog of 92,601 asylum cases submitted before June 2022 by the end of this year, adding that it was “too late” to make a substantial difference.

In an interview with the Inside Whitehall podcast, Patel claimed that Sunak had turned down a Home Office request to fund the digitalisation of claims which are largely paper-based. These are slower to process and contributed to the current backlog.

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“In 2021, we asked the Treasury for money to reform the asylum processing system. It was completely rejected by the way. We said if you don’t do this you’re going to end up spending more money basically, because it will take longer to process the cases,” Patel said.

“The whole system is still very paper based and it was a labour of love to try and persuade the Treasury to give that money. So now they announce resources and it’s a sticking plaster and too late.”

Patel also claimed that much of the Nationality and Borders Act, passed while Johnson was still prime minister, had yet to be enacted, adding that “everybody tried to airbrush the significance of that bill”.

Sunak last week set a new goal of bringing migration down below the level he “inherited” as prime minister, which was about 500,000 net arrivals a year. Braverman had previously said she believed net arrivals should be under 100,000 a year.

The prime minister has made the difficult task of stopping small boat crossings a central mission of his government. “I think illegal migration is undoubtedly the country’s priority, and you can see all the work I’m putting in to that,” he said.

A No 10 source said: “As chancellor, the prime minister put over £3bn of investment into the UK’s asylum system, including an additional £85m per year to improve the asylum case-working system and strengthening border security. As prime minister, he has put an unprecedented focus on curbing illegal migration and stopping the boats – making it one of his five top priorities.”

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‘It’s difficult to admit that something as natural as fatherhood has been so hard for you.’ Illustration: Sarah Tanat-Jones/The Guardian

[Postnatal depression](#)

**‘I didn’t even know men could get it’:
the hidden impact of male postnatal**

depression

Postnatal depression affects up to 15% of new mothers, but studies suggest almost as many fathers also show symptoms – and little is being done to help them



[Ammar Kalia](#)

Mon 22 May 2023 05.00 EDT

Seventy hours into the birth of his first child, Lewis was told that his wife needed to be rushed into surgery for an emergency C-section. The pregnancy had been straightforward and full of nervous excitement, but, as crisis presented itself, Lewis found himself unprepared.

“I still can’t talk about it properly now, five years on,” the 35-year-old says. “It was horrific. I didn’t know what was going on and I couldn’t do anything except stand by and watch as my wife and my baby’s lives were potentially in danger. The whole thing was a blur, but it felt like it would go on for ever.”

An hour or so later, his son was delivered. His wife was fine and the baby was healthy. Yet the memory of the traumatic birth kept replaying in Lewis's mind, long after the family returned home. "My wife was still recovering from major surgery, so I was left alone with my child, but I didn't feel that special connection that everyone talks about," he says. "I just wanted to make sure my wife was OK. My baby became something I had to deal with."

Lewis found himself going through the motions of parenting – sleeping fitfully each night, changing nappies constantly, looking on while mother and child bonded through breastfeeding – but he struggled to connect with his child. He began to feel deeply sad, as if there might be something wrong with him; so many other new fathers seemed enamoured of their babies.



'It felt like there was no escape.' Photograph: Justin Paget/Getty Images (posed by models)

As he later found out, he was experiencing the symptoms of [postnatal depression](#) (PND), which remains largely unexplored in men. PND is well established as a mood disorder that affects women, with between [10% and 15% of mothers](#) thought to experience it. In the UK, new mothers are monitored for PND during routine NHS health visits. New fathers,

however, have no access to standardised care or routine checkups on the NHS, despite research finding that [up to 10% of them](#) exhibit symptoms.

“Both parents are equally susceptible to mental health challenges during and after birth,” says Dr Sharin Baldwin, the clinical academic lead for nursing at the London north west university healthcare NHS trust. “Recent years have seen caring responsibilities become shared and there is an expectation that dads need to be more involved. That combination can create more pressure on men who want to be good dads, but might feel as if they’re not good enough or that they can’t burden their partners with their own worries.”

Baldwin, a health visitor, is one of the few researchers to study the prevalence of postnatal depression in men. Her interest in the topic began when her husband told her how he felt excluded by child health services after the birth of their first child, with each piece of literature or help for infants seemingly naming only “mothers and babies”. She began a three-part [New Dad Study](#) in 2016, interviewing 21 men from different ethnicities and backgrounds about their experiences of having children.

If men don’t have a social network within which they can talk or share their feelings, things can get worse

She found that a number of themes tied them together. “A lot of the men spoke about their exhaustion with having to go back to work and still care for their children when they were at home, as well as the difficulty in being separated from them,” she says. “There were also concerns raised about expectations not matching with reality, like dads being surprised that their partner might struggle with breastfeeding and then feeling as if they weren’t able to help. Ultimately, their issues might not feel as important as the birthing partner’s and so they often neglect their own needs.”

Lewis felt conflicted when he went back to work after two weeks of parental leave. “The office was really tiring, but I needed the break from being at home,” he says. “I felt so guilty when I got back, for missing out, as well as sometimes relieved. I didn’t want to make life harder for my wife by telling her.” Nonetheless, she noticed his apathy and his fluctuating

mood; she encouraged him to seek help. “She told me that if I didn’t sort this out now it would affect our son’s life and our relationship,” he says. “She didn’t want me to work myself to the bone and not be present any more.”

After being put on a waiting list for NHS counselling, Lewis decided to pay for private sessions so that he could start immediately. “A few months in, I began to make sense of my feelings and realise that the birth had been hard for both of us,” he says. “It really helped being able to talk about it and the weight lifted. I could begin to feel unconditional love for my boy. I wish I had known earlier that, even though there might be a lack of connection initially, it would come.”

Baldwin says PND can affect men who have adopted children, as well as those in same-sex couples; there can be an expectation to parent without complaint after going through a lengthy adoption or [surrogacy process](#). “Support is really important,” she says. “If men don’t have a social network within which they can talk or share their feelings, they might feel cut off and then things can get worse.”

When James, 38, became a father, he felt extremely isolated. After he and his partner had gone through two unsuccessful rounds of IVF and begun to look into adoption, she became pregnant naturally in 2019 and gave birth to their “miracle baby” at the height of the Covid pandemic. “The lockdowns meant that we were almost entirely alone, which became really hard,” he says. “We had gone through so much to have a child and I was so excited for her arrival that I wasn’t expecting how tough it might be. I felt awful.”

Sleeping only four or five hours a night, James became deeply affected by his daughter’s screams, anticipating their arrival and sometimes hearing noises when there were none. “It felt like there was no escape, especially since we couldn’t even really go outside,” he says. “Everyone else was also having their own difficult experiences of Covid, so there wasn’t much space to share how I was feeling. I kept everything inside and began to dread the long nights.”

Ian Coleman, a therapist with the Counselling Directory, describes the “doom loop” that he encounters with new fathers who come to him for help. “Men can have these traditionally masculine notions of needing to cope, which means they don’t talk about their feelings and then they feel guilt at not doing well, which makes the depression worse,” he says.

“Caring for yourself can be seen as selfish, but it’s necessary. Men often don’t have a roadmap for fatherhood and they might not want to repeat how their own fathers were, so they need perspective to understand that their lives are objectively difficult in those moments.”

James says his father was largely absent, busy at work, when he was growing up. He was determined to be more hands on with his daughter, even if he was struggling. “I didn’t even know men could get postnatal depression, but as the lockdowns lifted and I reconnected with my friends and family, I asked the other dads I knew about their experiences and they began telling me how hard it had been for them, too,” he says.

The pressure James had been feeling began to subside and he felt as if he could parent on his own terms. “Looking back now, I can’t believe there isn’t more awareness about the issue and that there aren’t more resources available, since it seems so common,” he says.

The [PND support charity Pandas](#) has seen its private Facebook group for new fathers grow to 800 members since it was established in 2020. There has been a “slow but steady increase” in people reaching out to its support services specifically for men, says Annie Belasco, who runs the charity. She says the mental health of new dads is often overlooked. “With [25% to 50%](#) of fathers experiencing anxiety or depression when the mother also has a perinatal mental illness, the demand will only grow.”

Baldwin agrees, noting the need for more resources. “We need national guidance to assess fathers routinely. Health visiting numbers in England have [dropped by 40% since 2015](#) and, with this disinvestment, we struggle to identify fathers who need more support,” she says. “Between 8% and

10% of fathers might experience PND, but those are only the ones that we know about. The real figure could be higher.”

As research into men’s mental health develops, with studies finding that [fathers go through hormonal changes](#) after birth, it seems clear that awareness of the realities of fatherhood needs to be increased. The stigma is still prevalent – as evinced by the fact that each man I spoke to about their experiences did not want to share their full name.

“It’s difficult to admit that something as natural as fatherhood has been so hard for you, but it feels important to do it,” Lewis says. “Us dads need to look after ourselves, as well as our partners and kids.” Five years after that emergency C-section, Lewis’s son has started school and Lewis and his wife have had another child. “I love them both so deeply,” he says. “Even though it has been really tough at points, they are the best parts of my life.”

Some names have been changed

In the UK, the charity [Mind](#) is available on 0300 123 3393 and [Childline](#) on 0800 1111. In the US, [Mental Health America](#) is available on 800-273-8255. In Australia, support is available at [Beyond Blue](#) on 1300 22 4636, [Lifeline](#) on 13 11 14 and [MensLine](#) on 1300 789 978

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‘AI impacts people all over the world, and they don’t get to have a say on how they should shape it’ ... Timnit Gebru. Photograph: Winni Wintermeyer/The Guardian

[The G2 interview](#)[Artificial intelligence \(AI\)](#)

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‘There was all sorts of toxic behaviour’: Timnit Gebru on her sacking by Google, AI’s dangers and big tech’s biases

[John Harris](#)

The Ethiopian-born computer scientist lost her job after pointing out the inequalities built into AI. But after decades working with technology companies, she knows all too much about discrimination



[@johnharris1969](#)

Mon 22 May 2023 01.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 23 May 2023 06.30 EDT

‘It feels like a gold rush,’ says Timnit Gebru. “In fact, it *is* a gold rush. And a lot of the people who are making money are not the people actually in the midst of it. But it’s humans who decide whether all this should be done or not. We should remember that we have the agency to do that.”

Gebru is talking about her specialised field: artificial intelligence. On the day we speak via a video call, she is in Kigali, Rwanda, preparing to host a workshop and chair a panel at an international conference on AI. It will address the huge growth in AI's capabilities, as well as something that the frenzied conversation about AI misses out: the fact that many of its systems may well be built on a huge mess of biases, inequalities and imbalances of power.

This gathering, the clunkily titled International Conference on Learning Representations, marks the first time people in the field have come together in an African country – which makes a powerful point about big tech's neglect of the global south. When Gebru talks about the way that AI “impacts people all over the world and they don't get to have a say on how they should shape it”, the issue is thrown into even sharper relief by her backstory.

We need regulation, and we need something better than just a profit motive

In her teens, Gebru was a refugee from the war between Ethiopia, where she grew up, and Eritrea, where her parents were born. After a year in Ireland, she made it to the outskirts of Boston, Massachusetts, and from there to Stanford University in northern California, which opened the way to a career at the cutting edge of the computing industry: Apple, then [Microsoft](#), followed by Google. But in late 2020, her work at Google came to a sudden end.

As the co-leader of Google's small ethical AI team, Gebru was one of the authors of an academic paper that warned about the kind of AI that is increasingly built into our lives, taking internet searches and user recommendations to apparently new levels of sophistication and threatening to master such human talents as writing, composing music and analysing images. The clear danger, the paper said, is that such supposed “intelligence” is based on huge data sets that “overrepresent hegemonic viewpoints and encode biases potentially damaging to marginalised populations”. Put more bluntly, AI threatens to deepen the dominance of a

way of thinking that is white, male, comparatively affluent and focused on the US and Europe.

In response, senior managers at Google demanded that Gebru either withdraw the paper, or take her name and those of her colleagues off it. This triggered a run of events that [led to her departure](#). Google says she resigned; Gebru insists that she was fired.

What all this told her, she says, is that big tech is consumed by a drive to develop AI and “you don’t want someone like me who’s going to get in your way. I think it made it really clear that unless there is external pressure to do something different, companies are not just going to self-regulate. We need regulation and we need something better than just a profit motive.”



Gebru speaking at the TechCrunch Disrupt conference in 2018. Photograph: Kimberly White/Getty Images for TechCrunch

Gebru, who is 40, sometimes speaks dizzyingly quickly, as if the rich details of her life might outrun the hour or so we have to talk. She tends to use the precise, measured vocabulary of a tech insider, leavened with a sense of the absurd that is focused on one particularly howling irony: the fact that an industry brimming with people who espouse liberal, self-

consciously progressive opinions so often seems to push the world in the opposite direction.

One of the subjects she returns to repeatedly is racism, including experiences of prejudice in the US education system and Silicon Valley. While she was at high school in Massachusetts, she says, her gift for science was treated bluntly (one teacher said: “I’ve met so many people like you who think that they can just come here from other countries and take the hardest classes”) and passive-aggressively: despite high grades in physics, her request to study the subject further was met with concerns that she might find it too difficult.

“The thing that was very confusing to me as an immigrant was that liberal type of racism,” she says. “People who sound like they really care about you, but they’d be like: ‘Don’t you think it’s going to be hard for you?’ It took me a while to really figure out what was going on.”

I was being attacked by a bunch of guys, and nobody helped me at all.
That was the scariest thing

Later on came a watershed experience of even more brazen prejudice, when she and a friend – a black woman – were attacked in a bar. “That was the scariest encounter I’ve ever had in the US,” she says. “It was in San Francisco – again, another liberal place. I was being attacked by a bunch of guys and nobody helped me at all. That was the scariest thing to see: being strangled and people just walking by and looking at you.”

She called the police. “And that was worse than not calling them, because first they accused me of lying a number of times, and kept on telling me to calm down. And then they put handcuffs on my friend, who had just been attacked.” Her friend was also detained in a police cell.

At Stanford, although she was often condescendingly asked by some of her white peers if she had got in thanks to an affirmative action programme, her undergraduate years were spent in an environment where senior people at least “talked about diversity a lot, and they had different people from different places”. But after working as an audio engineer for Apple between

2005 and 2007, she went back to Stanford to study for a PhD and had very different experiences.

Her life, she says, became all about “going to an office every day with the same bunch of people – it’s kind of like work. And there was nobody who looked like me at all. It was just *shocking*.”



Gebru ... ‘I’m not worried about machines taking over the world, I’m worried about groupthink, insularity, and arrogance in the AI community.’
Photograph: Winni Wintermeyer/The Guardian

Gebru began to specialise in cutting-edge AI, pioneering a system that showed how data about particular neighbourhoods’ patterns of car ownership highlighted differences bound up with ethnicity, crime figures, voting behaviour and income levels. In retrospect, this kind of work might look like the bedrock of techniques that could blur into automated surveillance and law enforcement, but Gebru admits that “none of those bells went off in my head ... that connection of issues of technology with diversity and oppression came later”.

Soon enough, though, she began to think deeply about how big tech’s innovations often embodied the same inequalities evident in its offices, labs and social activities. In 2015, Google had to apologise when the AI systems

that served its Photos app mistakenly [identified a black couple as gorillas](#). The year after, the thinktank ProPublica found that software used across the US to assess prison convicts' chances of reoffending was heavily biased against black people. Meanwhile, Gebru was becoming even more aware of aspects of the tech industry's culture that lay behind such stories.

Around this time, she attended a big AI conference in Montreal where, at a Google party, a group of white men openly harassed her. "One of them kissed me, one of them took a picture. And I was kind of frozen: I didn't really do anything. They were having a party at an academic conference with limitless drinks at a bar and they weren't even making it clear that this was a professional event. Obviously, you should never harass women – or anybody – like that. But that was rampant at these conferences." The organisers of the conference say that their code of conduct has since been "elaborated"; they now have "a new one-stop contact point for concerns and complaints, which is monitored closely".

The next year, Gebru made a point of counting other black attenders at the same event. She found that, among 8,500 delegates, there were only six people of colour. In response, she put up a Facebook post that now seems prescient: "I'm not worried about machines taking over the world; I'm worried about groupthink, insularity and arrogance in the AI community."

In that context, it might seem surprising that, after a year spent working in Microsoft's fairness, accountability, transparency and ethics in AI lab, Gebru took a job at Google. In 2018, thanks to Margaret Mitchell, a recently hired specialist in algorithmic bias, she was recruited to co-lead a team dedicated to the ethics of AI. "I was full of trepidation," she says. "But I thought: 'Well, Margaret Mitchell is here – we can work together. Who else can I work with?' But that was how I went into it: I was like: 'I wonder how long I can last here.'"

"It was a difficult decision," she says. "Because, by the time I was going to Google, I had heard from several women about sexual harassment, and other kinds of harassment, and they had actually said: 'Don't do it.'"

When Gebru arrived, Google employees were loudly opposing the company's role in [Project Maven](#), which used AI to analyse surveillance

footage captured by military drones (Google ended its involvement in 2018). Two months later, staff took part in a huge walkout over claims of systemic racism, sexual harassment and gender inequality. Gebru says she was aware of “a lot of tolerance of harassment and all sorts of toxic behaviour”.



Google employees in New York stage a walkout in November 2018, .
Photograph: Bryan R Smith/AFP/Getty Images

In its quest to highlight some of the moral and political questions surrounding AI, her team hired Google’s first social scientist. She and her colleagues prided themselves on how diverse their small operation was, as well as the things they brought to the company’s attention, which included issues to do with Google’s ownership of YouTube. A colleague from Morocco raised the alarm about a popular YouTube channel in that country called [Chouf TV](#), “which was basically operated by the government’s intelligence arm and they were using it to harass journalists and dissidents. YouTube had done nothing about it.” (Google says that it “would need to review the content to understand whether it violates our policies. But, in general, our [harassment policies](#) strictly prohibit content that threatens individuals, targets someone with prolonged or malicious insults based on intrinsic attributes, or reveals someone’s personally identifiable information.”)

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Then, in 2020, Gebru, Mitchell and two colleagues wrote the paper that would lead to Gebru's departure. It was titled [On the Dangers of Stochastic Parrots](#). Its key contention was about AI centred on so-called large language models: the kind of systems – such as [OpenAI's ChatGPT](#) and Google's newly launched [PaLM 2](#) – that, crudely speaking, feast on vast amounts of data to perform sophisticated tasks and generate content.

These sources are usually scraped from the world wide web and inevitably include material usually subject to copyright (if an AI system can produce prose in the style of a particular writer, for example, that is because it has absorbed much of the writer's work). But Gebru and her co-authors had an even graver concern: that trawling the online world risks reproducing its worst aspects, from hate speech to points of view that exclude marginalised people and places. “In accepting large amounts of web text as ‘representative’ of ‘all’ of humanity, we risk perpetuating dominant viewpoints, increasing power imbalances and further reifying inequality,” they wrote.

When the paper was submitted for internal review, Gebru was contacted by one of Google's vice-presidents. At first, she says, non-specific objections were expressed, such as that she and her colleagues had been too “negative”

about AI. Then, Google asked Gebru either to withdraw the paper, or remove her and her colleagues' names from it.

She says she told the company that she would not retract it and would remove the authors' names only if Google specified its objections. If this didn't happen, she said, she would resign. She also sent a number of emails to women working in Google's AI division, saying that the company was "silencing marginalised voices".

Then, in December 2020, while she was on holiday, one of her closest colleagues texted her to ask if an email they had seen saying she had left the company was correct. Subsequent accounts said that Google had cited "behaviour that is inconsistent with the expectations of a Google manager".

How, I wonder, did she feel? "I was not in thinking mode. I was just in action mode, like: 'I need a lawyer and I need to get my story out; I wonder what they're planning; I wonder what they're going to say about me.'" She pauses. "But I was fired. In the middle of my vacation, on a road trip to visit my mom, in the middle of a pandemic."



Google HQ in Mountain View, California. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

In response to what Gebru says about workplace harassment and toxic behaviour at Google, her experiences at the party in Montreal and the nature of her departure, the company's press office emails me a set of "background points".

"We are committed to building a safe, inclusive and respectful workplace – and we take misconduct very seriously," it says. "We have [strict policies](#) against harassment and discrimination, thoroughly investigate all concerns reported and take firm actions against substantiated allegations. We also have several ways for our workforce to report concerns, including anonymously."

Five years ago, it goes on, the company overhauled "the way we handle and investigate employee concerns, introducing new care programs for employees who report concerns and making arbitration optional for Google employees".

On questions about AI systems using copyrighted material, a spokesperson says that Google will "innovate in this space responsibly, ethically, and legally", and plans to "continue our collaboration and discussions with publishers and the ecosystem to find ways for this new technology to help enhance their work and benefit the entire web ecosystem".

After her departure, Gebru founded Dair, the Distributed AI Research Institute, to which she now devotes her working time. "We have people in the US and the EU, and in Africa," she says. "We have social scientists, computer scientists, engineers, refugee advocates, labour organisers, activists ... it's a mix of people."

AI is not magic. There are a lot of people involved – humans

The institute's fellows, she tells me, include a former Amazon delivery driver, plus people with experience of the monotonous and sometimes traumatic job of manually labelling online content – including illegal and toxic material – to train AI systems. Much of this work happens in developing countries. "There's a lot of exploitation in the field of AI, and

we want to make that visible so that people know what's wrong," she says. "But also, AI is not magic. There are a lot of people involved – *humans*."

Running alongside this is a quest to push beyond the tendency of the tech industry and the media to focus attention on worries about AI taking over the planet and wiping out humanity while questions about what the technology does, and who it benefits and damages, remain unheard.

"That conversation ascribes agency to a tool rather than the humans building the tool," she says. "That means you can abdicate responsibility: 'It's not me that's the problem. It's the tool. It's super-powerful. We don't know what it's going to do.' Well, no – it's *you* that's the problem. You're building something with certain characteristics for your profit. That's extremely distracting, and it takes the attention away from real harms and things that we need to do. Right now."

How does she feel squaring up to her old employers in Silicon Valley? "I don't know if we'll change them or not," she says. "We're never going to get, like, a quadrillion dollars to do what we're doing. I just feel like we have to do what we can. Maybe, if enough people do small things and get organised, things will change. That's my hope."

This article was amended on 23 May 2023 to correct a misquote. Gebru spoke of the abdication, not aggregation, of responsibility.

Join a Guardian Live online event on the future of AI on Tuesday 23 May at 8pm, chaired by technology editor Alex Hern. Book tickets [here](#)

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‘I have felt like a very different person since’ ... Scott Wright.

[A new start after 60](#)[Life and style](#)

**A new start after 60: I had my first
psychedelic experience at 68**

After hearing some home truths from his wife on his 65th birthday, Scott Wright was determined to figure out ‘who the hell I was’. He ended up on a hallucinogenic retreat in Mexico

[Paula Coccozza](#)

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Mon 22 May 2023 02.00 EDT

At his 65th birthday party, Scott Wright’s wife, Martha, made a toast. Her speech, in front of their friends and family, highlighted the accomplishments of Wright’s eclectic career.

He had grown up in Chicago, she began, starting out as a radio DJ, before working as a promotion executive for the record label Epic on campaigns for Michael Jackson, Pearl Jam and Céline Dion. In 1999, he had moved on again, to Napa Valley, California, to pursue his dream of making wine. He and Martha had sold the business in 2014, with Wright turning to film-making.

“And then,” Wright says, “she noted that I had a reputation for being a bit of a dick.”

Martha’s words gave Wright the push he needed to “start getting serious about figuring out who the hell I was”. To this end, in March, at 68, he travelled to Mexico for his first psychedelic experience.

He had read Michael Pollan’s 2018 book, [How to Change Your Mind](#), as well as the research of Roland Griffiths, a professor in psychiatry and neuroscience, and expected “a very intimate and personal” trip.

“I couldn’t imagine getting the full experience in a room full of people on their own journeys,” he says. So he booked a one-to-one retreat for “young elders”, run by Maria Camille, in San Miguel de Allende.

On day one, Camille instructed Wright to compose a letter to the mushroom, “expressing my intentions and thoughts and fears”. On day two,

Wright took psilocybin, the hallucinogenic chemical contained in magic mushrooms, in small squares of dark chocolate.

It's like 20 years' worth of therapy in a few hours

"The next four and a half hours were the most profound, intense and mind-blowing minutes I have ever spent," he says. "Above and beyond everything else, it's an amazing light show. Once the rocket took off, I was holding on for dear life, but it turned out to be good ... People say it's like 20 years' worth of therapy in a few hours, and I think that's spot on."

He saw visions of his late mother, his late mother-in-law and his daughter. When it was over, he crawled into bed "and cried like a baby".

The experience felt like being reborn, he says: "I felt myself being squeezed through a canal. At one point, I could really feel something pressing on my body and I was being pushed through something. I have felt like a very, very different person since that experience."

In his late 50s, Wright had begun to embrace "new stuff": running marathons, tattoos. "I have always been a bit of a seeker, getting out of my comfort zone," he says. But Martha's birthday toast instigated more meaningful change. "We started doing couples therapy. I committed to a meditation process."

In 2016, Wright had started making documentaries, most recently about the singer John Waite. Now, a film with Camille about the retreat is in pre-production. He has recently turned to writing, with a screenplay based on his time as a DJ. "I think this may be the last career," he says.

Does he feel he has got to the bottom of what Martha meant in her toast? "I was successful and I had big jobs, but I was actually very insecure and I always had this problem of feeling 'less than'. As a result, I acted out and was braggadocious and negative to other people," he says. "I was aware of it. I had already started to turn the corner. But that definitely helped me to focus."

Did the psychedelic experience change him? “Hopefully it has made me a more honest, nicer, kinder person ... I’ve historically been very kind with Martha, but not with humanity as a whole. She’s happy to see me making moves in that direction.”

[Tell us: has your life taken a new direction after the age of 60?](#)

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‘The first writer I ever met’ ... Martin Amis in 1975. Photograph: Express/Getty Images

[Martin Amis](#)

William Boyd on his friend Martin Amis: ‘He was ferociously intelligent – and very funny’

He saw the world’s cruel absurdities through a comic lens, writes Boyd, who recalls his very first meeting with Amis – and explains why his unmistakable voice will never be forgotten

[John Self on Amis: ‘He stamped his style over a generation’](#)

[Geoff Dyer on Amis: ‘Mick Jagger in literary form’](#)

[William Boyd](#)

Mon 22 May 2023 03.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 22 May 2023 11.40 EDT

The awful [news of Martin Amis's death](#) prompts a rush of memories. I first met him in 1969, in Paris, when we both found ourselves staying in the same apartment on the Île Saint-Louis for a few days. I was 17, Martin was 20. I only realised who this Martin guy was four years later when his first novel, *The Rachel Papers*, appeared. In a strange but real sense, he was the first writer I had ever met. And thus began an acquaintance as an avid reader and later as a friend.

The remarkable thing about that first novel was the utter confidence and distinctiveness of the narrative voice. Martin found his style at the very beginning of his career as a writer and it never changed. That voice he had defined and charged everything else he wrote – fiction, essays, journalism, memoirs. Very few writers can be instantly identified by a sentence or two of their prose – Laurence Sterne, Charles Dickens, James Joyce, DH Lawrence, Vladimir Nabokov – and Martin precociously joined that elite group and stayed there.

He was the easiest to point to, the easiest to place on a pedestal

His style became his unmistakable signature. And there was also the wit and humour. He identified himself as a comic writer – however serious his subject matter. He saw the world and its cruel absurdities through a comic lens. He was a very, very funny writer as well as a ferociously intelligent one and that should never be forgotten.

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Because of the wonderful energies and original allure of his writing style, Martin became, over the decades that followed his first novel, a kind of exemplar of the contemporary British novelist, though he was not necessarily happy in that role. Having Kingsley Amis as his father also contributed: Martin was the one easiest to point to; the one easiest to place on a pedestal. And with good reason, in fact, because Martin was inimitable as a writer – though many people tried to imitate him, of course. That is his great legacy to literature and our great loss.

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‘Poised somewhere between provocation and seduction’ ... Martin Amis.
Photograph: Ulf Andersen/Getty Images

[Martin Amis](#)

**‘Damn, that fool can write’: how
Martin Amis made everyone up their**

game

He exploded into the tweedy world of literature, a young, pouting and outrageously brash crusader for prose. Our writer remembers her encounters with the novelist, whose smarts and chutzpah confounded his peers



[Lisa Allardice](#)

Mon 22 May 2023 01.00 EDT

‘You’ll be reading me every now and then at least until about 2080, weather permitting. And when you go, maybe my afterlife, too, will come to an end, my afterlife of words.’ So wrote Martin Amis in his heavily autobiographical final novel [Inside Story](#) in 2020. With a body of work spanning 50 years, he leaves 15 novels, two short-story collections, one memoir and seven book-length works of journalism and history. Did posterity matter to him? Hell, yes. “There is only one value judgment in literature: time,” he insisted.

Back in 2009, I called Amis – as editors all over the world would have been calling or emailing leading writers on Saturday night – to ask if he might

write a tribute to the American novelist John Updike, who had just died. Time was tight and we were aiming high, but as with every major (and not so major) event at that time, Amis was the writer everyone was after. And on Updike, the last postwar American literary giant? It had to be him. Happily, he felt a duty to contribute to what Gore Vidal called “book chat”.

With a cigarette dangling, he would pout extravagantly at the camera – you can almost smell the smoke and ambition

“Call me back in 10 minutes,” he said in his unmistakable transatlantic drawl (he hadn’t yet made America his permanent home). Had he said he would do it? Would he file in time for tomorrow’s front page? I wasn’t sure, but duly called him back 10 minutes later, hiding in a cupboard in the bowels of the Guardian, where we went to make private calls.

“Ready?” he said. And – I may have imagined this bit – lighting a cigarette, he proceeded to dictate a whole piece, replete with semi-colons, quotation and his hallmark neologisms (not for Amis the correspondent’s punctuation-less cablese). He spoke and I typed. “There aren’t supposed to be extremes of uniqueness – either you are or you’re not – but he was exceptionally *sui generis*,” [he drawled](#).



A daring take on the Holocaust ... Martin Amis at the Booker ceremony in 1991, holding a copy of *Time's Arrow* – the only one of his books nominated for that award. Photograph: Rebecca Naden/PA

We repeated the exercise barely three months later when another of his great heroes and friends, [JG Ballard, died](#). This time we made it to over 1,000 words. “Very few Ballardians (who are almost all male) were foolish enough to emulate him. He was *sui generis*,” Amis enunciated with verbal italics. “What was influential, though, was the marvellous creaminess of his prose, and the weird and sudden expansions of his imagery,” he continued. “Marvellous creaminess”, “weird and sudden expansions” – how did he *do* that?

OK, so he had written at length about both Updike and Ballard before. And he was routinely invoked as a successor to both. But still. Of all the writers I’d worked with during many years as a literary editor, Amis was the only one I knew who could pull that off. The sheer smarts and chutzpah of composing a piece off the cuff, without even going to the bother of turning on the computer, was quintessential Amis.

He will for ever be remembered as part of the [“Class of 83”](#), the inaugural Granta Best of Young British novelists list that also included Ian McEwan,

Julian Barnes, Salman Rushdie and Kazuo Ishiguro. “He has had a baleful influence on a whole generation,” bemoaned AS Byatt of Amis in 1993, as one of the Granta judges tasked with finding successors a decade later. Not because he was a bad writer but because so many had been foolish enough to try to emulate him (to echo Amis on Ballard).

If, as is often said, this generation of writers were the closest the books world gets to having rock stars, then [Amis was Mick Jagger](#). Those 70s photographs (The Rachel Papers years) of him pouting extravagantly at the camera, cigarette dangling – you can almost smell the smoke and ambition – announced a changing of the guard. His pose, like his prose, poised somewhere between provocation and seduction. Where the literary world had been grey and tweedy, presided over by ageing grandees (Amis Sr, William Golding, Anthony Burgess, Iris Murdoch), now it was young and outrageously brash, and Amis was the frontman.



Old devils ... Amis and Salman Rushdie in 1995. Photograph: David M Benett/Getty Images

At [an event in 2020 with Salman Rushdie](#), Rushdie asked him if, back in those heady days, he felt part of a gang. “That’s the way ‘movements’ start,” Amis replied. “Ambitious young drunks, late at night, saying, ‘We’re not going to do that any more. We’re going to do this instead.’” And with

this “gang” – which also included his great friend, the late journalist [Christopher Hitchens](#), and [Ian McEwan](#) – the young drunks went on to become “the old devils”, to borrow a Kingsley Amis title, that pretty much comprised the literary establishment for years.

“There was a feeling,” he said of this time, “that there were places to go that the English novel didn’t go, and was being too fastidious about.” And he spent the next few decades making sure he was the first to go there. Who but Amis could have had such a firm grasp on the collar of what John Self, the narrator of [Money](#), called “the panting present” to have written a novel of that title at the beginning of the 80s, that decade of Thatcherite greed? And then envisage ecological collapse in [London Fields](#) at the end of it? Which writer would have dared to take on the Holocaust (Time’s Arrow in 1991, and The Zone of Interest in 2014) and Stalin’s Great Terror (Koba the Dread in 2002), with, as Tim Adams put it in the Observer, [“his full ironist’s swagger”](#)? Or to have imagined the last 24 hours of 9/11 terrorist Mohamed Atta in The Second Plane in 2008?

In his crusade for fine writing and his declaration of war on cliché, Amis made everyone up their game. Over the years, critics have fallen over themselves trying to outsmart Mart: lobbing hyperbole and volleying adverbs (Amis was a huge tennis fan). “So just how good is [Martin Amis](#)?” “Why do we love to hate Amis?” they would come out, strutting, pistols cocked. But Amis was already in the bar.

For a time, he seemed happy to fill the role of novelist as public intellectual. He riffed elegantly on everything from the porn industry to the Royal family. “He is always putting it up to you somehow, making the reader feel brilliant too. Or a bit stupid,” wrote Anne Enright [of his collection of criticism The Rub of Time](#) in 2017. “This is the best fun going when everyone is drunk, as they seemed to be in the 1980s, and literary London was like one long dinner party in which everyone knew where you went to school.”

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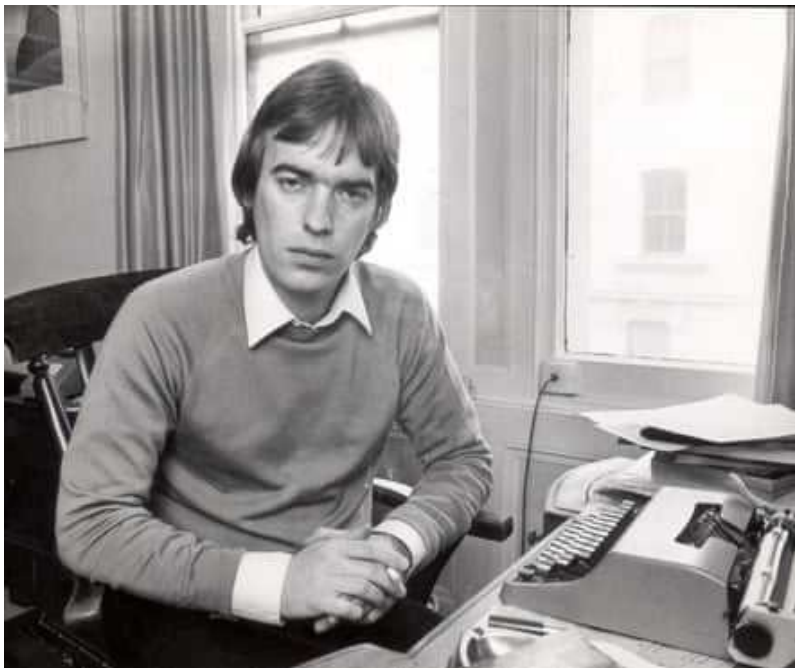
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‘Anyone who’s any good is going to be funny’ ... Amis at home in 1981.
Photograph: Martin Lawrence/Daily Mail/Shutterstock

Inevitably, the poster-boy turned into a target, and at one point Amis the dazzling young stylist looked in danger of being overshadowed by Amis the grumpy old controversialist, with ill-judged comments on Islamism and euthanasia. But after what he called an [“eisteddfod of hostility”](#) from the British press and his move to New York, he largely reserved his opinions for his writing.

He was planning a collection of short stories on the subject of slavery in the US – “boy will I cop it,” he said in [a recent Guardian interview](#) – as well as returning to the Third Reich for a third time with a “modest novella”. And yet, despite many years as Britain’s foremost literary celebrity and contrarian, Amis somehow managed never to win the Booker (he was only shortlisted for Time’s Arrow) nor to be cancelled.

Of his instinct to shock, he observed: “Every novel worth reading is funny and serious. Anyone who’s any good is going to be funny. It’s the nature of life. Life is funny.” And it is clear from the irrepressible punchiness of his prose that he had a blast writing. “It seems to me a hilariously enjoyable way of spending one’s time,” he said. And so, at his daring comic best, he was great fun to read.

He was famous for his biting satire and swaggering prose, but there was always tenderness not far beneath

The insolence, the silliness, the seriousness, the grotesqueness, the erudition and audacity were all swept up in those inimitable sentences and corralled into order by his cleverness with form. As Enright summed up in her review: “Damn, that fool can write.” And, like an imposing building slightly worn with time, Amis changed the landscape of literature so dramatically that it is hard to remember what it looked like before. And for all the macho-ness of his writing, his influence can be seen in writers of the generation that followed, for instance his friend Zadie Smith.

“He was a talismanic figure for my generation of novelists, and an inspiration to me personally,” says another friend, Kazuo Ishiguro. “He was famous, notorious even, for his biting satire and swaggering prose, but there was always a surprising tenderness not far beneath that surface. His characters were always yearning for love and connection. I believe ultimately his work will age well, growing over the years.” We will be reading him for decades, weather permitting.

But to go back to 2009 and Amis’s closing words on Updike: “His style was one of compulsive and unstoppable vividness and musicality. Several times

a day you turn to him, as you will now to his ghost, and say to yourself, ‘How would Updike have done it?’ This is a very cold day for literature.”

And so it is today. Younger writers will ask: “How would Amis have done it?” He was exceptionally *sui generis*.

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Keir Starmer visiting Harlow ambulance station, Essex, January 2023.
Photograph: Yui Mok/PA

[OpinionNHS](#)

**No more missing records or letters lost
in the post – I will bring in a totally
digital NHS**

[Keir Starmer](#)



Imagine the benefits of having a joined-up service at last. Combined with AI and genomic medicine, this is the future for our health service

Mon 22 May 2023 05.45 EDTLast modified on Mon 22 May 2023 12.47 EDT

The NHS faces an existential crisis. A crisis that is both immediate and long term. Yes, it's about how the Tories have run the NHS into the ground over the past 13 years, with ambulances not arriving until too late, swift GP appointments a thing of the past and more than [7 million people waiting for treatment](#). But it's about a lot more than that. Today, with an ageing population, more long-term chronic illnesses and far more knowledge about how to prevent ill health, the NHS needs to adapt.

That is why today we are announcing details of our health mission with the clear aim of making the [NHS](#) fit for the future – a prevention-first model and a shift from hospitals to the community so that illness is caught early and at home, not late and in hospital.

But there is another change that could totally reframe the NHS and how it operates, and save money: moving from an analogue system to a fully

digital NHS. The NHS is in pole position to take advantage of advances in science and technology, if only ministers realised it. We have a thriving life sciences sector, a universal health service with an entire population's data and the ability to move at pace, as was shown with the vaccine rollout.

So what could a tech revolution in the NHS look like? [More than 30 million people](#) signed up to the NHS app during the pandemic. That is a big number and represents the majority of adults in this country. Covid made it necessary. Yet, post-Covid, this resource – a resource that could be harnessed for the good of the public – has been left dormant. It's another tale of our time – another opportunity missed, indicating the absence of strong leadership.

A Labour government would get hold of that NHS app and use it to drive forward a more patient-focused, responsive service. Get this right and it means moving to “a single front door to all NHS services” – fully digital [patient records](#). In one place a patient will be able to book appointments, use appropriate self-referral routes, get reminders for checkups and screenings, receive the latest guidance on treatment and have the ability to take part in clinical trials, something particularly important if you are one of the [more than 3 million people](#) in the UK who will be affected by a rare disease in their lifetime.

Patients will be in control of their own data, choosing how it's used and how it's shared. This could mean a genuine democratising of healthcare, helping to get rid of the divide between those who are confident to speak up for themselves and those who can't. And, of course, it will need careful management to ensure those who are less comfortable using technology are supported throughout and given alternative routes where needed.

This could add up to faster care, more choices for patients and the ability for us to better manage our own health. In short, a new relationship between citizen and the NHS – the rebuilding of trust in a service so badly bruised by the past few years. A fully digital NHS will mean primary care, hospital care and social care are joined up properly for the first time, speaking to each other in ways that can speed up and streamline care for patients.

And it doesn't stop there. Technology provides more choice and power for patients, but it also saves lives. Artificial intelligence has the potential to transform patient outcomes, improve productivity and save money in the NHS.

Here's an example. Lung cancer is the number one cause of cancer-related deaths in the UK. There are an estimated 274,000 patients in the UK waiting 11 days or more following a scan to find out whether or not they have the disease. AI interpretation of chest X-rays can save 15% in radiologists' workload, reduce costs and, when combined with interpretation by a consultant radiologist, can reduce missed lung cancer cases by 60%. Rolling this type of tech out nationally could speed up lung cancer diagnosis, saving thousands of lives.

Another example, genomic medicine, can be similarly life-changing. Today, genomic screening can spot predisposition to big killers such as cancer or heart disease in babies, diagnose rare diseases and help personalise treatments. With the power of genomics, we could help every one of us live a healthier life, prevent more illness and take more care of our lifestyle choices.

Harnessing the revolution in science and technology will require huge drive, strategic leadership and breaking down the barriers that are holding it back. It means new incentives to innovate throughout the NHS, with fewer barriers to adopting scientific breakthroughs, fewer unnecessary hurdles to clear to get new treatments adopted, less bureaucracy, more clinical trials and a government properly backing our life sciences industries.

The NHS needs to change. Our plan deals first with the immediate crisis. But to make the NHS fit for the future will require an unflinching commitment to harnessing the possibilities of science and technology. If we do so, I am optimistic the NHS will not only survive but thrive for the decades to come.

- Keir Starmer is leader of the [Labour](#) party and MP for Holborn and St Pancras
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Illustration by R Fresson

[OpinionYoung.people](#)

A lost generation are stuck living with their parents – and Tory talk of housebuilding won't help them

[John Harris](#)



Young adults stranded in the family home have been abandoned by politicians who view them as an afterthought

Mon 22 May 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 22 May 2023 05.17 EDT

A huge social shift is happening that has barely been noticed, let alone understood. Earlier this month, the Office for National Statistics [revealed data](#) from the 2021 census about the number of adults in England and Wales living with their parents: [4.9 million of them](#), up nearly 15% on the figure for 2011. The fact that the stats were collected in the midst of the Covid crisis may suggest a blip, but the ONS is adamant that the rise “appears to be a continuing trend rather than a result of the pandemic”.

[Ten years ago](#), it reported record levels of such living arrangements, and the latest numbers are even more striking. Men outnumber women by three to two. The share of 20- to 24-year-olds living in the family home is 51.2%, up from 44.5% 10 years ago, and for those aged 30 to 34, the figure is nearly 12%. Almost half of single-parent families now have adult children at home. In London, one in four households had at least one adult child in the home, and in five London boroughs, the average age of what the ONS

calls “adult children living with their parents” is 26. The numbers in more rural places are often almost as remarkable: in Dorset, for example, that description applies to [nearly 20%](#) of the grownup population.

Clearly, all this highlights the cruelties of our housing crisis. Woven into the same picture is a higher education system that spits out twentysomethings already burdened with astronomical debt. The result is a kind of compulsory extended adolescence, which is now threatening to envelop even those [starting their 40s](#), and is surely a big part of the huge downturn in younger people’s mental health. It also has big potential repercussions for an already-blighted economy, not least when it comes to people’s ability to be as mobile as modern employers often demand.

Over the past few weeks, housing has rightly moved into the political foreground. While the Conservatives squabble about their devotion to the green belt, [Keir Starmer and his colleagues](#) have been promising to restore the government’s binned targets for new homes, give first-time buyers priority on new houses built in their areas, and stop speculators based abroad from purchasing them. It has been good to hear him break one of politics’ most stupid taboos, and suggest that [property prices need to fall](#) in relation to people’s incomes. But a set of grimly familiar preferences and prejudices seem to sit under a lot of what he says, leaving millions of people unspoken for.

When politicians talk about new housing, they usually mean the kind of developments that now ring most British towns and cities: three- or four-bedroom starter homes, with a car in the drive, and a slide and swing in the back garden. To state the obvious, there is nothing wrong with that: millions of us crave the certainty and security associated with home ownership, and the collective British mind tends to think that houses embody those things in a way that other kinds of homes do not. The archetypal swing voter, moreover, is likely to either own a house, or to want to – which only deepens Westminster’s attachment to an imagined utopia of cul-de-sacs and crescents, full of people happily mortgaged to the hilt.

But where does that vision leave many of those people still living in the family home? What a lot of them need is housing that we never hear about:

flats, suitable for single people, concentrated in and around towns and cities, and available for either reasonable prices – or, more urgently, genuinely affordable rents. An abundance of such places would not only help the young: it might also unblock a big chunk of the property market by attracting older couples and single people currently living in large dwellings, but prevented from moving by the unavailability of smaller properties. But who is building them?

Last year, the property-selling platform Unlatch revealed that over the previous 12 months, one-bedroom flats had accounted for just [6% of new homes](#), and that new-builds had fallen by 12% since 2017. The only housing innovations offered to young people seem to be cramped “[microflats](#)” with shared kitchens and communal workspaces, which basically offer indefinite studenthood. Even for people who can afford to buy a proper apartment, life is often ruined by England and Wales’s awful leasehold system, which covers 95% of owner-occupied flats, and regularly combines its restricted definition of “ownership” with punitive service charges and fights over maintenance and repairs. Though the government will soon announce plans for reform, it recently abandoned plans to get rid of leaseholding; Labour says the system is “[feudal](#)”, but has only pledged to end it for new developments.

All this highlights an even bigger issue: the fact that, even as economic precarity extends further and further up the age range, Westminster tends to view younger people as an afterthought. Whatever the arguments about how to finance higher education, one fact is clear: after [Nick Clegg’s about-turn](#) on tuition fees, Starmer is the second avowedly centrist politician in recent memory to have raised hopes of an end to huge student debt, and then [dashed them](#). Thanks partly to the stupidities of our electoral system – and perhaps because youth-oriented politics are another Corbynite baby to be thrown out with the bathwater – his party’s main focus is on a segment of older people with rather different generational values. Labour definitely seems to take the under-30s for granted; meanwhile, as the political right’s [failure to attract younger voters](#) curdles into [barely hidden loathing](#), it clings on to the absurd idea that far too many of them are spoiled snowflakes, whose problems supposedly amount to so much melodrama.

There is a huge political opportunity here. The Green party would do well to present itself as champion of millennials and Gen Z, not only focused on the climate crisis and what it will mean for those people, but also keenly aware of the generational injustices that [Labour](#) and the Tories talk about selectively, at best. Younger voters would surely be receptive: they always strike me as a much more politicised lot than my generation, whose large-scale support for Labour may turn out to be rather more conditional than Starmer and his allies would like to think. At this rate, their patience will sooner or later snap, with no end of consequences. Politicians on all sides ought to think about that.

- John Harris is a Guardian columnist

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Suella Braverman makes a speech at the National Conservatism conference in central London. Photograph: Victoria Jones/PA

[OpinionConservatives](#)

The Tories have form with far right conspiracy theories. This time it's 'cultural Marxism'

[Samuel Earle](#)



The party turns nasty and brutish when it fears for its future. The use of this term – with its clear links to antisemitism – is just the latest example

Mon 22 May 2023 05.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 22 May 2023 05.30 EDT

This week, London played host to the National Conservatism conference, an orgy of rightwing anxieties about threats to the west and the future of Conservatism. The lineup saw an eclectic coalition of rightwing firebrands raising the alarm about the left’s purported plans for world domination via a “woke revolution”.

The fascistic undertones of this conspiratory narrative – which effectively calls on conservatives to save their country from an insidious alliance between progressives and minorities – sounded particularly pronounced [during a speech](#) by Tory MP Miriam Cates. Describing falling birthrates as “the one overarching threat to British conservatism, and to the whole of western society”, she laid blame for Britain’s woes at a surprise foe: “a cultural Marxism that is systematically destroying our children’s souls”.

What is cultural Marxism? The term, which emerged [in the 1990s in the US](#) with clear antisemitic origins, imagines that an anti-western ideology was [concocted by Jewish intellectuals](#) after the second world war. The conspiracy taps into confected panics about political correctness and wokeness that first started in the US. Only in more recent years has it captured the minds of Conservatives in Britain as well.

In March 2019, [Suella Braverman declared](#) that “we are engaged in a battle against cultural Marxism”, tying the threat to Jeremy Corbyn. In November 2020, 22 Conservative MPs and peers then signed a letter criticising “cultural Marxist dogma”. Each utterance brings fresh calls from Jewish groups and leaders to stop the usage and exploitation of the term. But for the Tories the allure of a phantom threat destroying Britain from the inside – exonerating the party for its dismal 13 years in government – is too good to turn down.

It’s tempting to frame the Conservatives’ flirtations with conspiratorial thinking as an aberration. But the truth is that the party has always contained darker, apocalyptic undercurrents. These are usually repressed and marginalised in the interests of electability – politeness, levelheadedness and respectability are essential to the party’s brand – but at times of crisis, when [Conservatives](#) fear for the future and feel threatened by social trends evolving beyond their control, they often rise to the surface.

In many ways, the foundational challenge for the Conservative party has been how to harness the most reactionary forces of society while also keeping the party’s moderate reputation untarnished by them. This balancing act – embracing the far right with one arm, keeping them at a distance with the other – has caused all kinds of contortions in the party’s past: from Margaret Thatcher dismissing the National Front as a “[socialist front](#)” at the same time as it accused her of stealing its rhetoric and policies, to David Cameron mocking Ukip as “[fruitcakes, loonies and closet racists](#)” and then surrendering to its main demand for an in/out referendum. However much they might not like it, Conservatives know that their winning coalition usually requires keeping those “fruitcakes, loonies and closet racists” on side.



Winston Churchill with prime minister David Lloyd George in 1922: in 1920 Churchill suggested that ‘international Jews’ were leading a ‘world-wide conspiracy for the overthrow of civilisation.’ Photograph: PA

But the Conservatives’ reactionary tendencies are also more than mere tactics. Between the two world wars, when fascist leaders came to power across Europe, many Conservatives succumbed to fascism’s core conspiracy: that Jews and communists were in cahoots against the west. The Conservative leader Stanley Baldwin tried his best to dissuade his party from fascism. “Fascism ... takes many of the tenets of our own party and pushes them to a conclusion which, if given effect to, would ... be disastrous to our country,” he warned. But dozens of Tories funded, founded or joined fascist groups such as the British Union of Fascists and the Anglo-German Fellowship. Fascism is often associated with thugs, but in Britain, as elsewhere, it was often an upper-class affair.

Not even the greatest heroes of the Conservative party have been immune to these prejudices. The fact that Winston Churchill helped to defeat Hitler doesn’t change the fact that he indulged in antisemitic conspiracy theories, too. In 1920, Churchill suggested that “international Jews” were leading a “[worldwide conspiracy](#) for the overthrow of civilisation”. He wondered whether the Jewish heritage of many revolutionary leftwing thinkers – Karl

Marx, Leon Trotsky, Rosa Luxemburg, Emma Goldman – spoke to “inherent inclinations rooted in Jewish character and religion”.

Like other Tories, Churchill was ultimately stirred into action not by Hitler’s antisemitism or his fascism, but by “the [threatening continental expansionism](#) that it inspired in Germany”, as the historian Priya Satia has explained, which endangered Britain and its empire. Arch-imperialist and Conservative politician [Leo Amery believed](#) that, on matters of race, Churchill was “not quite sane”, suggesting that here there was little difference “between his outlook and Hitler’s”.

The Conservatives’ impressive feat is knowing how to tap into reactionary forces one moment, and how to dissociate the party from them the next. After the second world war, as the evils of fascism entered national folklore, the Conservatives committed to cleaning up their image. Fascist sympathies and antisemitism were no longer tolerated as understandable eccentricities. In early 1953, a young Jewish man named Sir Keith Joseph, who would later go on to become Thatcher’s right-hand man, approached the party about becoming an MP. John Hare, Conservative vice-chairman for candidates, immediately saw his value. “There is a good deal of talk about antisemitic prejudice within the party and his adoption, therefore, by some constituency would be helpful,” [he said](#).

The remarkable diversity of the Conservative cabinet – unmatched anywhere else in the western world – is testament to the party’s power of adaptability. But their recent readiness to indulge conspiracy theories and reactionary rhetoric suggest the embrace of multicultural Britain was always more a matter of expedience than enthusiasm. Contained within invocations of “cultural Marxism” is a vast constellation of more mundane conservative anxieties about the modern world, from the culture of victimhood supposedly enabled by universities to the erosion of family values.

Conservatives now claim they simply want to restore a respect for tradition and a sense of personal responsibility among young people, undoing the damage done by the left. But they should perhaps ask whether they are in fact the architects of their own unhappiness – whether the erosion of traditional values and rise of identity politics has more to do with the free-

market capitalism they have championed so fervently than any nebulously defined cultural Marxism. “[I sometimes wonder](#),” Norman Tebbit confessed in 2013, “whether our economic reforms led to an individualism in other values, in ways we didn’t anticipate.” Most Conservatives prefer to avoid any such reckoning.

This is now the paradoxical core of conservative psychology: a cult of personal responsibility that refuses to take any responsibility for the world that, through its promotion of free-market capitalism, it has in large part created. It’s clear they will conjure up all kinds of conspiracies to avoid confronting this unhappy truth.

- Samuel Earle is the author of *Tory Nation: How One Party Took Over*
- ***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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The show must go on ... the silver moustache comb from the Sotheby's auction, Freddie Mercury: A World of His Own. Photograph: Sotheby's/PA

[OpinionFreddie Mercury.](#)

**I love a good auction. If only I could
afford Freddie Mercury's moustache
comb ...**

[Emma Beddington](#)



Even though I'd never bid on 98% of the lots, nothing matches the nosy thrill of rooting through a stranger's waistcoats, bird baths or stuffed stoats

Mon 22 May 2023 02.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 22 May 2023 05.21 EDT

Publicity kicked off last month for the [auction of Freddie Mercury's possessions](#): furniture, art and trinkets go under the hammer in September, plus handwritten lyrics, stage props and a waistcoat decorated with portraits of his cats. It might even top last year's [Joan Didion auction](#), at which literary groupies outbid each other for the cult writer's stained napkins and novelty aprons: people paid \$11,000 a piece for unused blank notebooks.

If your curiosity is piqued, but you don't have Tiffany moustache comb money (another Mercury lot), can I recommend seeking out a civilian version? I'm an auction addict. It's my husband's fault: he discovered our local auction house – a paradise of outdated agricultural machinery, brown furniture and bargain white goods (he equipped our kitchen for next to nothing) – and has infected me. Only yesterday, I spent 40 blissful minutes scrolling through toby jugs, horse brasses, lawnmowers and a puzzling number of signed photos of Rex Harrison.

Auctions have all the ethical advantages of vintage – the acceptable face of shopping – plus bonus elements. Like in any charity shop, I don't want 98% of the stuff, but browsing scratches my consumerist itch. Then, for the odd things I do covet, bidding is such a rush: sweaty fingers clawed around my mouse, I watch the thumbnail video of the bored auctioneer and calculate whether a puffin-themed plate is worth another fiver, while speculating furiously about my rival bidder until the hammer falls. The endorphins, the drama! Some people get that from eBay, but auctions have more louche, mothball-scented glamour.

They are also brilliant for the pathologically nosy. Like the celeb versions, many sales at my local are house clearances, and it's a window into another, exotic life – how did you end up acquiring an empty Swedish pistol holster, you wonder; why so many stuffed stoats? And finally, paradoxically, they act as a brake on my own acquisitive impulses. Often, I only have to imagine someone decades hence scrolling judgmentally through my dusty bird-themed junk to step away from the bidding on the owl mug. I've still got my eye on a bargain bird bath tomorrow, though.

Emma Beddington is a Guardian columnist

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2023.05.22 - Around the world

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- [Bill Gates Jeffrey Epstein allegedly tried to extort billionaire over extramarital affair](#)
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Greece: centre-right party falls short of majority in latest general election – video report

[World news](#)

Greek centre-right party falls short of majority in general election

Prime minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis's party on 40% share against Syriza on 20%

[Helena Smith](#) in Athens

Sun 21 May 2023 16.01 EDTFirst published on Sun 21 May 2023 15.08 EDT

The centre-right party of Greece's incumbent prime minister, [Kyriakos Mitsotakis](#), has clinched more than 40% of the vote in Sunday's election, comfortably seeing off the challenge of the leftist main opposition Syriza party but falling short of an absolute majority.

With almost every ballot counted it was clear that New Democracy had won a landslide, posting a 20-point margin – 40.8% – over the Syriza, which was trailing at just over 20.1% – a difference rarely seen since the collapse in 1974 of military rule. Even in Crete, a socialist bastion, the rightwing party had fared unexpectedly well.

“It appears that New Democracy will have a very important victory,” said Giorgos Gerapetritis, a former state minister and one of Mitsotakis's closest colleagues. “The Greek people took stock of the past and voted for the future ... it voted for future generations.” Other government officials described the result as a “spectacular victory”.

Under a new electoral system of proportional representation introduced under the former prime minister and Syriza leader [Alexis Tsipras](#), the victor

had to secure about 46% of the vote to win an outright majority of 151 seats in the 300-member parliament. That, for any party, had been an impossible feat.

With 96% of the vote counted, smaller parties including MeRa25, headed by the country's former finance minister Yanis Varoufakis, failed to pass the 3% threshold to get into parliament.

KKE, the communist party, came in with 7.2% of the vote, doing especially well in urban centres, with senior officials hailing the outcome as proof of the party's ability to put up stiff opposition to "neoliberal" policies it has said are bringing Greeks to its knees.

The inconclusive result will lay the ground for a fresh ballot in July if, as expected, efforts to form a coalition government break down. The second-round poll, expected on 2 July, will take place under a semi-proportional representation system that would grant the first party 50 bonus seats if it won 40% of the vote.

On Monday, as protocol demands, Greece's president, Katerina Sakellaropoulou, will hand Mitsotakis a three-day mandate to explore the options of forming a coalition. Aides said the 55-year-old leader, who appeared in ebullient mood as he arrived at New Democracy's headquarters in Athens, would prefer a repeat poll with Sunday's result hardening his view that a single-party government was "more than possible".

In an address on Sunday night the prime minister said he was "proud and moved" by the result. "Hope has beaten pessimism, unity has beaten division," Mitsotakis said. "I pledge to work even harder. People want a strong government with a four-year mandate so that we can cover the lost ground that separates us from [Europe](#). A government is needed that really must believe in reforms so that it can implement them."

Throughout the electoral campaign he had insisted the country's interests could only be served with "a strong majority" government that would enable him to press ahead with his reform programme during a second four-year term.

If, as looks likely, Mitsotakis hands the mandate back to Sakellaropoulou, Syriza in theory will follow suit in trying to form a government, although the results did not suggest a “progressive alliance” would be arithmetically feasible even if leftist parties could find the consensus.

It had been thought that the governing party’s popularity had been severely dented by a wiretapping scandal and devastating train crash – events that cast a pall over Mitsotakis, a former banker, personally.

But Syriza’s unexpectedly poor performance appeared to uphold the view that Greeks had voted for stability – despite many being perturbed by what has been perceived as democratic backsliding under the centre-right government, with the spy scandal highlighting those concerns.

In an election dominated by anxiety over the cost of living crisis, Greeks singled out the economy, citing memories of the nation’s debt drama a decade ago and punishing austerity meted out in return for emergency funds to keep the country afloat. Sunday’s ballot was the first since the EU and IMF, which orchestrated the biggest bailout in global financial history to avert a Greek default, ceased supervising the country’s finances.

But trauma still lingers. The cuts demanded in exchange for rescue exacted a heavy price: the Greek economy contracted by more than 25%, beginning a recession from which the nation has only begun to recover. “The idea of more adventures after everything we have been through swayed my vote,” said Maria Lygera, echoing a common refrain.

The 48-year-old was among a sizeable cohort of undecided voters estimated at close to 13% before polls opened.

“Right until I walked into the ballot booth I wasn’t sure which way I would go,” she said.

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“I wanted to punish New Democracy because of the wiretapping scandal but equally I also wanted to ensure there is a centre-left party that is present and strong. Because that is definitely not Syriza, I voted Pasok.”

The Pasok party came in third with just under 12%, a result its jubilant leadership said placed it on course to replace Syriza as the main centre-left opposition.

Mitsotakis has promised to cut taxes further, bring down unemployment – hovering about 11%, from an all-time high of 30% during the crisis – and stimulate the economy by attracting more foreign direct investment. His election campaign motto has been “stability”, with the politician evoking the turbulence of Syriza’s time in office when Tsipras, its firebrand leader, was catapulted into power in 2015.



Alexis Tsipras arrives at his party headquarters in Athens on 21 May.
Photograph: Louisa Goulamaki/AFP/Getty Images

Tsipras, 48, has toned down the radical rhetoric that first appealed to his base but throughout the election campaign vowed to raise public sector wages to help assuage the effects of the cost of living crisis and upgrade state facilities including the public health system. Senior Syriza cadres described the outcome as deeply disappointing and a far cry from what the leftwing party had hoped to achieve.

“The result is extremely negative for Syriza,” Tsipras said on Sunday night, announcing immediate changes in the party.

More than 9 million Greeks were eligible to cast ballots in a vote held under a rarely used proportional representation system.

In an historic step Greeks abroad were also able to participate at polling stations set up in the UK and cities across Europe, the US, Canada and Australia. Voter turnout was said to be high among the more than 22,000 diaspora Greeks registered on the electoral roll.

But from the outset the new electoral procedure had made it practically impossible for any candidate to win the 46% required to form a single-party

government. Not since 1981, when Andreas Papandreou charged to victory on the slogan of *allagi* or “change”, has that feat been pulled off.

With such high probability of the result being inconclusive, Mitsotakis had raised the spectre of a follow-up election in July even before Greeks began to cast their ballots.

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Epstein reportedly demanded that Gates reimburse him for the software coding school he paid for Mila Antonova to attend. Photograph: Julia Nikhinson/Reuters

[Jeffrey Epstein](#)

Jeffrey Epstein allegedly tried to extort Bill Gates over extramarital affair

Convicted sexual offender reportedly threatened to expose Gates's relationship with Russian bridge player Mila Antonova

[Maya Yang](#)

Sun 21 May 2023 16.08 EDTLast modified on Sun 21 May 2023 16.28 EDT

The convicted sex trafficker Jeffrey Epstein appeared to threaten Bill Gates and tried to blackmail the multi-billionaire over his extramarital affair with a Russian bridge player, according to a new [report](#) published by the Wall Street Journal.

Speaking to the Journal, sources familiar with the matter said that after [Epstein](#) found out about the Microsoft co-founder's affair with Russian bridge player Mila Antonova, he threatened Gates into reimbursing him for tuition costs that Epstein had initially covered for Antonova to attend software coding school.

Epstein's threat to [Gates](#) came in the form of an email he sent in 2017 after he failed to convince Gates to join a multibillion-dollar charity fund he attempted to set up, according to the sources.

Gates met Antonova in about 2010, when she was in her 20s, and went on to play bridge with her. In a 2010 YouTube video, Antonova recounted a tournament that she played with Gates, [saying](#): "I didn't beat him but I tried to kick him with my leg."

According to documents reviewed by the Journal, Antonova wanted to establish an online bridge tutorial business and was attempting to secure funds. Through Boris Nikolic, a close Gates adviser, Antonova was introduced to Epstein to help her raise funds for her initiative, which sought to "promote bridge by creating quality tutorials for beginners and advanced players", the Journal reported.

Antonova and Nikolic met Epstein at his townhouse in November 2013 in New York City, where she presented her fundraising proposals to him and sought half a million dollars, according to the Journal. Antonova told the outlet that Epstein ultimately did not invest in the initiative.

Nevertheless, Antonova went on to stay at an apartment in New York a year later that Epstein provided her. "I didn't interact with him or with anyone else while there," she said.

Epstein at one point paid for Antonova to attend software coding school, the Journal reported.

"Epstein agreed to pay, and he paid directly to the school," she told the outlet. "Nothing was exchanged. I don't know why he did that."

“When I asked, he said something like he was wealthy and wanted to help people when he could.”

During the time Antonova was looking to set up her initiative, Epstein was also trying to set up his own fund. According to documents reviewed by the Journal, Epstein was attempting to establish his charitable fund with [JP Morgan](#), which would require ultra-wealthy individuals to make a minimum \$100m contribution and pay him millions of dollars in fees.

The fund was supposed to be a way for Epstein to rebuild his reputation after he was forced to register as a sex offender and had pleaded guilty in 2008 to soliciting and procuring a minor for prostitution, according to sources that spoke to the Journal.

Documents reviewed by the outlet showed that Epstein’s fund was contingent upon obtaining support from Gates.

In emails sent to JP Morgan executives, Epstein tried to come off as a close adviser to Gates, despite not including the Microsoft co-founder in the emails, which the Journal reviewed.

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“In essence, this [fund] will allow Bill to have access to higher quality people, investment, allocation, governance without upsetting either his marriage or the sensitivities [sic] of the current foundation employees,” Epstein wrote in an email in August 2011.

He followed up the next day, writing: “Bill is terribly frustrated. He [would] like to boost some of the things that are working without taking away from thoses [sic] that are not.”

Two months later, Epstein sent another email to JP Morgan executives after the company prepared a presentation on the project, writing, “the presentation, is not tailored to [Bill]. He is the only person, the only one, that counts.”

Speaking to the Journal, a JP Morgan spokesperson said: “The firm didn’t need him for introductions. Knowing what we know today, we wish we had never done business with him.”

Similarly, the Journal reported that a Gates spokesperson “has said Epstein never worked for Gates and misrepresented their ties in communications with JP Morgan and others”.

In 2017, Epstein emailed Gates about Antonova after Gates’s extramarital affair ended, people familiar with the matter told the Journal. In the email, Epstein asked Gates to reimburse him for Antonova’s coding school costs.

“The tone of the message was that Epstein knew about the affair and could expose it, the people said,” the Journal reported, adding that a Gates spokesperson said that the Microsoft founder “had no financial dealings with Epstein”.

Two years later, in 2019, federal prosecutors charged Epstein with sex trafficking a minor and conspiracy to commit sex trafficking. Epstein denied the charges and was refused bail. He died months later in custody in an apparent [suicide](#).

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Volunteers in Cesena. Young people have come from all over Italy to help in Emilia-Romagna. Photograph: Giorgio Salvatori/The Guardian

[Italy](#)

‘Roads have disappeared’: Italy begins cleanup after catastrophic floods

Emilia-Romagna still on alert, with 36,000 people homeless after six months’ worth of rain fell in 36 hours

[Angela Giuffrida](#) in Ronta

Sun 21 May 2023 10.45 EDTLast modified on Mon 22 May 2023 10.44 EDT

Standing outside her home under moody skies in Ronta, a hamlet in the Forlì-Cesena area of Emilia-Romagna, Ivana Casadei considers herself one of the lucky ones. “The water only came as far as our garden,” said the 61-year-old. “But my neighbours’ home was destroyed, so they are now staying with us – there are eight of us living together, and five dogs.”

Emilia-Romagna remained on red alert on Sunday after catastrophic flooding that [claimed 14 lives and left more than 36,000 people homeless](#). The emergency, which wreaked havoc across 100 cities and towns – many still under water – prompted the prime minister, Giorgia Meloni, to return early from the G7 summit in Japan. A helicopter that had been attempting to restore electricity to homes crashed close to the badly affected town of Lugo on Saturday, injuring one of the four people onboard. “Frankly, I cannot remain so far from Italy in such a complex moment,” said Meloni, who visited some of the flooded areas on Sunday afternoon and pledged support to help the recovery.

Casadei’s home was among the cluster that rescuers were unable to reach until Saturday, first because of strong winds that prevented dinghies from arriving and then because of a landslide that snapped a nearby road in two.



Ivana Casadei and her husband, Loris, outside their home in Ronta. Photograph: Giorgio Salvatori/The Guardian

One of her neighbours who died was Marinella Maraldi, whose body was swept 12 miles (19km) down the Savio River before being found in Cesenatico, a beach along the Adriatic coast. Maraldi’s husband, Sauro Manuzzi, also died, reportedly as they tried to save their farm animals,

leaving behind their only daughter. “Marinella and I gave birth around the same time,” said Casadei. “They were a wonderful couple. None of us have experienced such disastrous flooding like this before – there are some people here who are close to age 100 who say they have never seen anything of the kind.”

Most of those left homeless have been put up by family or friends, while others are staying in hotels or temporary shelters.

Marina and her husband, whose home is uninhabitable, are among those staying with Casadei. “It hasn’t quite hit us yet,” said Marina, whose only salvaged item of clothing was her wedding dress. “We are in a daze ... at the moment we just feel fortunate to be here, and are boosted by the solidarity. But then afterwards, the depression will probably come.”

Rescuers, who have been joined by thousands of volunteers, many of them young people who travelled from across [Italy](#), are working relentlessly to clean mud and debris from the streets, or bring food and clothing to people living in shelters and isolated areas.

Mountains of furniture lined a street in Ronta as volunteers formed a human chain to lift buckets of flood water from an apartment building.



Marina managed to save her wedding dress from her uninhabitable home in Ronta. Photograph: Giorgio Salvatori/The Guardian

Lorenzo Camagni, 25, said he had not slept in three nights. “Over 2.5 metres [8ft] of water flooded our home,” he added. “I tried to pump the water away for nine hours straight before the rescuers came. My parents are devastated ... but then we also feel lucky as so many are worse off than us.”

Six months’ worth of rain fell within 36 hours across Emilia-Romagna, one of Italy’s most important agricultural regions. Just two weeks ago, the area was hit by intense storms that killed two people. The floods were preceded by a drought that had dried out the land, reducing its capacity to absorb water. More than 305 landslides were caused by the latest floods, which in turn either damaged or closed off 500 roads.

Weather-related disasters have been on the rise in Italy, a country deemed particularly vulnerable to the climate crisis.

Enzo Lattuca, the mayor of Cesena, said people in the area were given a warning 24 hours before the storms. But he had trouble convincing some people to leave their homes, particularly those living in hillside hamlets.

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“There was still sunshine at that point and many people didn’t think it would happen,” he said. “One woman, who didn’t want to leave her home, told me she only believed it was happening when the water was at her feet.”

Showing a photo of a severely damaged road on his mobile phone, Lattuca said: “I don’t even know if it will be possible to repair it.”



A road near Ronta, damaged by a landslide. The floods caused more than 305 landslides in Emilia-Romagna. Photograph: Giorgio Salvatori/The

Guardian

Paride Antolini, the president of the geologists order for the Emilia-Romagna region, said the “landslide bombing” was “distorting the cartography of the area”. “Many roads have completely disappeared,” he told the Ansa news agency. “In my 63 years I have never seen anything like it, it’s too much even for a geologist.”

Areas along the Emilia-Romagna coastline were also affected by the floods, with debris washing up on beaches.

Beach club owners have rushed to clean up their resorts in the hope of salvaging the holiday season, as hotels reported many cancellations over the weekend and during the last week of May.

“Tourism is obviously fundamental; many of us survive off the summer season,” said Simone Battistoni, president of the union of beach club owners in the Cesenatico area. “But we are ready to welcome people. Until then, 30 of us are working in shifts to bring essential supplies to the people who have been left homeless.”

In Riccione, a popular town that was partly affected by the floods, beach club owner Raoul Conti said: “We all worked to clean up the beach in a couple of days, but we feel fortunate, and so our thoughts are with our neighbours just a few kilometres away. Obviously the start of the season has been affected but I don’t think it will influence the rest of the season – people from Emilia-Romagna are stubborn, and we will double down to ensure it’s a good one.”

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Stella Assange: 'This is the closest we've ever been to securing Julian's release' – video

[Australian politics](#)

Julian Assange's life 'in hands of Australian government', wife Stella says

'Extradition in this case is a matter of life and death,' campaigner tells National Press Club

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Australian Associated Press

Mon 22 May 2023 03.25 EDT

Stella Assange has said the life of her husband, [Julian Assange](#), is “in the hands of the Australian government” as she pleaded for Canberra to do more to influence the US to stop the pursuit of the WikiLeaks founder.

For more than 1,500 days Julian Assange has been waiting behind bars in London under threat of extradition to the US, where he faces a 175-year sentence on espionage charges for leaking classified military documents.

“If Julian is extradited, he will be buried in the deepest, darkest hole of the US prison system, isolated forever,” Stella Assange said in an emotional address to the National Press Club in Canberra on Monday.

“We must do everything we can to ensure that Julian never, ever sets foot in US prison. Extradition in this case is a matter of life and death.”

Stella Assange had also come to Australia to advocate for her husband's release in the presence of the US president, Joe Biden, who was scheduled to be in Sydney for Quad talks [before pulling out](#).

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But Biden's absence did not deter her from coming to the country of her husband's birth because she believes Australia has a crucial role to play in securing his release.

"Australia is the United States' most important ally," she said. "Julian's life is in the hands of the Australian government."

Julian Assange's Australian supporters are hopeful that the prime minister, Anthony Albanese, will continue to plead his case after meeting Biden at G7 talks in Japan at the weekend.

Support in Australia is growing, with Albanese and the opposition leader, Peter Dutton, agreeing that Assange has been incarcerated for too long.

"Nothing is served on the ongoing incarceration of Julian Assange," Albanese told parliament on Monday.

The treatment of Julian Assange, his wife argues, has emboldened authoritarian regimes to clamp down on press freedoms around the world.

"The case against Julian cannot be understood as anything other than an absurdity," she said. "A stupefying decision of egregious overreach."

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“America’s case against Julian has created a new race to the bottom – a new normal, which makes it easier to get away with imprisoning journalists.”

As their young children grow older and come to realise their father’s plight, Stella Assange feels increasing urgency to secure her husband’s freedom.

Jennifer Robinson, an Australian human rights lawyer on Julian Assange’s legal team, did not rule out attempting to strike a plea deal with US prosecutors to seal his release, potentially on time served.

But she insists that Assange has committed no crime.

Robinson welcomed a comparison to the case of terrorism-accused David Hicks, who was returned to Australia as part of a political settlement after his defence struck a plea bargain.

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A worker takes part in the dismantlement of the Talus 2 slum on Mayotte. Photograph: Philippe Lopez/AFP/Getty Images

[France](#)

Demolition of shantytown on French Indian Ocean island of Mayotte begins

Diggers move in as police and gendarmes launch operation against substandard housing and illegal migration

Agence France-Presse in Koungou

Mon 22 May 2023 10.36 EDTFirst published on Mon 22 May 2023 02.35 EDT

Authorities on the French Indian Ocean island of Mayotte have begun demolishing homes in a large slum as part of a contested operation against substandard housing and illegal migration.

France has deployed hundreds of police officers in Mayotte, the country's poorest region, since April to prepare for a major slum-clearing initiative

called Operation Wuambushu (“take back”).

Diggers started destroying the sheet-metal shacks in the Talus 2 slum in the Majicavo area at about 7.30am on Monday. Police wielding crowbars entered homes to check no one was inside before the destruction began, while the electricity and water supply was cut.

Mayotte’s top state official, Thierry Suquet, said at the scene there were 162 homes slated for demolition. “Today, half the families who lived in this neighbourhood have been rehoused,” he added.

Some said they had been left without shelter, however. “I have nowhere to live for the moment,” said Fatima Youssouf, 55, one of the oldest people in the shantytown. She added that she had been unable to remove some of her possessions from the home where she invested all her savings.

Another resident, Zenabou Souffou, wept at the sight of the construction machines, saying she had been living in the area for 25 years and brought up seven children there. Her husband, a demolition worker, had to be taken to hospital when he fainted as the work reached the door of his own mother’s house, she said.

France’s interior minister, Gérald Darmanin, wrote on Twitter that his “political initiative is paying off”. “We are continuing to destroy shanty towns where many families were living in disgraceful conditions, while offering to rehouse them,” he said.

Suquet insisted evicted families were being provided for, saying the state’s “balanced” policy would offer “appropriate lodgings” to “French citizens and regularised foreigners living in these conditions”.

Of Mayotte’s estimated 350,000 residents, half do not possess French nationality – with the number falling to one-third in the shantytowns.

The French island sits in the impoverished Comoros Islands archipelago, with thousands of Comorans making the trip across to Mayotte in search of higher living standards every year. The influx has caused major tensions on

Mayotte, where many locals complain about crime and the strains put on overloaded state infrastructure.



Protesters clash with French gendarmes in Mayotte last month. Photograph: Gregoire Merot/AP

Some associations have denounced Wuambushu as a “brutal” measure violating people’s rights, but local elected officials and many islanders have supported it. The operation initially triggered clashes between youths and security forces and fuelled diplomatic tensions with the Comoros.

Expulsions of undocumented workers to the Comoros resumed on Wednesday after tensions cooled between the two territories.

The demolition of Talus 2 was originally scheduled to take place on 25 April but was suspended by a court decision. Two subsequent legal rulings then authorised the French state to proceed.

Operations there will last all week, Psylvia Dewas, the local official in charge of reducing illegal housing, told reporters.

Across Mayotte, about 1,000 substandard homes are slated for destruction. Six families filed requests for rehousing on Monday at the town hall in the

neighbouring Talus 1 district, the prefecture said.

Showing his allocated lodgings in Talus 1 to AFP reporters, Abderrahmane Daoud said: “This isn’t a home, see, there aren’t even separate rooms.

“How can I live here with my wife and children? Where will we sleep?”

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- [Travel Busy roads and airports expected over late-May UK bank holiday weekend](#)
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Jeremy Hunt backs interest rate hikes even if they cause recession; UK retail sales jump – as it happened

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Jeremy Hunt says to grow the economy ‘we have to support the Bank of England in the difficult decisions that they take’. Photograph: Jordan Pettitt/PA

[Interest rates](#)

Hunt will back more interest rate rises even if they push UK to recession

Chancellor to support Bank of England’s decisions because ‘inflation is a source of instability’

- [Business live: latest updates](#)

[*Kalyeena Makortoff*](#)

[@kalyeena](#)

Fri 26 May 2023 05.22 EDTFirst published on Fri 26 May 2023 04.50 EDT

Jeremy Hunt said he would back further interest rate rises by the Bank of England, even if they risk plunging the UK into recession, in order to

combat [soaring inflation](#).

The chancellor's comments come after figures this week showed annual inflation in April was higher than expected at 8.7%, raising the prospect of a 13th interest rate rise by the [Bank of England](#). Markets are predicting that interest rates could climb to 5.5% by the end of the year, up from their current level of 4.5%, putting further pressure on borrowers and the housing market.

When asked whether he was comfortable with the central bank doing whatever was needed to bring down inflation, even if that could cause a recession, Jeremy Hunt [told Sky News](#): “Yes, because in the end, inflation is a source of instability. And if we want to have prosperity, to grow the economy, to reduce the risk of recession, we have to support the Bank of England in the difficult decisions that they take.”

The chancellor said that while it was not an easy decision, it sent the right message to global markets. “I have to do something else, which is to make sure the decisions that I take as chancellor, very difficult decisions, to balance the books so that the markets, the world can see that Britain is a country that pays its way – all these things mean that monetary policy at the Bank of England [and] fiscal policy by the chancellor are aligned,” he said.

Earlier this week, the International Monetary Fund said it [no longer expected the UK to fall into recession](#) this year, after observing the greater “resilience” of households and businesses during the worst of the inflation shock. It also predicted that inflation would fall back to 5% by the end of the year and below the Bank of England's 2% target by the summer of 2024, mainly in response to falling energy prices.

Hunt said inflation would not drop without determination and coordination by the Bank of England and Treasury.

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“When the prime minister announced that it was his objective to halve inflation in January, there were some people who derided that; they said: ‘Well, it’s automatic; inflation is going to come down anyhow.’ There’s nothing automatic about bringing down inflation; it is a big task but we must deliver it, and we will. It is not a trade-off between tackling inflation and recession. In the end, the only path to sustainable growth is to bring down inflation,” he said.

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Queues for ferries at the Port of Dover in Kent on Friday. The RAC is preparing for the busiest late-May bank holiday weekend for motoring since 2019. Photograph: Gareth Fuller/PA

[Road transport](#)

Busy roads and airports expected over late-May UK bank holiday weekend

More than 3,000 planes scheduled to take off on Friday, with road traffic peaking as leisure trips coincide with commuting

[Gwyn Topham](#) *Transport correspondent*

[@GwynTopham](#)

Fri 26 May 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 26 May 2023 05.04 EDT

The start of the May half-term holiday for many schools will result in “hectic” roads and the most flights departing the UK since before the pandemic, according to industry estimates.

About 19m car journeys for leisure are expected on Britain's roads over the next four days, and more than 3,000 planes are scheduled to take off on Friday.

The RAC is preparing for the busiest late-May bank holiday weekend for motoring since 2019, with traffic likely to peak on Friday afternoon when leisure trips and commuting coincide.

Fine weather is forecast for the UK-wide three-day weekend – which coincides with the start of the half-term break for most schools in England and Wales – potentially bringing more people out to the coast and countryside.

According to the analysts Inrix, there will be severe delays on the M25, the M5 in Somerset and the M6 in Cheshire.

The RAC spokesperson Rod Dennis said: “With the travel restrictions imposed during Covid now thankfully a distant memory, it's clear drivers' desire to get away has been reignited, with our figures for this coming weekend suggesting leisure traffic volumes will be close to what we last saw in 2019.”

He added: “With the Met Office currently predicting largely settled weather with [above-average temperatures](#), we're expecting this to be a hectic period on major roads.”

Passengers flying with British Airways from Heathrow on Thursday and Friday faced significant disruption after more than 150 flights [were cancelled](#) because of “technical issues”.

A spokesperson for the airline said on Friday: “While the vast majority of our flights continue to operate today, we have cancelled some of our short-haul flights from Heathrow due to the knock-on effect of a technical issue that we experienced yesterday.

“We've apologised to customers whose flights have been affected and offered them the option to rebook to an alternative flight with us or another

carrier, or request a refund.”

Unusually, rail passengers have a bank holiday weekend free of planned stoppages. There are very few major engineering works, meaning most British rail services will run normally.

However, there will be a series of rail strikes in the second half of the school holiday week, with drivers from Aslef out on 31 May and 3 June, and train crews in the [RMT union on strike on 2 June](#). Most services across England are likely to be halted when drivers walk out, with severe disruption during the RMT action.

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Heathrow airport, meanwhile, vowed that passengers would not experience any disruption from the three days of strikes that started on Thursday, as holiday departures peak on Friday.

The chief executive, John Holland-Kaye, said passengers “should not be concerned about strike action by Unite over the half-term getaway”.

The strikes, which also [affected visitors to the UK for King Charles's coronation](#) earlier this month, are the result of a dispute over pay increases for security staff.

According to data from the aviation analytics firm Cirium, more than 3,000 planes will take off from UK airports on Friday, the highest daily figure since December 2019.

About 6% more flights will operate over the bank holiday weekend than a year ago, potentially flying out more than 2 million passengers from Friday to Monday.

Dublin, Amsterdam, Palma, Málaga and Alicante are the most popular international destinations.

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British Airways has suffered a number of IT failures, including one in December that led to a number of long-haul cancellations. Photograph: John Sibley/Reuters

[British Airways](#)

BA flight chaos at Heathrow airport ahead of bank holiday weekend

At least 50 British Airlines services cancelled on Thursday due to technical problems and passengers warned of further delays on Friday

[Gwyn Topham](#) *Transport correspondent, and agencies*

Fri 26 May 2023 00.24 EDTFirst published on Thu 25 May 2023 13.51 EDT

A “technical issue” has left [British Airways](#) passengers facing the possibility of further delayed or cancelled flights at Heathrow heading into Friday and the bank holiday weekend.

At least 50 BA flights from the airport were cancelled on Thursday afternoon, while a large number of inbound flights were delayed for more than an hour.

Some passengers due to depart on Friday evening were notified their flights were delayed. The airline said passengers should check their flight status before going to the airport on Friday.

A statement from British Airways released just before 10pm on Thursday said: “We’re aware of a technical issue, which we have been working hard to fix ... Due to high call volumes please only contact us if you’re due to travel in the next 48 hours.”

A tweet from British Airways at 11.27pm on Thursday said systems were back up and running but there might still be intermittent issues.

The airline said: “While the majority of our flights have continued to operate [on Thursday], we have had to cancel a number of [Heathrow](#) flights due to a technical issue.

“Affected customers have been contacted and offered options, including a refund or rebooking to an alternative flight with us or another carrier. We are extremely sorry to our customers for the inconvenience caused.”

On Thursday queues of passengers seeking assistance formed at Heathrow, with some also unable to check in online. The airline mainly cancelled flights to destinations with multiple departures to allow customers to travel.

One Twitter user, who was at the airport around 7pm, said: “Almost all BA flights from LHR T5 cancelled tonight. No info. About 4 people on BA desks trying to deal with the chaos. Come on BA you can do better than this. You are supposed to be the UK’s flagship.”

The disruption came as the airline and airport were working to minimise the fallout from the first day of a three-day strike by security guards at Heathrow who are members of the Unite union. Friday is expected to be the

busiest day overall in the UK for departing flights since 2019, according to data from analysts Cirium.

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The IT issue is unrelated to the strikes, with Heathrow saying its contingency plans had kept security queues flowing across the airport.

BA has suffered a number of IT failures, including one in December that led to a number of long-haul cancellations. Its most [notorious IT incident](#) also occurred at the start of a May half-term getaway, in 2017, when tens of thousands of passengers were stranded after its systems were accidentally turned off.

With PA Media

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2023.05.26 - Spotlight

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- [Turkey Europe's diaspora split as large numbers vote in election runoff](#)
- [Experience I'm Britain's 'dullest woman'](#)
- ['It's new territory' Why is Betelgeuse glowing so brightly and behaving so strangely?](#)

Blur's 20 greatest songs – ranked!

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Voters take selfies in front of the Turkish consulate in Berlin. Photograph: Kate Connolly/The Guardian

[Turkey](#).

Europe's Turkish diaspora split as large numbers vote in election runoff

Support for Erdoğan in older communities among Europe's 3.4 million Turkish voters is strong, while younger people want change in Kılıçdaroğlu

[Kate Connolly](#) in Berlin and [Jon Henley](#) in Paris

Fri 26 May 2023 02.00 EDTLast modified on Sat 27 May 2023 04.57 EDT

Casting her ballot at the Turkish consulate in Berlin for Sunday's second round runoff in Turkey's presidential elections, Cansu Yeni said she and her country faced a make-or-break moment.

The 32-year-old was one of many young people who moved to the German capital from Istanbul five years ago in reaction to democratic backsliding under Turkey's president, [Recep Tayyip Erdoğan](#).

“The country became a dictatorship,” she said. “Me and my friends suffered a lot. Choosing who to vote for is an easy decision.”

Yeni is one of 3.4 million Turkish voters in [Europe](#) registered to cast their ballots abroad. In the first round the diaspora’s choice was split quite clearly between larger and more-established communities, who backed the incumbent, and smaller, newer communities, who chose the opposition unity candidate, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu.

The continent’s two largest diasporas – [Germany](#), with 1.5 million voters, and France, with 400,000 – and other decades-old communities such as those in the Netherlands and Belgium voted massively for Erdoğan.



Cansu Yeni, 32, an architect living in Berlin said voting for Kılıçdaroğlu was an ‘easy decision’. Photograph: Kate Connolly/The Guardian

Almost 66% of Turkish voters in Germany backed the conservative incumbent. In [France](#), the Netherlands and Belgium, also home to decades-old communities, the corresponding figures were 64%, 68% and 72%.

“You live abroad, you’re not much affected by what’s going on at home, yet you feel closer to it than to your adopted country – the temptation is to vote

for someone who flatters your religious and national identity,” [said Claire Koç](#), a Franco-Turkish writer.

On a recent day in the tree-lined grounds of the consulate in western Berlin, those who were eligible to vote at one of the 17 polling stations across Germany, were being ushered into booths. A man with a megaphone directed the crowds.

Instead of ticking a box, voters stamped ballot papers. For Rosa Burç, political sociologist and researcher at the German Centre for Integration and Migration Research (DeZIM), this adds even more potency to the act of voting. “For many people that physical act of stamping has become a way for them to express a lot of their years of pent up anger and frustration,” she said.

Throughout the morning, a stream of shuttle buses and minivans pulled up in front of the consulate discharging voters from Berlin and other parts of Germany. In the courtyard the atmosphere was mostly upbeat, with people greeting and hugging each other, though sporadic scuffles broke out.

Yeni, who works as an architect, said she had voted for Kılıçdaroğlu. “He says he will bring back democracy to the country and I believe him. He ran a very peaceful election campaign and this is what we need. Basically if he wins, many people will feel they can return home, including me, because it’s hard being an immigrant,” she said.

Gülden, 31, a retail worker who declined to give her surname, said she had come to “support our president”.

For her and her parents, who came to Germany as Gastarbeiter (guest workers) in the late 70s, Erdoğan is the only option.

“He did a lot for our country so there are many, many reasons to vote for him,” she said.

Asked about his response to the recent earthquake, for which the government has faced huge criticism and been accused of incompetence, or his human rights record, she said: “He did a lot to help people after the

earthquake. I see this for myself on A Haber [a private, pro-government Turkish TV news channel]. And he admitted he had made some mistakes and I respect him for that.” As for his human rights, she added: “I don’t know much about that as I’m living here but I haven’t heard that there are any problems.”



Yasin Acarbaş, 36, and his dog Charlie, outside the Turkish consulate in Berlin after casting his vote. Photograph: Kate Connolly/The Guardian

Hüseyin, 68, a Turkish Kurd clutching amber prayer beads, who received political asylum in Germany five years ago, said he would meet friends at a roundabout cafe in Berlin’s Kreuzberg district to watch the results on Sunday evening. “There are two people in this race,” he said. “A democrat and a fascist. We want to get rid of the fascist so that we can go back home.”

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Nearly 49% of people eligible in Germany turned out in the first round. The second round, voting for which closed on Tuesday, is thought to have attracted more voters.

“Voters in Germany as elsewhere, consider this election as a significant juncture for Turkey, which has meant mobilisation has increased over the past week or so, with people feeling they have to make a very clear statement,” said Burç.

Holding his scottish terrier Charlie, 36-year-old Yasin Acarbaş, a Berlin resident who left Turkey a decade ago after the Gezi Park protests, said: “I don’t feel I should have the right to vote when I’m not living in a country. But I feel it’s necessary to use my vote for the last time in order to try to get rid of Erdoğan.”

Elif, 36, a student, standing in front of a large Turkish flag stretched across the consulate railings taking selfies with three friends, said she had turned up to vote “so that Turkey wins”. Born in Berlin to guest worker parents from Antalya, she said she feared the changes a Kılıçdaroğlu government might bring.

“I’m concerned the country will go back to how it was 20 years ago, when many houses had no running water and no toilets,” she said. “So it would be better to keep things just as they are.”

In smaller and more recent communities in Europe, the narrative is very different. In places like the Baltic states, where polling stations have been

opened for Turkish voters for the first time this year, Kılıçdaroğlu is the favourite.

He garnered 80% of the vote in Lithuania, for example, where first-generation Turkish immigrants are in general much younger, more likely to be university-educated, and broadly pro-European.

In Estonia, 91% of votes went to the opposition candidate, while in Poland he won 85%. In the UK, whose 130,000 immigrants from Turkey are mostly Turkish Cypriots, members of the Alevi religious minority or Kurds, Erdoğan won only 18% of the vote.

Sweden, home to another Kurdish community that has [led to tensions with Turkey](#), voted 53% for Kılıçdaroğlu and 44% for Erdoğan.

After the closure of polling booths across Europe earlier this week, in a carefully coordinated operation, a cargo plane landed in each location to pick up the diaspora votes before flying them back to Ankara to be stored in the Turkish chamber of commerce until polls in Turkey close on Sunday evening.

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Rachel Williamson: 'I'm crocheting every minute. In bed, I'm thinking of my next project.' Photographs: Rebecca Lupton/The Guardian

[ExperienceLife and style](#)

Experience: I'm Britain's 'dullest woman'

The Dull Men's Club saw my crochet toppers for postboxes and wanted to name me Anorak of the Year. I proudly accepted

Rachel Williamson

Fri 26 May 2023 05.00 EDT

I took up knitting when I was five, crafting little figures and learning to make clothes with yarn. In fact, my best friend still has a pixie, called Greeny, I made for her when we were six. When I had my three sons, I picked it up again, knitting booties, gloves and cardigans for them as babies, and during my 18 years as an officer with the North Wales police I knitted things for nearly everyone in the force.

After I retired in 2018, I feared life might become a bit boring, but I busied myself with knitting, going to airshows with my twin sister, Ruth, holidaying with friends and playing the piano.

Then, when lockdown started in March 2020, Mum and Ruth came to live with me in Rhyl. One day in April, we went to the chemist to get Mum's prescription. Ruth joined the queue outside, all socially distanced, looking miserable, and I waited in the car.

I clocked the postbox nearby and said to Ruth: "I'm going to see if I can make a sparkly rainbow topper for that postbox, to cheer people up." I don't know where the idea sprang from, but I had the yarn in my stash and was thrilled to find a use for it.



Williamson with her breast cancer charity topper

Crocheting seemed the best approach, but I hadn't done it before, so I watched a couple of tutorials online and I was off. Three hours later, I'd made my first postbox topper. We were allowed out only for exercise, so the next day Ruth and I cycled out at 6.30am and popped it on.

I wasn't sure how it would be received, or if I'd get into trouble with the Post Office, but it became the talk of the town. The local paper made a Facebook post, asking who was behind it. I called to say it was me. It went crazy after that. I was in the papers and people messaged me, asking for more toppers across Rhyl. I made dozens.

As interest grew over the next 18 months, the mayor visited and TV crews, too. When the chairman of the [Dull Men's Club](#) – an international group celebrating the ordinary – called me, it was a surprise. They welcome women, too, and had seen my yarn-bombing. He said they wanted to name me [Anorak of the Year 2021](#), making me Britain's dullest woman. Me, an anorak? I'm anything but. I didn't know what to think, but proudly accepted. It was funny to me.

I was invited to a members' meeting in a pub 50 miles away in Trevor. There was a guy from the [Telegraph Pole Appreciation Society](#) and a young man fascinated by crazy golf. The fantastic thing was, these people weren't dull at all. I admired their passion.

I received a certificate from the club, presented "for the colourful and creative postbox toppers she crocheted and put on postboxes throughout Rhyl that uplift people's feelings while they are locked down". I thought it was lovely. I sent them a picture of me standing beside a postbox with a topper I'd made of Tom Jones, which was used in the club's 2022 annual calendar. I was Miss November.

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There are seven postboxes on Rhyl prom. I've covered them all, and have done more than 200 toppers now. I call my house Topper Headquarters. When I'm a Celebrity filmed at Gwrych Castle, 20 minutes away, I crocheted a topper of Ant and Dec on horseback. I've done a topper with a pair of crocheted boobs for a breast cancer charity, one for Rhyl FC featuring players on artificial turf, and made Christmas gatepost toppers for my entire close. One of my early ones, a seagull called Dave, was stolen but later recovered by the police. Then someone later ripped his head off, so I crocheted a new one. He's in the Denbigh Museum now, alongside that first rainbow one.

I've sent toppers to Scotland, the Midlands and Liverpool. I've been to a Buckingham Palace garden party as a thank you for cheering people up.

I'm a grandmother and almost 60. I served in the police for nearly two decades and don't think I made anybody as happy then as I have in these past three years.

I'm crocheting every minute I get, and when I go to bed I think of the next one. I still follow the Dull Men's Club on Facebook. It's the people without hobbies who are boring. As for being Britain's dullest woman? Nobody else has that accolade. I wear it with pride.

As told to Deborah Linton

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Betelgeuse, a red supergiant star in the constellation Orion, is glowing at 150% of its usual brightness, following ‘the great dimming’. Photograph: Franco Tognarini/Getty Images/iStock

[Astronomy](#).

‘It’s new territory’: why is Betelgeuse glowing so brightly and behaving so strangely?

After the ‘great dimming’, the closest red giant star to Earth is pulsating twice as fast as usual and lighting up the southern hemisphere’s early evening sky



[Helen Sullivan](#)

[@helenrsullivan](#)

Thu 25 May 2023 23.52 EDT Last modified on Fri 26 May 2023 13.10 EDT

One of the brightest stars in the sky is behaving strangely, pulsating from bright to dim twice as fast as usual and giving scientists an unprecedented insight into how stars die.

Betelgeuse, the closest red giant to Earth, has long been understood to move between brighter and dimmer in 400-day cycles. But from late 2019 to early 2020, it underwent what astrophysicists called “the great dimming”, as a dust cloud obscured our view of the star.

Now, it is glowing at 150% of its normal brightness, and is cycling between brighter and dimmer at 200-day intervals – twice as fast as usual – according to astrophysicist Andrea Dupree of the Harvard-Smithsonian Centre for Astrophysics. It is currently the seventh brightest star in the night sky – up three places from its usual tenth brightest.

In the southern hemisphere sky it can be spotted glowing brightly in the early evening, at the shoulder of the Orion constellation. As days grow

shorter in the northern hemisphere, it will be visible there too.

Betelgeuse is expected to explode some time in the next 10,000 to 100,000 years.

“One of the coolest things about Betelgeuse is that we’re watching the final stages of big star evolution play out almost in real time for us, which we’ve never really been able to study in this much depth before,” says Dr Sara Webb, an astrophysicist at Swinburne University of Technology in Australia.

Observing its behaviour gives important insights [into the behaviour of red giants](#) before supernova explosions. When it does eventually explode, it could – over the course of a week – grow so bright that it will be visible during daylight, and cast shadows at night.

There are records from ancient Egypt of what appears to be a star exploding as a supernova. The Egyptians described the appearance of a “second sun” in the sky, says Webb.

The great dimming was caused by the star spitting out a lump of gas and dust, like chewing gum: or what scientists call a “surface mass ejection” caused by an “anomalously hot convective plume”.

That lump was several times the mass of Earth’s moon, says Webb.

“If we were to throw one of our arms away from us, it changes the way our forces move in our body. And a similar thing happened with poor Betelgeuse,” says Webb.

“So it’s pushed all of this mass away and now its core and its stability are still trying to recover.”

The [paper](#) Dupree co-authored with other scientists from Harvard and the University of California, Berkeley, concludes that it will be five to 10 years before Betelgeuse returns to its normal 400-day cycles.

“Since the dimming, Betelgeuse’s light and radial velocity curves have been markedly different from its past,” the authors write.

“It’s new territory,” says Webb. “We haven’t seen this before.”

In Greek astronomy, Betelgeuse ([pronounced](#) “beetlejuice”, like the Tim Burton film character) marks one of the shoulders in the constellation Orion, but its name comes from the Arabic *bat al-jawzā*, which means “the giant’s shoulder”.

Aboriginal Australians discovered the star’s bright and dim cycles long before western astronomers, who until 1596 believed that stars were “unchanging and unvariable”, according to [the Conversation](#).

In the cosmology of the Kokatha Mula people in South Australia, Betelgeuse marks the right hand and fire magic of a hunter named Nyeeruna – this is the hunter’s fire magic, which he uses to try to overpower a protective older sister named Kambugudha. As the two figures battle, Nyeeruna’s fire magic grows brighter, dimmer and brighter again.

While Betelgeuse is very unlikely to explode in our lifetimes, “we don’t know”, says Webb. “I mean, I’ve always got all of my fingers and toes crossed that maybe we’ll get lucky.”

We’re also watching this in the past, she explains: the light from Betelgeuse is more than 600 years old.

“Theoretically it probably hasn’t, but theoretically it could have exploded and we wouldn’t know.”

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2023.05.26 - Opinion

- 'Farming good, factory bad', we think. When it comes to the global food crisis, it isn't so simple
- British parents need to adapt to climate chaos – but not by abandoning the great outdoors
- Starmer is right – giving young people the vote will mean fewer big Tory wins
- No, Succession's antiheroes don't have a good side: that's what makes it so compelling



Illustration: Nate Kitch

[OpinionFood](#)

**‘Farming good, factory bad’, we think.
When it comes to the global food crisis,
it isn’t so simple**

[George Monbiot](#)



The solution is not more fields but better, more compact, cruelty-free and pollution-free factories

Fri 26 May 2023 02.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 26 May 2023 06.00 EDT

No issue is more important, and none so shrouded in myth and wishful thinking. The way we feed ourselves is the key determinant of whether we survive this century, as [no other sector is as damaging](#) . Yet we can scarcely begin to discuss it objectively, thanks to the power of comforting illusions.

Food has the extraordinary property of turning even the most progressive people into reactionaries. People who might accept any number of social and political changes can respond with fury if you propose our diets should shift. Stranger still, there's a gulf between ultraconservative beliefs about how we should eat and the behaviour of people who hold such beliefs. I have heard people cite a rule formulated by the food writer Michael Pollan – [“Don't eat anything your great-great-great-grandmother wouldn't recognise as food”](#) – while eating a diet (Thai one day, Mexican the next, Mediterranean the day after) whose range of ingredients no one's great-great-great-grandmother would recognise, and living much the better for it.

Something is blocking us, a deep repression that stands in the way of honest conversation. It pushes food writers, celebrity chefs and some [environmentalists](#) to propose answers to the planetary crisis that are even more damaging than the problems they claim to address. Their solutions, such as pasture-fed meat, with its [massive land demand](#), are impossible to scale without destroying remaining wild ecosystems: there is simply not enough planet. What is this inhibition and how does it arise?

It's now a year since I published [Regenesis](#), a book that has incited levels of fury shocking even to me. I've spent much of this time trying to work out what makes people so angry. I think it's because the book challenges what the cognitive historian Jeremy Lent calls a "root metaphor": an idea so deeply embedded in our minds that it affects our preferences without our conscious knowledge.

The root metaphor in this case is exemplified by King Charles III's love affair with Transylvania, explored recently in the [New Statesman](#). What he found there "was a perfectly bottled model of life before modernity". "It's the timelessness which is so important," the king is reported to have said. "The landscape is almost out of some of those stories you used to read as a child."

Farming in Transylvania looks (or did until recently) just as it "ought" to look: tiny villages where cows with their calves, ducks with their ducklings and cats with their kittens share the dirt road with ruddy-cheeked farmers driving horses and carts; alpine pastures where sheep graze and people scythe the grass and build conical haystacks. In other words, as the king remarked, it looks like a children's book.



Making hay for animal feed in Zalánpatak, Transylvania, Romania.
Photograph: JasonBerlin/Alamy

A remarkable number of books for pre-literate children are about livestock farms. The farms they imagine look nothing like the industries that produce the meat, dairy and eggs we eat, which are generally places of horror. The stories they tell are a version of an ancient idyll of herders with their animals, built across thousands of years in pastoral poetry and religious traditions. Livestock farming in this idyll is a place of safety, harmony and comfort, into which we subconsciously burrow at times of unease.

Much of the discussion of food and farming in public life looks like an effort to recreate that happy place. As a result, many of the proposed solutions to the global food crisis seek, in effect, to revive medieval production systems – to feed a 21st-century population. It cannot end well.

For instance, there's now a foodie obsession with [hyper-free range chicken farming](#). Chickens, the new romantics propose, should follow grazing cattle, eating the insects that feed on their dung. As in the children's books, farm animals of different species interact. But the chicken is a non-native, omnivorous bird of the pheasant family. Just as we begin to recognise the [damage caused](#) by the release of pheasants into the countryside – they work through [baby snakes](#), frogs, caterpillars, spiders, seedlings – the nostalgists

seek to do the same with chickens. To the extent that chickens feed themselves in such systems, they mop up wildlife. In reality, they can't survive this way, so they continue to be fed on soy, often produced on former rainforest and [Cerrado savanna](#) in Brazil.

This is what happens when people see the pictures and not the numbers. A scene that reminds us of our place of safety at the dawning of consciousness is used as the model for how we should be fed, regardless of whether it can scale. Bucolic romanticism might seem harmless. But it leads, if enacted, to hunger, ecological destruction or both, on a vast scale. Our arcadian fantasies devour the planet.

Storybook farming never worked as the romantics claim. Widespread meat-eating in the 19th century became possible only through the colonisation and clearance of Australia and the Americas and the creation, largely by the British empire, of a [global system](#) sucking meat into rich nations. The cattle and sheep ranching that supplied our supposedly traditional diet drove the dispossession of Indigenous people and destruction of ecosystems on a massive scale, a process that [continues](#) to this day. When you challenge the story that masks these grim realities, it's perceived as an attack on our very identity.

Real solutions to our global food crises are neither beautiful nor comforting. They inevitably involve factories, and we all hate factories, don't we? In reality, almost everything we eat has passed through at least one factory (probably several) on its way to our plates. We are in deep denial about this, which is why, in the US, where [95% of the population eats meat](#), a survey found that [47% wanted to ban slaughterhouses](#).

The answer is not more fields, which means destroying even more wild ecosystems. It is partly better, more compact, cruelty-free and pollution-free factories. Among the best options, horror of horrors, is a shift from farming multicellular organisms (plants and animals) to farming unicellular creatures (microbes), which allows us to [do far more with far less](#).

King Charles would doubtless hate this. But there are 8 billion people to feed and a planet to restore, and neither can be achieved with retentive

fantasies. I've found myself contesting a cruel, polluting and self-destructive mainstream farming model on one hand and, on the other, an idyllic reverie that would lead us to the twin disaster of agricultural sprawl and world hunger. It's hard to decide which is worse.

- George Monbiot is a Guardian columnist. *Regeneration* is now published in paperback

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‘One piece of Finnish research found that babies slept longer outdoors than indoors.’ Photograph: Richard Saker/The Guardian

[Republic of Parenthood](#) [Parents and parenting](#)

British parents need to adapt to climate chaos – but not by abandoning the great outdoors

[Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett](#)



Try telling a cooped-up child they can't go out due to global heating. Luckily, we can learn from our European neighbours

Fri 26 May 2023 03.45 EDTLast modified on Fri 26 May 2023 10.03 EDT

Like all children, I hated rainy days. What I didn't realise until I had my own baby was how my parents probably hated them, too. Cooped up, whingeing babies can make cooped up, whingeing babies of their adult caregivers, too. "Get outside every day," people tell you, but you find yourself and the child all wrapped up and ready to go and standing in a doorway watching the showers come down in biblical sheets. A [2016 study](#) that found that British children spend less time outdoors than prison inmates started to make a little bit more sense.

I have sung a lot of Singin' in the Rain this past winter, and then spring, but sometimes I've been crying on the inside. I don't get [seasonal affective disorder](#), but by April my spirits were starting to feel low. The weather feels personal now, in a way that it never did before, when I could hunker down with a book or a film or a glass of red wine and a record. Now stormy weather means trying to find endless entertainment for a baby who loves nothing more than being outside and watching the wind shake the leaves. It

couldn't have been more different than the spring we brought him into the world: our postpartum euphoria as we walked him through sunlit streets, long lunches of seafood pasta while he slept in the pram, pink blossom falling like snowflakes on the day we registered his birth. This year, it's been so wet that he's only just touched grass.

It got me thinking about how weather and climate radically alter our experience of parenting and the culture of parenthood, depending on where on the planet we find ourselves. Before we had the baby, we used to go to Greece, and in my 20s I spent a year living in [Italy](#). In both cases, I was always struck by the Mediterranean attitude to parenting, the children out playing far past British bedtime, as their parents dined and socialised nearby. I always felt that I wanted to be like that – not least because a later bedtime surely means a more civilised wake-up time – but, as well as the weather, it's a challenge in a country that does not treat public space in the same way. The piazza shapes parenting, as it shapes many aspects of Italian life.

The Arctic survival parenting of Sami reindeer herders is another example of how climate shapes family life. Children are taught independence from a young age as a way of building resilience in a hostile climate – children choose when they eat and when they sleep, curling up for a nap wherever they feel like it. “Me and the children can nap on an all-terrain vehicle, snowmobile, under a rain cover in a trailer or in our van”, a woman who married into a Sami family [told the BBC](#). Families don't follow a schedule; the terms are set by the natural environment.



‘I took the baby out only in the early mornings and late evenings, though it hit 28C by 7am.’ Children play in a London fountain, 17 June 2022. Photograph: Kirsty Wigglesworth/AP

Now that things have brightened up, I have vowed to work towards helping my boy to learn to nap outside on a rug. Yesterday, in the playground, I met a Portuguese nanny who had put her charge face down on a blanket on the large circular nest swing and covered her with a coat. When I asked the woman how she had managed to get her to sleep so soundly, her response indicated that a child refusing to nap was not really an option. They sleep better outside, she said.

Scandinavians are inclined to agree. They’re famous for leaving sleeping babies in prams in the street, and will bundle them up and allow them to [nap outside](#) even in sub-zero temperatures. Nursery schools will put the children down in the garden, the theory being that the children are less likely to catch viruses than if you have them all sharing the same room. One piece of [Finnish research](#) found that babies slept longer outdoors than indoors.

Perhaps my countryside roots are manifesting in my resistance to being an urban, “indoor” parent, or perhaps being outside just feels more natural to

me. In an evolutionary sense, we are supposed to be outdoors, and, just as how babies relax during movement speaks to our nomadic past, there must be an atavistic desire to spend time in the open air.

In the climate emergency, however, outdoor parenting is going to become more challenging than ever as weather becomes more extreme. The heatwave last summer, when I took the baby out only in the early mornings and late evenings, though it hit 28C by 7am, gave me a glimpse of things to come. Will the next few decades see London become unlivable for the very young and the very old? Our architecture is not built for heat as it is in warmer countries, and I'll never forget the hellish week we spent breastfeeding under a fan, stuck together by a film of sweat. Periodically I would sponge down both the baby and Mackerel, our poor, panting cat, with flannels cooled in the fridge. We even considered putting him on Mackerel's special pet cooling mat.

Society will need to adapt, or British children will end up more cooped up than ever. I am immensely privileged to live in a place where the local government has prioritised shaded playgrounds, paddling pools and sprinkler areas, so that all children, regardless of whether they have access to a garden, can enjoy the summer. I can't wait to introduce him to the joy of water play, but perhaps it's time to think about a life that looks beyond the paddling pool to a closer engagement with nature. In the meantime, let's just hope the weather holds up.

What's working

Cheese as a vehicle for getting green veg into the baby. Like his mother, who is frequently mocked by his father for always adding it to dishes "for flavour", the baby is a fromage fiend, and will eat almost anything as long as it factors. A friend uses a similar strategy, but with desiccated coconut. Yes, on everything, including bolognese.

What's not

This kid loves wiping his mouth on everything that isn't a cloth. Feeding him has turned into a race against time: can you wipe his grubby chops

before he launches himself at your lovely blouse or the nearest piece of furniture? The answer is almost always no, which is why the ottoman is covered in little rings of yoghurt.

- Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett is a Guardian columnist and author
- ***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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‘Labour and the Tories have long had different ideas about who should be included in the electorate and who left out.’ Photograph: Finnbar Webster/Getty Images

[OpinionPolitics](#)

**Starmer is right – giving young people
the vote will mean fewer big Tory wins**

[Andy Beckett](#)



Politics used to be about targeting small swing groups, but finally Labour is thinking big and expanding the electorate

Fri 26 May 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 26 May 2023 05.24 EDT

In a democracy, who is allowed to vote – and why – are basic but always interesting questions. Especially in a democracy as old and bodged-about as Britain, with its centuries of alterations to the electorate and yet its tendency to see each new set of arrangements as somehow natural, eternal and wise.

Beneath the self-congratulation and claims of political neutrality, however, the shape of the electorate is always the product of power struggles, which are no less intense for often being hidden from sight. How adult, or how British, you need to be to have a say in how the country is governed: these are contested issues in an ever more fluid world.

They are made more contentious still by political parties. For self-interested and philosophical reasons, [Labour](#) and the Tories have long had different ideas about who should be included in the electorate and who should be left out. For more than half a century, governments of both parties have redrawn its boundaries, sometimes to their considerable advantage.

Keir Starmer's [recent suggestion](#) that 16- and 17-year-olds should be given the vote in England and Northern Ireland (they already have it in Scotland and Wales for local and devolved elections) and that EU citizens living in the UK be allowed to vote in general elections (rather than only in local ones), provoked a tellingly furious response from the Conservatives and their press allies. Labour was accused of seeking to “rig the voting system”, and of “a plot to reverse Brexit”.

In some ways, the outrage was unjustified. Reversing Brexit is not likely to be Labour policy any time soon, and accusing the party of trying to rig elections seems rich coming from a government that has just introduced a [voter ID law](#) for precisely that reason, as the increasingly loose-tongued former minister [Jacob Rees-Mogg admitted](#) last week. Faced with multiplying enemies, the Tories' unsubtle plan seems to be to give their narrow support more weight by making it harder for others to vote.

Yet Starmer's Tory critics were right about the potential importance of his proposals. His plan would add about 6.5 million people to the electorate, increasing it by 14%. And most of those new voters would probably not be Tories, given that Labour [beat](#) the Conservatives by 43 percentage points among 18- to 24-year-olds at the last election; and given how badly the government has treated Britain's EU residents since Brexit. If Labour takes power and expands the electorate, comfortable Tory general election victories could become extremely rare. Even under the current system, they have had only one since 1987.

Contemplating such large-scale shifts feels unfamiliar, even like a form of wishful thinking, because since at least the 90s, so much of our politics has been about the opposite: the targeting of small numbers of swing voters. Our first past the post system, the emphasis on marginal seats, and the ever greater precision of political research and marketing, all mean that winning elections is about gaining lots of small advantages – or so we are told by an industry of strategists, pollsters and focus group analysts.

Yet Britain also has a largely forgotten history of less reactive, more ambitious approaches to the electorate. It arguably began in 1969, when the Labour government of Harold Wilson – in whose strong election-winning

record Starmer takes a keen interest – [reduced the voting age](#) from 21 to 18. Cabinet supporters of the change argued that older teenagers were [effectively adults](#); and also that giving them the vote “will channel their political energies into regular forms of political activity and away from the kind of violent demonstration in which students have recently been indulging” – the famous 1968 uprisings. Today’s 16- and 17 year-olds are not rioting yet, despite having almost their entire lives blighted by Tory austerity; but giving them the vote might make that less likely.

Labour almost certainly gained from lowering the voting age. They won two of the next three elections. In October 1974, the first contest for which age-related voting data is available, [almost twice as many](#) 18- to 24-year-olds chose them as the Tories: a crucial factor in a narrow victory. Yet after the Conservatives returned to office in 1979, they initiated their own politically advantageous expansion of the electorate: [giving expats the vote](#) for the first time.

Treating people living abroad as legitimate participants in domestic politics suggested that the Tories were not yet ready to give up on the old imperial idea that Britain was a global nation. It also reflected a common assumption that expats were rightwing: people who had left the country to make more money, pay lower taxes and escape postwar Britain’s supposedly stifling egalitarianism. Letting them register as “overseas voters” in the British constituencies where they had last lived was attacked by Labour as “international gerrymandering”. But the Tories ignored the accusation, and then extended how long expats could retain a vote in Britain from five to 20 years. At the 1992 election, the first after this change, it was estimated that about [two-thirds of them](#) backed the Conservatives.

Nowadays, thanks largely to Brexit, expats are less likely to be Tories. Yet the questionable nature of letting people have a say over how Britain is governed without feeling some or any of the consequences remains. And so does the Conservative desire to harvest expat votes. Last year, the same [Elections Act](#) that introduced ID requirements for British residents who want to choose the rulers and policies that directly affect them included a less-noticed provision for expats to remotely enjoy “votes for life” in Britain. The government estimates that 3.5 million people could join the

electorate. The legislation is expected to take effect in time for the next election.

If Labour wins anyway, it is not guaranteed that the party will also widen the electorate. Since making his controversial suggestion about doing so Starmer has, typically, hedged his bets, saying that Labour has “no settled policy”.

In Scotland and Wales, left-leaning parties have done well in elections since 16- and 17-year-olds were given the vote. The policy is supported by the SNP, the Lib Dems, the Greens and Plaid Cymru. Teenagers may not always make the most mature voters, but as the support from much older Britons for Brexit and a succession of poor Tory prime ministers has shown, advancing age and political wisdom don't necessarily go together. It's time for Labour to make Britain a younger democracy again.

- Andy Beckett is a Guardian columnist

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‘Even with the ugliness that defines each of the Roys, there is a pervasive belief among viewers that there still must be someone for them to root for.’

Photograph: Home Box Office/HBO

[Opinion](#)[Succession](#)

No, Succession’s antiheroes don’t have a good side: that’s what makes it so compelling

[Sarah Manavis](#)

In a TV landscape offering only the worst of humanity or the syrupy best of it, I know which I’d choose

Fri 26 May 2023 03.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 26 May 2023 16.31 EDT

In debates over who is the least competent sibling, arguments for which actor’s performance is best and theories around how it’s all going to end, one question dogs social media discussion about [Succession](#): which character are you rooting for? The HBO drama surrounding the Murdoch-

esque family the Roys, fighting among themselves over who will become CEO of their media empire, has become a weekly lightning rod for debate in its final season (which ends on Monday). It's normal to wake up on a Monday to a [viral Twitter thread](#), Reddit or TikTok post putting forward a case for the morality of one of Succession's main characters.

The problem with these competing theories should be obvious to anyone who's watched the show: every character on [Succession](#) is an irredeemably bad person.

Be it Logan, the cruel and uncaring patriarch; any of his kids, each greedy, self-involved and violent in their own special way; or even the cast of secondary characters, all desperate sycophants operating entirely based on what will get them closer to power – the show is a conveyor belt of the worst human impulses. But it's not just Succession: on TV today, highbrow dramas are filled with casts of unlikable characters. From [Industry](#) to [The White Lotus](#), “prestige television” has become synonymous with knowing the people you're watching are, on the whole, mostly bad.

You can see why this is happening now. Shows full of these detestable characters – and in particular Succession – have come as a welcome relief for viewers who spent much of the last decade being preached to by soapy dramas with clear moral centres and/or obvious antiheroes (think: Orange Is the New Black, House of Cards, Master of None). The carefully drawn depravity baked into each of the Roys feels like an honest version of reality, without opportunistic sensationalism.

While this trend has accelerated, a crevasse has opened up between the two types of most popular TV, with these prestige dramas where no one is a good person sitting at one end while the other is occupied by [“nicecore” shows](#) – like Ted Lasso or [Abbott Elementary](#) – where everyone is. The latter is full of peppy, saccharine characters who spend their time overcoming easy obstacles that teach viewers lessons about love and friendship they already know. These shows' plotlines aren't only unchallenging – with happy endings expected and baked in – they increasingly act as mini-moral infomercials, where characters give

[seemingly random monologues about consent](#), bullying and the importance of “feeling your feelings”.



Jason Sudeikis in Ted Lasso, a ‘nicecore show’ Photograph: Landmark Media/Alamy

Flawed good people are much harder to capture than near-perfect ones or shallow supervillains (it’s also easier said than done to create a balanced portrayal of good and bad without cloying sweetness or cliché). This isn’t to say there should be some plucky hero trying to stick up for the little guy on Succession, or two people in a perfectly well-adjusted relationship on The White Lotus – that would ruin these thoughtfully curated ensembles. But within the current landscape there’s little of this mixed morality on screen being done well. Audiences are often left choosing between the worst of humanity or a syrupy overdose of the best of it.

But the new wave of apparently morality-free dramas do offer something that the alternative – shows about horrible people that ask you to simply judge them – would not. The increasingly saturated genre of shows and films “skewering” the rich adopted an instructive overtone where wealthy people are hammy portrayed as one-dimensional cartoon villains, such as in the now-canned Gossip Girl reboot or the recent Netflix film, Glass

Onion, resulting in flat, predictable dramas. Viewers even appeared to prefer the second season of *The White Lotus* to the first after it dropped this tone from its writing, giving its characters greater moral complexity and less moralising (which yielded a far more interesting story).

And perhaps this is partly why, even with the objective ugliness that defines each of the Roys and their nauseating counterparts, there is a pervasive belief among much of *Succession*'s audience that there still must be someone on the show for them to root for. Checking social media after each episode has become a game of seeing how far tens of thousands of viewers will go to argue that an abominable character – whether it's a Nazi sympathiser, a narcissist, a killer, or some combination of all three – is merely flawed. This impulse is so insurmountable that many people who can clearly see the bad still find themselves grappling around these casts trying to sniff out a shred of good.

Even if itself a flawed instinct, the persistence of this impulse is a large part of what makes *Succession* so successful. Its greatest trick is getting us to feel empathy for its characters in spite of their evident evil – characters who would happily ruin our lives in exchange for an inch of influence. It's why, as the series ends, many viewers are already “[pre-grieving](#)” this show that managed to make a group of such bad people watchable – for some, even beloved. In its wake, we should expect to see casts like these more often, but we shouldn't hold our breath for something that replicates its delicate, depraved balance.

- Sarah Manavis is an American writer covering technology, culture and society

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South Korean artillery battery fires at Seungjin training field in Pocheon, South Korea, during its largest ever joint live-fire drill with the US. Photograph: Thomas Maresca/UPI/Shutterstock

[South Korea](#)

North Korea slams ‘sinister’ South and allies as live-fire exercises with US begin

US, Japan and South Korea tighten monitoring of North’s missile launches; meanwhile South puts first commercial satellite in space on own rocket

[Warren Murray](#) and agencies

Thu 25 May 2023 20.11 EDT

North Korean media has criticised as “sinister measures” plans by South Korea, the United States and Japan to share real-time data on missile launches by Kim Jong-un’s regime – with the North lashing out as its

neighbour this week undertook its largest-ever live-fire exercises with the US.

The leaders of [South Korea](#), the US and Japan met at the G7 summit in Hiroshima, Japan, last weekend and discussed new coordination in the face of North Korea's illicit nuclear and missile threats. North Korea has undertaken a series of missile and weapons tests in recent months, most recently a new solid-fuel intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM). The North's missile and nuclear weapons programmes are banned by the UN security council.

With Kim Jong-un last week inspecting [what North Korea says is its first spy satellite](#), South Korea on Thursday said it successfully flew its domestically made space rocket, delivering a commercial-grade satellite into orbit.

The Nuri rocket lifted off from Naro space centre on the southern coast of South Korea at 6.24pm in its third flight after technical glitches caused the launch to be cancelled a day earlier. Among eight satellites onboard the rocket was a commercial-grade satellite that made contact with a base station in Antarctica after successfully deploying, said the science minister, Lee Jong-ho. Six other cubesats were also deployed; the outcome for a seventh cubesat was not yet known.

President Yoon Suk Yeol said the launch placed South Korea among the top seven countries that have put domestically produced satellites into orbit with domestically built launch vehicles.

The Nuri is central to South Korea's ambitious plans to jumpstart its space programme and boost progress in 6G networks, spy satellites and even lunar probes.



South Korea's homegrown Nuri rocket, carrying eight satellites, lifts off from Naro space centre in Goheung, South Jeolla province. Photograph: Korea Aerospace Research Institute/EPA

Seoul also plans to launch military satellites, but has ruled out any weapons use for the Nuri.

Construction at North Korea's satellite-launching station has hit a "new level of urgency", a US-based thinktank said in a report on Thursday, citing satellite imagery.

Meanwhile, South Korea is reportedly to start sending hundreds of thousands of artillery rounds to Ukraine. The Wall Street Journal, citing unnamed sources, said Seoul had reached the "confidential arrangement" with Washington to transfer the shells to the US to be delivered to Ukraine.

Jeon Ha-kyu, spokesman at South Korea's defence ministry, said on Thursday that it had been in talks with the Pentagon on ammunition exports but that there were "inaccurate parts" in the WSJ report. South Korea had previously ruled out sending lethal aid to Ukraine, citing business ties with Russia and Moscow's influence over North Korea.

Arming Ukraine would set South Korea even further apart on the international stage from North Korea, which backs Russia in the Ukraine war, is believed to have supplied Russia's military, and along with Syria is one of only two countries recognising Russia's annexation of Ukrainian territories.

With Reuters

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A screengrab showing Elon Musk standing next to a surgical robot during a Neuralink presentation.

Photograph: Neuralink/AFP/Getty Images

[Elon Musk](#)

Elon Musk's brain implant company Neuralink approved for in-human study

The Food and Drug Administration, which had initially rejected the application, finally gave the company the green light

Reuters

Thu 25 May 2023 21.40 EDT Last modified on Fri 26 May 2023 11.25 EDT

Neuralink, Elon Musk's brain-implant company, said on Thursday it had received a green light from the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to kickstart its first in-human clinical study, a critical milestone after earlier struggles to gain approval.

Musk has predicted on at least four occasions since 2019 that his medical device company would begin human trials for a brain implant to treat severe conditions such as paralysis and blindness.

Yet the company, founded in 2016, only sought FDA approval in early 2022 – and the agency rejected the application, seven current and former employees told Reuters in March.

The FDA had pointed out several concerns to Neuralink that needed to be addressed before sanctioning human trials, according to the employees. Major issues involved the lithium battery of the device, the possibility of the implant's wires migrating within the brain and the challenge of safely extracting the device without damaging brain tissue.

Thursday's FDA approval comes as US lawmakers are urging regulators to investigate whether the makeup of a panel overseeing animal testing at Neuralink contributed to botched and rushed experiments.

Neuralink has already been the subject of federal investigations.

Last year, the USDA's inspector general began investigating, at the request of a federal prosecutor, potential violations of the Animal Welfare Act, which governs how researchers treat and conduct tests on certain types of animals. The company has killed about 1,500 animals, including more than 280 sheep, pigs and monkeys, following experiments since 2018, Reuters previously reported.

The inquiry has also been looking at the USDA's oversight of Neuralink.

In a tweet on Thursday, Neuralink said it was not yet open for a clinical trial.

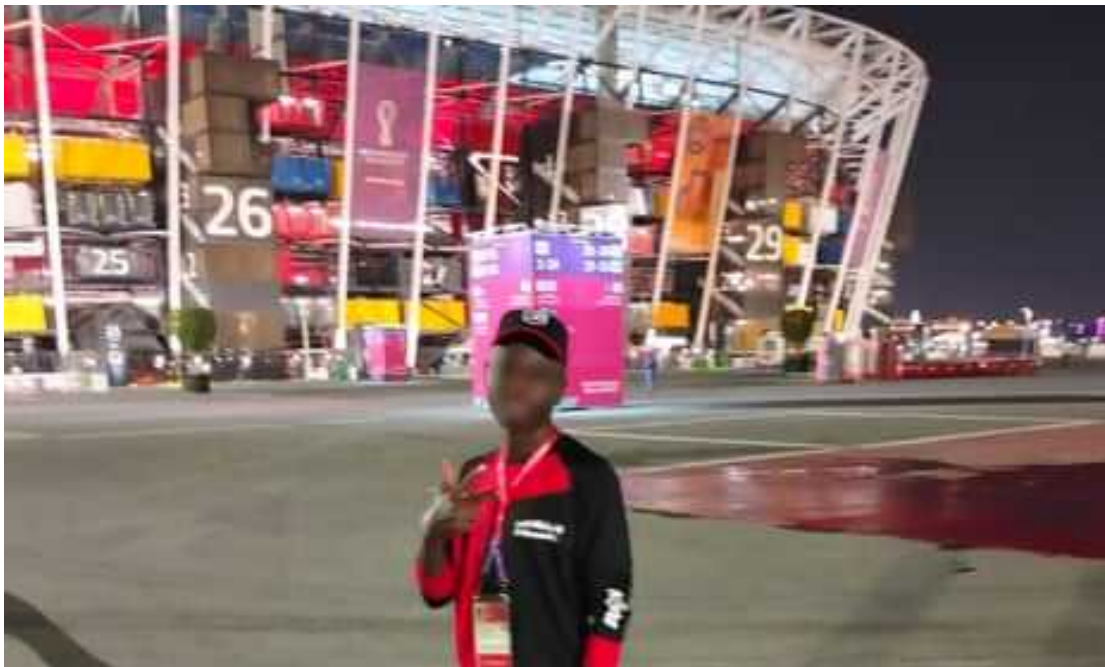
“This is the result of incredible work by the Neuralink team in close collaboration with the FDA and represents an important first step that will one day allow our technology to help many people,” the company said in a tweet on Thursday.

Over the years, Musk has publicly outlined an ambitious plan for Neuralink. He made headlines late last year when he said he was already so confident in the device's safety that he would be willing to implant them in his own children.

Musk envisions both disabled and healthy individuals swiftly getting surgical implants at local centers. These devices aim to cure a range of conditions from obesity, autism, depression and schizophrenia, and to enabling web browsing and telepathy.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2023/may/25/elon-musk-neuralink-brain-implant-fda-approval-human-study>.

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A security guard outside Stadium 974. Two guards from Kenya who worked at the stadium were told they were fired as the tournament ended. Photograph: Pete Pattison

[Rights and freedomWorkers' rights](#)

World Cup security guards still jailed in Qatar after dispute over unpaid wages

Workers at World Cup 2022 venues fired as tournament ended and allegedly jailed or deported after trying to claim unpaid wages

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[Pete Pattison](#) in Doha, Imran Mukhtar in Islamabad and Praveen Yadav in Kathmandu

Fri 26 May 2023 00.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 26 May 2023 04.38 EDT

Three [World Cup](#) security guards who were detained while trying to resolve a dispute over unpaid wages are still being held in Qatar four months after their arrest.

Shakir Ullah and Zafar Iqbal from [Pakistan](#), and an Indian national, have allegedly been sentenced to six months in prison and fined 10,000 riyals (£2,220) each.

The findings, first established by the human rights group Equidem and verified by the Guardian, are a shocking postscript to the World Cup, which Fifa promised would leave a lasting legacy of better workers' rights in the Gulf state. [Qatar](#) has not commented on the case.

The three men were among hundreds of security guards, employed by Stark Security Services, a local private security company, who were deployed at key sites throughout the World Cup but were laid off in the days after the final, with months still left on their contracts.

Ullah, who was affectionately known as *chacha* (uncle in Urdu) by his colleagues, was described by one as a “calm, quiet person, but when it comes to his rights, he will not allow you to cheat him”.

Calling for the immediate release of the three men, Equidem’s director, Mustafa Qadri, said the men had been punished for simply demanding what they and hundreds of their colleagues were owed after their contracts were terminated early.

“This is the true cost of Fifa’s reckless disregard for the rights of people who help them generate huge profits,” Qadri said.

Hundreds of other former Stark Security workers are also coming to terms with their own traumatic ordeal after disputing the early termination of their contracts.

While Lionel Messi lifted the World Cup trophy in Qatar after what Fifa’s president, Gianni Infantino, called the [“best ever” World Cup](#), Jacob* and Patrick*, from Kenya, were told they were being fired.

They had spent much of the tournament working as security guards at Stadium 974, which hosted matches involving Argentina, Brazil, France and Portugal and stars such as Messi, Mbappé and Ronaldo.

They say the message came as a shock, because their contracts still had three months left to run. They were then instructed to collect their final salary for the days they had worked in December and leave their accommodation.

Just days after the final they suddenly found themselves jobless and homeless. “When they needed you, they treated you well, but now they are done with you, you are nothing to them,” said Jacob.



Workers interviewed by the Guardian believed they had been hired for six months but allege that their jobs were terminated early. Photograph: Pete Pattison

Worse was to come: after attempting to dispute the early termination of their contracts, the two men were allegedly detained and deported along with hundreds of others.

“They say it was the most beautiful World Cup, but at the end of the day we just lost everything,” said Patrick.

In the months leading up to the World Cup, Stark Security took on hundreds of security guards to be deployed at key tournament sites. “Because it was Fifa, we all said ‘let’s join’,” said another worker from Ghana.

The Guardian interviewed nine security guards who worked for the company, including Jacob and Patrick, all of whom had their employment terminated early. Four were allegedly later deported and five others were fired at the same time or shortly afterwards but were not deported.

The workers’ contracts, seen by the Guardian, promised a monthly salary of 2,700 riyals (£600) for working seven days a week, as well as providing them with food and accommodation.

The nine workers interviewed by the Guardian all believed they had been employed for six months. Their contracts stated: “Notice period: six months post date of joining.” Under reforms made to Qatar’s labour laws in 2020, employers and workers can end contracts early, but they must give one month’s notice.

“We went to Qatar to earn money and make a better life for our family, but the company and authorities cheated us,” said another fired security guard from Pakistan. “We felt so helpless.”

With nowhere else to stay, no way to repay the huge debts they had taken on to get to Qatar and few other jobs available once the World Cup had finished, Jacob, Patrick and hundreds of other security guards attempted to negotiate with Stark Security and filed a complaint with the Qatari government.

“We told them: we’re still willing to work,” said Jacob. “We have not failed you in any way, we have not committed any crime; if you wish to stop [employing] us, you have to compensate us for these three remaining months.”

But Stark Security told them that there was no more work as the tournament was over, and, according to the workers, ordered the labour camp to stop serving food to them. “They kept coming to the accommodation and threatening us, banging on our door so we would leave,” said Jacob.

On 23 January, about 200 of the guards hired buses to take them to the headquarters of a company associated with Stark Security to negotiate for their unpaid wages. Staff allegedly called the police and claimed the workers were blocking the road. The guards said, apart from their leaders, they did not even get off the buses.

The workers were allegedly taken to a detention centre by the police, with more than 200 later deported, including the four men interviewed by the Guardian, who had been on the buses.

Eventually, with no other options, the men interviewed by the Guardian accepted their wages for the days they had worked in December. Any hope they might be paid for the remaining months of their contract was lost. They said that they, along with all the other men detained with them, were deported within a week. Only Shakir Ullah and his two colleagues remained.

Equidem said it had interviewed 43 men who had worked for Stark Security and allegedly had their contracts terminated early and been deported.

For those who say they were forced to return home, the sense of outrage and shock is still raw. Some blame the Qatari regime. “Nothing happens without its knowledge. We should have gotten our rights if the Qatar government had cared,” said Jacob.

But that anger is also directed at Fifa, which made \$7.5bn (£6bn) over the four years leading up to the Qatar World Cup. “Fifa made big money from the World Cup and we deserve our share,” said a guard from Ghana.

A spokesperson for Qatar government’s international media office said an investigation found that Stark Security had failed to comply with all of Qatar’s labour laws and would be penalised.

It confirmed the workers had been employed on temporary six-month contracts, but “a resolution was swiftly reached between the company and its employees, whereby the workers were remunerated in full for their services and their contracts were concluded in accordance with their specified terms”.

It did not confirm if any of the workers had been deported, but said: “Qatar does not arrest or deport workers for seeking to resolve their employment disputes. The rights of all individuals working in Qatar are upheld and protected through the fair and just application of legal due process.”

Fifa directed the Guardian to an earlier statement it made on the case, in which it said it “seeks to facilitate discussions at host country level, to explore available options for remedy”.

Stark Security Services did not respond to requests for comment. Qatar's local World Cup organising committee declined to comment.

** Names have been changed to protect individuals' identities.*

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2023/may/26/world-cup-security-guards-still-jailed-in-qatar-after-dispute-over-unpaid-wages>

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Joe Biden’s advisers say the president understands he cannot strengthen relations with Pacific allies by jamming ‘our views down their throat’. Photograph: Susan Walsh/AP

[US foreign policy.](#)

Joe Biden’s advisers say he doesn’t want to drag Pacific allies into ‘headlong clash’ between US and China

Senior White House official says president hears region’s concerns and ‘does not want conflict’ with China

[Daniel Hurst](#) *Foreign affairs and defence correspondent*

Fri 26 May 2023 00.43 EDTLast modified on Fri 26 May 2023 00.51 EDT

Joe Biden’s senior advisers have acknowledged countries in the Indo-Pacific don’t want to be “trampled by a headlong clash” between the US and China.

In a webinar with an Australian audience on Friday, senior White House national security council (NSC) officials said the US president wanted to give allies and other close partners “breathing space” to engage with [China](#) constructively.

Edgard Kagan, the NSC’s senior director for east Asia and Oceania, said Biden had been listening to the region’s concerns.

“I think the president is very focused on the fact that we cannot strengthen our relations with allies and partners if we just try and jam our views down their throat,” Kagan said. “That’s not who he is.”

Beijing has [accused the G7 countries of collaborating](#) to “smear and attack” it at last weekend’s summit in Hiroshima, Japan, after leaders outlined strong concerns about China’s actions in the region.

But after attending the summit, Biden told reporters to expect improvements in the US-China relationship, adding: “In terms of talking with them, I think you’re going to see that thaw very shortly.”

The Australian government is also seeking to “stabilise” its relationship with China, with the prime minister, [Anthony Albanese](#), suggesting he is open to travelling to Beijing later this year if restrictions on Australian exports are removed.

Kagan said on Friday that Biden had “long been very clear that he does not want conflict” with China, even though there would be “very serious competition” between the two countries.

“We both have strong interests and important interests but that doesn’t mean that can’t find ways in which we’re able to at least sit down together, work together where possible,” Kagan told the webinar hosted by the United States Studies Centre at the University of Sydney.

Mira Rapp-Hooper, the director for Indo-Pacific strategy at the NSC, admitted the tone of Biden’s recent comments seeking constructive talks

with China was also “an important tool of alliance management”.

She acknowledged that allies and partners, within the region and across the world, “don’t want to feel like they’re being forced to choose between two competing great powers”.

“They don’t want to feel like they’re being trampled by a headlong clash,” Rapp-Hooper said.

“He chose to signal that to the rest of the world, as well, because for so many allies and partners having that bit of breathing space where they feel like they, too, can engage China on constructive terms if they need to or want to is really important.”

Biden cut short his trip to the region, postponing planned trips to Papua New Guinea and Australia, so that he could focus on the high-stakes negotiations with congressional republicans over the debt ceiling.

That forced the cancellation of the planned Quad summit at the Sydney Opera House on Wednesday, although the leaders of the US, Japan, Australia and India still met in Hiroshima.

Kurt Campbell, the coordinator for Indo-Pacific affairs at the NSC, told the same webinar that Biden still travelled to Japan because postponing the entire trip would be “catastrophic”.

Campbell [acknowledged there were](#) “obvious concerns and worries” within the Indo-Pacific about whether the region could “count on the United States” to be a “steady predictable force”.

He said Biden had expressed his “deepest regrets” to Albanese and the pair had still proceeded with the signing of a “[blockbuster agreement](#) on climate and the provision of critical minerals”.

Biden and Albanese also took steps to ensure “all elements of Aukus”, including the [nuclear-powered submarine plan](#) and collaboration on other advanced defence technology, were “on track”.

A [report issued by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute](#) on Friday said Aukus and other moves would see the defence relationship between Australia and the US “grow in scope and complexity”

But US military personnel commonly did “not fully grasp” Australia’s sensitivities to maintaining its own sovereignty, according to Col Alan W Throop, a US Army War College fellow at Aspi.

He called on the US Department of Defense to “understand that sovereignty is essential when dealing with the Australian Defence system”.

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Stewart Rhodes pictured in 2017. Other members of the Oath Keepers are due to be sentenced this week and next. Photograph: Susan Walsh/AP

[US Capitol attack](#)

Far-right Oath Keepers founder sentenced to 18 years over January 6 attack

Stewart Rhodes was convicted of seditious conspiracy for his role in Capitol insurrection

[Martin Pengelly](#) in New York and agencies

Thu 25 May 2023 14.19 EDTFirst published on Thu 25 May 2023 13.15 EDT

Stewart Rhodes, the founder of the far-right Oath Keepers militia, was sentenced on Thursday to 18 years in prison, after being convicted of seditious conspiracy for his role in the January 6 attack on Congress.

Prosecutors sought a 25-year term. Lawyers for Rhodes said he should be sentenced to time served, since his arrest in January 2022.

Before handing down the sentence, the US district judge, Amit Mehta, told a defiant Rhodes he posed a continued threat to the US government, saying it was clear he “wants democracy in this country to devolve into violence”.

“The moment you are released, whenever that may be, you will be ready to take up arms against your government,” Mehta said.

Rhodes claimed the prosecution was politically motivated.

“I’m a political prisoner and like President Trump my only crime is opposing those who are destroying our country,” he said.

Rhodes also noted that he never went inside the Capitol on January 6 and insisted he never told anyone else to do so.

But members of the Oath Keepers took an active role on 6 January 2021, when a mob incited by Donald Trump smashed its way into the Capitol, attempting to stop certification of Joe Biden’s election win.

Prosecutors successfully made the case that Rhodes and his group prepared an armed rebellion, including stashing arms at a Virginia hotel, meant for quick transfer to [Washington DC](#).

Other members of the Oath Keepers, some convicted of seditious conspiracy, are due to be sentenced this week and next. Members of [another far-right group](#), the Proud Boys, will face sentencing on similar [convictions](#) later this year.

Nine deaths have been linked to the January 6 attack, including suicides among law enforcement. More than 1,000 arrests have been made and more than 500 [convictions](#) secured.

In court filings in the Oath Keepers cases, prosecutors said: “The justice system’s reaction to January 6 bears the weighty responsibility of impacting whether January 6 becomes an outlier or a watershed moment.”

Like all other forms of Trump's attempted election subversion, the attack on Congress failed. In the aftermath, Trump was impeached for a second time, for inciting an insurrection. He was acquitted by Senate Republicans.

Laying out Trump's actions after the 2020 election, the House January 6 committee made [four criminal referrals](#) to the justice department. The former president still faces potential indictments in state and federal investigations of his election subversion and role in the attack on Congress. Nonetheless, he remains the clear frontrunner for the Republican presidential nomination next year.

At Thursday's hearing, speaking for the prosecution, the assistant US attorney Kathryn Rakoczy pointed to interviews and speeches Rhodes has given from jail repeating Trump's lie that the 2020 election was stolen and saying the 2024 election would be stolen too.

In remarks just days ago, Rhodes called for "regime change", Rakoczy said.

People "across the political spectrum" want to believe January 6 was an "outlier", Rakoczy said. "Not defendant Rhodes."

A defense lawyer, Phillip Linder, denied Rhodes gave orders for Oath Keepers to enter the Capitol on January 6. But he told the judge Rhodes could have had many more Oath Keepers come to the Capitol "if he really wanted" to disrupt certification of the electoral college vote.

In a first for a January 6 case, Judge Mehta agreed with prosecutors to apply enhanced penalties for "terrorism" under the argument that the Oath Keepers sought to influence the government through "intimidation or coercion".

Judges in previous sentencings had shot down the justice department request for the so-called "terrorism enhancement", which can lead to a longer prison term, but Mehta said it fitted Rhodes's case.

"Mr Rhodes directed his co-conspirators to come to the Capitol and they abided," the judge said.

Asked if Mehta's acceptance of the enhancement boded ill for others found guilty of seditious conspiracy, Carl Tobias, a law professor at the University of Richmond, Virginia, said prosecutors "argued that the judge should apply the enhancement because the 'need to deter others is especially strong because these defendants engaged in acts that were intended to influence the government through intimidation or coercion – in other words, terrorism'.

"The judge then stated, 'It's hard to say it doesn't apply when someone is convicted of seditious conspiracy.'

"Mehta apparently accepted that argument in imposing the sentence today and may well apply it to others who have been convicted of seditious conspiracy, as he has heard the evidence presented."

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Headlines

- Immigration UK net migration hits record high despite Tory promises to cut arrivals
- Live PM says immigration numbers 'too high' but system not 'out of control'
- Exclusive Tory pledge to build 40 'new' England hospitals likely to be delayed until after 2030
- Energy bills Britain's price cap falls to £2,074 but households will see little relief
- Live Energy bills: Ofgem cuts price cap to £2,074 from July



Rishi Sunak is facing a backlash from Tory MPs. Photograph: Jordan Pettitt/PA

[Immigration and asylum](#)

Rishi Sunak faces Tory backlash as net migration reaches record high

Prime minister says numbers are ‘too high’ after ONS data showing net migration into UK for 2022 was 606,000

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

[Rajeev Syal](#) *Home affairs editor*

Thu 25 May 2023 09.39 EDTFirst published on Thu 25 May 2023 04.37 EDT

Rishi Sunak has been accused of abandoning control of UK borders and faces a backlash from Conservative MPs after net migration and the backlog of asylum claims reached record highs, it emerged on Thursday.

The prime minister was forced to concede that the numbers should come down after [figures from the Office for National Statistics](#) showed that overall migration into the UK for 2022 was 606,000, which represents a 24% increase on the previous high of 488,000 last year.

The immigration minister, Robert Jenrick, appeared to suggest processing claims faster could encourage more people to come to the country through illegal routes after Home Office figures showed that more than 100,000 people had waited longer than six months for a decision.

Total long-term immigration was estimated at about 1.2 million in 2022, and emigration was 557,000, the ONS said.

The rise had been largely fuelled by people from outside the EU entering the UK to study, work or escape conflict or oppression.

According to the ONS data, the non-EU arrivals included 361,000 students and their families, 235,000 people coming for work-related reasons, 172,000 coming on humanitarian schemes from countries including Ukraine, Hong Kong and Afghanistan, and 76,000 people claiming asylum.

But after repeated claims by Conservative governments since 2010 that they would cut net migration, Sunak was forced to concede on ITV's This Morning that the numbers should come down. "Numbers are too high, it's as simple as that. And I want to bring them down," he said.

Yvette Cooper, the shadow home secretary, said Sunak had lost control. "The Conservatives' chaotic approach means that work visas are up 119%, net migration is more than twice the level ministers were aiming for, and the asylum backlog is at a record high despite Sunak promising to clear it this year."

Tory MPs warned of voter anger and frustration at "unsustainable" levels of net migration.

Aaron Bell, the MP for Newcastle-under-Lyme, said the figures were too high and his voters would "expect to see them fall", while Louie French, the

MP for Old Bexley and Sidcup, said the “unsustainable levels of migration” were having a “significant impact” on housing.

Sir Edward Leigh, the MP for Gainsborough, said: “Some people in the Treasury seem to think a good way to grow the economy is to fill the country up with more and more people, but this is bad for productivity and bad for British workers who are being undercut by mass migration from all over the world.”

Martin Vickers, the Cleethorpes MP, said voters’ “anger and frustration will grow when they consider these legal migration figures”.

Home Office figures released on Thursday showed that 172,758 people were waiting for an initial decision on an asylum application in the UK at the end of March 2023.

This was up 57% from 109,735 at the end of March 2022 and was the highest figure since current records began in 2010.

[graph shown net migration](#)

Appearing in parliament to answer an urgent question, Jenrick was asked why fewer than 1% of people who arrived on small boats last year had had their asylum claims determined.

The minister replied: “It is not correct, however, to suggest that if you can process illegal migrants’ claims faster that that will reduce the number of people coming into the country. In all likelihood it’ll lead to an increase.”

Ministers have been braced for the net migration figure for several weeks, and have managed expectations by briefing to media organisations that the figure could be as much as 1 million.

The figure is more than double the level recorded in 2019, when the Conservative party pledged in its election manifesto to reduce immigration.

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It is particularly embarrassing for the arch-Brexitters Sunak and [Suella Braverman](#), who argued that leaving the EU would allow them to take control of UK borders.

The pre-Brexit average of net migration was between 200,000 and 250,000 people a year. Braverman last year said she aimed to reduce overall migration to “tens of thousands” and Sunak has previously stuck to Boris Johnson’s 2019 pledge to bring down the overall figures to below 245,000. This week he has declined to give a specific target.

[Chart: total number of non-EU nationals who immigrated long term into the UK by reason \(2018-2022\), in thousands](#)

Despite Sunak’s promise to reduce the asylum backlog this year, the number of people waiting for an initial decision went up to 172,758 from 166,261, Home Office statistics show. The number waiting more than six months has increased by about 10,000 to 128,812.

The number of foreign criminals and people refused asylum removed in 2022 was 38,000, the lowest number on record other than during the years of the pandemic, the Home Office figures showed.

Immigration, via regular routes such as visa schemes and irregular routes such as across the Channel in small boats, will be a significant political battleground at the general election expected next year.

[graph showing visa recipients](#)

The increase in net migration – the number of people entering the country minus those leaving – will result in demands from Conservative MPs to go further to meet their 2019 manifesto pledge.

Although ministers claim a crackdown on students would have a “tangible” effect on net migration, their own forecasts acknowledged that net migration would still be about 500,000 by the time of the next election, due at the end of 2024.

A Home Office spokesperson said: “This week we carried out the toughest ever action by government to reduce migration by removing the right for most international students to bring family members, while continuing to benefit from the skills and resources our economy needs.

“We remain committed to reducing overall net migration, while stopping the boats and delivering control of our borders, prioritising tackling abuse and preventing dangerous and illegal crossings.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/may/25/uk-net-migration-record-high-despite-tory-promises-cut-arrivals>

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Man arrested after car crashes into Downing Street gates – as it happened

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The pledge to build and fund 40 new hospitals over the next 10 years was one of the major headlines of Boris Johnson's pitch to the electorate in 2019. Photograph: Xinhua/REX/Shutterstock

[Hospitals](#)

Tory pledge to build 40 'new' England hospitals likely to be delayed until after 2030

Delay to key pledge of last Conservative manifesto likely to anger MPs who wanted action before next election

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

[Aubrey Allegretti](#) and [Denis Campbell](#)

Thu 25 May 2023 05.28 EDT Last modified on Thu 25 May 2023 06.36 EDT

The health secretary is set to signal a major delay to one of the [headline promises in the last Conservative manifesto](#) by suggesting the delivery of 40 new hospitals in England is likely to be pushed back until after 2030.

In a move that will spark anger among MPs who wanted “spades in the ground” before the next election, government sources said [Steve Barclay](#) would make the announcement on Thursday.

The pledge to build and fund “40 new hospitals over the next 10 years” was one of the major headlines of Boris Johnson’s pitch to the electorate in 2019.

Sources indicated the government had been ready to make the announcement about the probable delay for some time, but it was repeatedly pushed back because of fears about a backlash from Tory MPs.

Instead, Barclay is expected to commit to prioritising five hospitals where roofs and ceilings are most at risk of sudden collapse because they are made from reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC).

The cheaper, lightweight form of concrete was used in the building of many schools and hospitals in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s but is now well past its intended 30-year lifespan.

The risk is so acute that some hospitals have deployed steel stilts to stop ceilings and roofs from falling down. The Queen Elizabeth hospital in King’s Lynn in Norfolk – which is widely used by constituents of the former prime minister Liz Truss – has deployed about 1,500 such supports, for example.

Tory MPs in marginal seats were hoping progress on new or improved hospitals could be pointed to in the run-up to the next election, as evidence of their commitment to the “levelling up” agenda.

But the news is likely to lead to fresh claims that Rishi Sunak’s government has ditched the legacy of his predecessor-but-one.

When Johnson made the claim in 2019 that he would deliver “40 new hospitals”, he was accused of being misleading, as critics said the bulk of the projects involved rebuilding of existing hospitals or consolidation.

The scheme came with a promised spending package of £3.7bn. However, [NHS](#) Providers, which represents hospital trusts, said at the time the real cost of building 40 new hospitals would be more like £20bn. Construction costs have soared since 2019, especially as a result of shortages of labour and key materials.

In the aftermath of Covid, Johnson used the policy as evidence of his commitment to “build back better and deliver the biggest hospital building programme in a generation”.

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Barclay is expected to make clear in his oral statement to MPs whether those five hospitals will be given five of the eight places in the [New Hospitals](#) Programme or if they will be added to it, taking the number of promised “new” facilities to more than the long-promised 40.

Those five had previously applied to NHS England for £332m of extra funding between them to tackle their RAAC problems, [New Civil Engineer](#) disclosed last October.

The risk posed by RAAC which has gone past its intended lifespan was highlighted dramatically in 2018 when the [flat roof of a primary school in Essex collapsed](#) without warning. No one was injured because it happened at a weekend. But the incident focused attention in the NHS on the danger to patients and staff of the same thing occurring in a hospital.

Barclay is also expected to clarify whether the £3.7bn budget for the hospital renewal programme will be expanded, especially if any or all of the five most beset by RAAC problems are added to it.

A Department of [Health](#) and Social Care spokesperson said: “We are investing £3.7bn for the first four years of the new hospital programme and remain committed to delivering all 40 new hospitals by 2030 as part of the biggest hospital building programme in a generation. Our new national approach to constructing hospitals will see them built more rapidly and give value for money.

“We remain committed to eradicating reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete from the NHS estate by 2035 and protecting patient and staff safety in the interim period.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/may/25/tory-pledge-to-build-40-new-england-hospitals-likely-to-be-delayed-until-after-2030>



Most people will not feel better off despite the lower fuel cap, fuel poverty campaigners say. Photograph: monkeybusinessimages/Getty Images/iStockphoto

[Energy bills](#)

Ofgem energy price cap falls to £2,074 but households will see little relief

Consumers still paying almost twice as much for gas and electricity as in October 2021 despite cut by regulator

- [Ofgem's energy price cap cut: how the changes affect you](#)
- [Business live: all the latest news](#)

[Jillian Ambrose](#)

Thu 25 May 2023 07.18 EDTFirst published on Thu 25 May 2023 02.03 EDT

Great Britain's energy price cap has fallen to £2,074 a year, but the average household will still pay almost double the rate for their gas and electricity than before costs started to soar.

About 27m households can expect a modest drop in energy bills this summer after the regulator Ofgem [lowered the cap](#) on the typical annual dual-fuel tariff to reflect a steep drop in global energy prices over recent months.

From July, when the change takes effect, households will see their average gas and electricity bill fall from the £2,500 a year level set by [the government's energy price guarantee](#). However, those who struggled to pay their bills over the winter will feel little relief, because government top-ups worth £400 between October to March [have come to an end](#).

Households also face being charged an extra £10 a year on their energy bills from October to bolster the profits of their energy provider, under plans put forward by the regulator alongside the new cap.

Ofgem has justified increasing the amount of profit suppliers can make from 1.9% to 2.4% because this would prevent them going bust, and the cost of bailing out a failed supplier would be higher. Under the plan, annual supplier profits would climb from £37 a household to £47.

The plan to bolster energy company profits sparked one of the biggest share price rises of the day for the owner of British [Gas](#). Shares in Centrica climbed by about 2% after analysts estimated that the move could hand the company an extra £56m a year.

Gillian Cooper, the head of energy policy at Citizens Advice, said: "Supplier profit margins in the retail price cap have already increased in line with energy bills and we are not convinced further increases are justified. We need to keep the focus on providing more support to people this winter."

Under the new cap, the average energy bill will remain almost double the level seen in October 2021 – when Russia began restricting supplies of gas to Europe in a move that sent wholesale prices soaring. Before the energy crisis, the typical household paid £1,271 a year for [gas and electricity](#).

Households could still face dual-fuel bills above £2,074 if they use more than the typical amount of energy because Ofgem's cap limits the rate energy suppliers can charge customers for each unit of gas and electricity – not the total bill.

The cap does not offer help to businesses, charities or public sector organisations such as schools, hospitals and care homes. A scheme brought in by the government at the start of April offers eligible businesses a discount on the wholesale price of energy, offering a total of up to £5.5bn of support over a year, far less than the estimated £18bn over six months given out under the previous aid package.

Jonathan Brearley, the chief executive of Ofgem, said that after a difficult winter for consumers it was encouraging to see that “prices are moving in the right direction”.

“However, we know people are still finding it hard, the cost of living crisis continues and these bills will still be troubling many people up and down the country. Where people are struggling, we urge them to contact their supplier who will be able to offer a range of support, such as payment plans or access to hardship funds.”

Brearley added that households were “unlikely to see prices return to the levels we saw before the energy crisis” in the medium term and called on the government to work with Ofgem, consumer groups and the wider industry to help support vulnerable groups.

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Simon Francis, a coordinator at the End Fuel [Poverty](#) Coalition, said: “The sting in the tail to this announcement is that customers are still going to be paying roughly the same for their energy as last winter. And after months of inflation and the wider cost of living crisis, people are even less able to afford these high energy bills.”

Fuel poverty campaigners at National Energy Action have warned that most households are unlikely to feel any better off, and about 6.5m households will remain in [fuel poverty despite the lower rate](#).

Energy experts believe households could face much higher than normal energy bills for years to come, as Russia’s war in Ukraine keeps prices on the global gas markets stubbornly high and at risk of sudden price surges. Analysts at Cornwall Insight have warned they do not expect bills to return to pre-2020 levels before the end of the decade at the earliest.

Jeremy Hunt, the chancellor of the exchequer, vowed that the government would be willing to intervene to protect families from unexpected price rises in the future.

“I don’t want to predict today what might happen to energy prices,” he told Sky News. “All I can say is that I think I have demonstrated in the autumn statement and the spring budget where I extended [government support] by three months, funded in part by a windfall tax on oil companies, that we are willing to do what it takes.”

Georgia Whitaker, a campaigner for Greenpeace UK, said the winter energy crisis “should have been a wake-up call for the government to deliver the nationwide insulation programme and wholesale switch to cheap, renewable powered heat pumps”.

Grant Shapps, the energy secretary, said: “We’ve spent billions to protect families when prices rose over the winter covering nearly half a typical household’s energy bill – and we’re now seeing costs fall even further with wholesale energy prices down by over two-thirds since their peak.”

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[Business live](#)**Business**

Jeremy Hunt doesn't rule out further energy bill support, after Ofgem lowers price cap; UK borrowing costs climb – as it happened

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2023.05.25 - Spotlight

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- [Chillaxing at Chequers How Boris Johnson used the PM's country house](#)
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Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher and Mark Hamill in Return of the Jedi
Photograph: Lucasfilm/Allstar

[Star Wars: Return of the Jedi](#)

Return of the Jedi at 40: a flawed reminder of when Star Wars was still an event

The third chapter in the beloved sci-fi saga is riddled with problems but there's still something charming in revisiting the universe before it expanded too much

[Scott Tobias](#)

Thu 25 May 2023 02.43 EDTLast modified on Thu 25 May 2023 15.01 EDT

Early in Return of the Jedi, Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) and his band of rebels are back on Tatooine, where Jabba the Hutt, a gluttonous slug who presides over the criminal underground like a late Roman emperor, is

keeping Han Solo (Harrison Ford) frozen in carbonite. By trade and trickery, they attempt to pry Han loose from Jabba's clutches, but all they succeed in doing is getting captured, one by one, and making the beast angrier. But rather than kill them outright, Jabba enslaves Princess Leia (Carrie Fisher, looking less comfortable than any human in history) and condemns the other to the Dunes, where they will be fed to a giant worm-like beast called the sarlacc.

"In his belly," announces Jabba, "you will find a new definition of pain and suffering, as you will be digested over 1,000 years."

Forty years ago, the sarlacc seemed like the gnarliest creature in the galaxy, treating its victims to a hell that only just begins when they walk the plank and drop into the abyss of its hungry maw. Now, the sarlacc feels more like a metaphor for the [Star Wars](#) franchise itself, which keeps grinding ceaselessly away at its own mythology, leaving no small bone or tendon undigested. Even the bounty hunter Boba Fett, a minor character dropped into the pit and presumably gone forever, had his own mediocre series on Disney+.

Yet Return of the Jedi, for all its flaws, still has the power to bring you back to a time when Star Wars was an event, a cohesive and awe-inspiring piece of world-building that hadn't yet started to deconstruct itself. It was also firmly in the hands of its creator, [George Lucas](#), who would mothball the entire series for 16 years until tackling the prequels, with Disney's sequel trilogy coming another 11 years after those ended. The gaps between trilogies are large enough to allow for generational attachments to each one, but the integration of the entire Star Wars universe over time has had the effect of eroding rather than enriching the experience. There's hardly a beat that hasn't been significantly worked out.

One of the problems with Return of the Jedi is that the franchise had already started to eat its own tail. In the original Star Wars, the Rebel Alliance went to incredible lengths to seek out vulnerabilities in the Galactic Empire's planet-zapping Death Star and destroy it. (Just intercepting the *blueprints* for the Death Star would lead to a prequel

movie, *Rogue One*, and perhaps the best of the Disney+ series, *Andor*.) *Return of the Jedi* is ultimately about the Rebel Alliance going to incredible lengths to seek out vulnerabilities in the rebuilt Death Star, which either says something profound about history repeating itself or is more simply a case of Lucas returning to the well.

Nevertheless, *Return of the Jedi* carries a lot of momentum from *The Empire Strikes Back*, the best of all the Star Wars movies, which leaves it in a place where Luke has to pick himself back up from revelations about his father and the Empire's renewed strength in crushing the resistance. As a Jedi-in-training, Luke has gained power that's coupled with uncertainty, because he's not in full command of a Force that Darth Vader and the Emperor intend to use to lure him to the dark side. Fate has dictated that Luke and Darth Vader will have a father-son relationship, but the terms are under violent negotiation.

With the completion of the new Death Star a priority for the Empire – being a contractor for the Emperor is maybe the worst job in the universe – the rebels have to plot another unlikely mission to destroy the reactor at its core. But first they have to get past the impenetrable shield protecting the space station, which is rooted on the forest moon of Endor. The Empire is fully anticipating every step of this plan, but the rebels make allies of the Ewoks, the cuddly, merchandisable teddy bears who live on Endor, to say nothing of the beds of every child under 10 in America.



A still from Star Wars: Episode VI, Return of the Jedi Photograph: Photo 12/Alamy

The action set pieces in Return of the Jedi rarely have the same impact as the highlights from the previous two films, with nothing like the excitement of Luke's climactic shot at the reactor in Star Wars or the attack of those all-terrain "walkers" in The Empire Strikes Back, with their imposing, Ray Harryhausen-esque jankiness. The one pulse-quickenning event here takes advantage of the Endor's gorgeous forest setting with speeder bikes zipping around (and into) trees with the immensity of California redwoods. But it remains an odd choice to relegate Han Solo mostly to the sidelines here, especially after Lucas and Ford had helped redefine the modern adventure movie a couple of summers earlier with Raiders of the Lost Ark.

Yet Return of the Jedi is more concerned with emotional payoffs than interstellar thrills, which puts Luke's identity – as a son, as a brother and as a Jedi – front and center as the series completes its arc. Lucas has sound reason to cash out on the massive investment viewers have made on these characters over three films, and how you feel about Return of the Jedi tends to relate strongly to how you feel about the episodes that preceded it. Luke's visit with his fading mentor Yoda on Dagobah, the recasting of his relationship with Leia and his final light saber duel with Vader complete a hero's journey with an affirmation of the themes that had guided the trilogy

to this point – loyalty, decency, redemption, self-sacrifice, friendship and family. It all seemed more affecting 40 years ago.

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Chequers, the prime minister's Buckinghamshire retreat. Photograph: Suzanne Plunkett/PA Media

[Boris Johnson](#)

Chillaxing at Chequers: how Boris Johnson used the PM's country house

The 16th-century mansion was given to the nation to allow its leader to unwind, and Johnson took full advantage



[Heather Stewart](#)

Thu 25 May 2023 02.00 EDT

When Chequers was gifted to the nation a century ago, the intent was to allow prime ministers two days a week of relaxation in the Chiltern hills, because “the better the health of our rulers, the more sanely will they rule”.

Boris Johnson is alleged to have taken the invitation to kick back more seriously than most, treating Chequers as both a bolthole and a party pad.

“It’s part of the grandeur that he thinks is his due,” said a former colleague. Even after resigning, Johnson and his wife were reluctantly dissuaded from [holding a lavish wedding bash](#) in the grounds of the 16th-century mansion, before handing back the keys.

They spent Christmas 2019, after Johnson’s landslide election victory, at No 10, where Mrs Johnson later oversaw a notoriously costly redesign.

But over time they came to spend an increasing amount of time at the wood-panelled Buckinghamshire residence, which is decorated with paintings and antiques and set in large, heavily guarded grounds.

It is formally owned by a trust, and MPs and officials who have visited describe Chequers as comfortable, despite its size, with attentive staff always ready with a cup of coffee or a bite to eat.

“They treat you as important, which Boris would have liked,” said one former visitor who knows Johnson well. “It’s cosy, you’re looked after, your every need is attended to.” Prime ministers are free to entertain at the house – as long as they pick up the costs of food and drink.

After Johnson was hospitalised with Covid in April 2020, it was to Chequers that he returned to recuperate.

It later emerged that even before that, Carrie Johnson – then his fiancée – had based herself at Chequers, with the prime minister commuting back and forth to No 10 during the early days of the pandemic.

[Explaining this arrangement](#) after it was first reported almost two years later, Johnson’s official spokesperson said: “At the time, as you know, Mrs Johnson was heavily pregnant, in a vulnerable category, and advised to minimise social contacts. So in line with clinical guidance and to minimise the risk to her, they were based at Chequers during that period, with the prime minister commuting to Downing Street to work.”

It would have come as a surprise to many members of the public at the time that “commuting” – or moving their family to a safer place – was within the rules.

Rachel Johnson, the former prime minister’s sister, displayed similar insouciance when she told LBC listeners on Tuesday, “as far as I am aware, all the rules were followed whenever I went to Chequers, which wasn’t often enough”. Presumably the officials who referred Johnson’s diary entries to the police felt that was at least unclear.

“The whole family have a massive sense of entitlement,” harrumphed one former cabinet minister.

Johnson’s former adviser Dominic Cummings hinted in [an interview with the website UnHerd](#) last year that the Partygate investigation should have

taken in goings-on at Chequers. Asked whether there were parties at Chequers during the pandemic, he replied: “So people say.”



Boris and Carrie Johnson with their daughter, Romy, making a video call at Chequers. Photograph: No 10 Downing Street/Reuters

Johnson and his growing family reportedly felt so at home at the Buckinghamshire retreat by the autumn of 2020 that he planned to build [a £150,000 treehouse](#) in the grounds for his son Wilfred, an idea apparently vetoed on security grounds.

They appear not to have been so comfortable with Chequers’ long-serving staff, however, with the senior housekeeper Charlotte Vine departing in 2020, amid reports about a clash with Carrie Johnson – something Mrs Johnson’s spokesperson denied.

It was over dinner at Chequers that the Johnsons wooed Allegra Stratton, whose appointment as the prime minister’s press secretary precipitated the acrimonious departure of the key advisers Cummings and Lee Cain.

Increasingly preoccupied with financial worries, it was also at Chequers that Johnson entertained the financier Richard Sharp and his friend Sam

Blyth, a distant relative of Johnson's who went on to act as guarantor for an £800,000 loan.

All three have insisted money was not discussed, but it was Sharp's failure to disclose his connection to the loan that led to his recent resignation as BBC chair.

When Theresa May was prime minister, she tended to prefer spending time at her more modest constituency home in the Berkshire village of Sonning, where she would escape for weekends.

Chequers was mainly used for welcoming foreign dignitaries – including Donald Trump – and for holding key meetings.

May's former press secretary Paul Harrison said: "In itself it's quite rarefied – not many people get to go, it's exclusive – so an invite feels like a bigger deal than it would be to go into the PM's office in the House of Commons, even though you're essentially doing the same thing."

May summoned her warring cabinet there to a dramatic Brexit showdown in July 2018 (the "Chequers summit") that ultimately precipitated Johnson's resignation as foreign secretary – once the Brexit secretary, David Davis, [had jumped first](#).

Johnson then helped foment a vigorous "chuck Chequers" campaign from the backbenches that helped to cement his reputation with grassroots Tory members – and seal May's fate.

At Christmas 2021, Downing Street released pictures taken at Chequers of Johnson, by now married, with his wife, new baby Romy and Dilyn the dog, joining a Zoom call with NHS staff from a squishy blue sofa.

They could not have looked more at home, but after the Partygate revelations and the ham-fisted defence of the [disgraced MP Owen Paterson](#), the seeds of his departure from No 10 seven months later had already been sown.

Johnson certainly took full advantage of Chequers, whose donors, Arthur and Ruth Lee, meant it to act as a country estate for prime ministers in a new, democratic age when they might not necessarily possess their own. Whether he ruled “more sanely” as a result of the time spent in the Chiltern hideaway may perhaps be best left to history to judge.

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Tina Turner in the 1985 film Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome, directed by George Miller. ‘I learned from her,’ he says. Photograph: Warner Bros/Allstar

[Tina Turner](#)

Tina Turner remembered by Mad Max director George Miller: ‘She was the opposite of a diva’

The Australian director shares his memories of working with Turner on Beyond Thunderdome and the start of their friendship

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As told to [Sian Cain](#)

[@siancain](#)

Thu 25 May 2023 00.17 EDT Last modified on Thu 25 May 2023 00.44 EDT

When someone was such a life force, you don't expect them to go. Of course it happens to everybody, but Tina was quite something.

When we made *Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome*, I knew her music like everyone else, but it was her persona that drew me to her – particularly for the role [of Aunty Entity]. I knew where the music came from, where her power came from. In this *Mad Max* wasteland, anyone who survives, let alone becomes a dominant force, has had to survive a lot of things that would normally diminish a person. Every time we talked about Aunty Entity as we were writing, we'd say: "Oh, someone like [Tina Turner](#)." She was the only person we could think of. And sure enough, she was the only person we ever asked.

She was the opposite of a diva. I had the privilege of working with her and getting to see just what made her so magnificent. She was so sharp, mentally. She was acutely aware of the dynamics of every situation. She was very funny and playful, she loved to laugh a lot. She was a person of

real substance. It wasn't just the surface. I think that rises out of someone who endures so much in early life and uses it to become incredibly wise.

She performed most of her life, in one way or another. It is relatively rare that someone can go through that process and remain pretty much intact, even grow in stature. I think she had that stature innately, from birth. I once saw her at a 50th birthday party, Mick Jagger and all of those types gathered around her, behaving as if she was this great regal presence in court. I am noticing the way [people are talking about her today](#), about how influential and generous she was. They all learned from her.

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And *I* learned from her. When we worked together, I could tell she got something out of learning about acting. But I was learning from her too – first of all, just doing the hard work. And second of all, how to inspire those around you to work together for a common goal. I think she knew it too; she once told me: “You’d learn a lot if you came on tour with us for a week or two.” I was so tempted to do it, but I was caught up with finishing the film. I have always regretted not going with her.

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I once saw her backstage after a concert, where one of her band members was having some problems. He was having some kind of personal crisis and was thinking about moving on, ending his career. He came in to talk to her and I said: “Oh, I’ll leave the room.” “No no,” she said, “Listen.” And I watched her talk to him. She understood his problems, she was firm with him and she talked him off the ledge, as it were. I was so impressed with her demeanour – her firmness on one hand, and her kindness on the other. But then I saw her doing the same again, with the Jackson brothers. That was when I realised she did that for everyone.

A story that sticks in my mind was in 1988. There were fireworks on Sydney Harbour for the bicentennial and Tina had got a boat and invited a lot of people to go out on it. My two-year-old daughter came along and Tina played with her. As the night wore on, we had to put our daughter to bed in one of the bunks, but she didn’t want to go. She kept saying: “I want to play with the Tina Turner girl, I want to play with the Tina Turner girl.” So we took her back. But Tina was so happy to keep playing with her. For that night at least, she was the Tina Turner girl.

She grew up in America, but she was very much an internationalist. She became a Swiss citizen at the end. The last time I saw her was in the late 1990s, when she was living on the coast of France, near Cannes. She embraced Australia and Australia embraced her.

Like everyone, you feel the loss. There was a very powerful presence there and when that’s gone, there is a sadness, an awareness that this happens to all of us – even someone as magnificent as Tina.

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Tina Turner performing at Madison Square Garden, New York, in 1985.
Photograph: Ray Stubblebine/AP

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Tina Turner obituary

Rock'n'roll singer whose comeback after her turbulent early career made her one of the great superstars of the 1980s and 90s

[Adam Sweeting](#)

Wed 24 May 2023 19.26 EDTLast modified on Thu 25 May 2023 06.05 EDT

When Tina Turner, who has died aged 83, walked out on her abusive husband [Ike](#) in Dallas, Texas, she feared it would spell the end of her showbusiness career. It was 1976, and she had been performing with Ike for two decades, since she had first jumped onstage and sang with his band at the Manhattan club in East St Louis, Missouri. Yet, although she was desperate and had only 36 cents in her pocket, she was on her way to a renaissance as one of the most successful performers in popular music during the 1980s and 90s.

She had to endure several lean years, but a turning point came in 1983, when [David Bowie](#) told Capitol Records that she was his favourite singer. [A version](#) of [Al Green's Let's Stay Together](#) followed. Produced by the [electropoppers](#) Martyn Ware and Ian Craig Marsh from Heaven 17, the track went to No 6 in the UK, then cracked the US Top 30 the following year.

Turner cemented the upturn in her fortunes with the album Private Dancer (1984). Driven by the huge hit [What's Love Got to Do With It?](#) (her first American No 1), the album became a phenomenon, lodging itself in the American Top 10 for nine months and going on to sell more than 10m copies. Suddenly Turner was one of the biggest acts in an era of stadium superstars such as [Michael Jackson](#), [Dire Straits](#) and [Phil Collins](#).



Tina Turner in Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome, 1985. Photograph: Moviestore/Shutterstock

In 1985 she was recruited to play Aunt Entity in the film Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome, for which she recorded another international chartbuster, [We Don't Need Another Hero](#). A second Thunderdome single, [One of the Living](#), won her a Grammy award, and she was an automatic choice to [join](#)

the Live Aid benefit concert in that year, as well as to participate in its American theme song, *We Are the World*.

Her follow-up album, *Break Every Rule* (1986), launched Turner on a global touring campaign, during which a crowd of 184,000 watched her in Rio de Janeiro. The tour spun off a double album, *Tina Live in Europe* (1988).

The album *Foreign Affair* (1989) sold 6m copies and generated another trademark anthem, [The Best](#), which was subsequently used to add oomph to numerous TV commercials and adopted both by the tennis ace Martina Navratilova and the racing driver [Ayrton Senna](#). The subsequent *Foreign Affair* tour ended in Rotterdam in 1990, after which she duetted with Rod Stewart on the old Tammi Terrell/Marvin Gaye hit [It Takes Two](#). Designed as the theme for a Pepsi advert, the track was a chart hit across Europe.



Tina Turner performing with David Bowie, a key figure in her comeback, at the NEC Birmingham, 1985. Photograph: Dave Hogan/Getty Images

Turner was born Anna Mae Bullock in Nutbush, Tennessee, to Zelma Currie, a factory worker, and her husband, Floyd Bullock, a Baptist deacon. Abandoned by their father and temporarily by their mother, in 1956 Annie and her elder sister, Alline, moved to St Louis, Missouri, where they

encountered Ike Turner and his band the Rhythm Kings. After Annie had talked the initially reluctant Ike into letting her sing with the band, he recruited her as one of his backing singers.

It was in 1960 that Tina – who had by then changed her name because it reminded Ike of the cartoon character Sheena, Queen of the Jungle – first sang a lead vocal with Ike's band. A session singer failed to turn up, and Tina's stand-in performance of [A Fool in Love](#) was a hit on both the pop and R&B charts. Ike immediately rebuilt his act around Tina, and christened it the Ike and Tina Turner Revue. They married in 1962.

Featuring nine musicians and a trio of skimpily dressed backing singers, the Ikettes, the Revue took the R&B circuit by storm. Tina rapidly developed into a mesmerising performer, radiating raw sexuality and bludgeoning audiences with the unvarnished force of her voice. They began to pepper the charts with hits, including [I Idolise You](#), [Poor Fool](#) and [Tra La La La La](#), and even if they only intermittently crossed over from the R&B charts to the pop mainstream, the band's performing reputation was second to none. Evidence of their stage prowess was preserved on the 1965 album *Live! The Ike and Tina Turner Show*, recorded on tour in Texas.

However, the seeds of the couple's destruction were being sown in their successful but intense lifestyle. Ike was a habitual womaniser, and also developed a destructive cocaine habit. This provoked violent outbursts against Tina, who, as she later revealed in her 1986 autobiography, *I, Tina*, was beaten, burned with cigarettes and scalded with hot coffee. She gained a glimpse of what life beyond Ike's intimidating orbit might be like when she worked with the "Wall of Sound" producer [Phil Spector](#) in 1966. To Ike's frustration, Spector refused to allow him in the studio while he worked on the single [River Deep, Mountain High](#), which subsequently became regarded as a high point of both Spector's and Turner's careers.

The Turners' work won them the admiration of many of their peers, not least the Rolling Stones, who invited them to open a UK tour for them in 1966, then to join them on their American tour in 1969. [Mick Jagger](#) was regularly spotted at the side of the stage during Tina's performances, fascinated by her stage presence and dance routines. One of the high points

of Live Aid in 1985 was Tina and Jagger performing together at JFK Stadium in Philadelphia.



Tina Turner and Mick Jagger in the Live Aid concert in Philadelphia, 1985.
Photograph: Amy Sancetta/AP

Working with the Stones prompted the Turners to import a rock-orientated edge into their work, a ploy that worked most successfully when they recorded John Fogerty's [Proud Mary](#) in 1971. It was their first million-selling single and a Top five hit on the American pop charts. In 1973 they notched up another landmark with Tina's feisty composition [Nutbush City Limits](#), inspired by her Tennessee origins. She took the role of the [Acid Queen](#) in [Ken Russell](#)'s film of The Who's rock opera, Tommy (1975): her performance was one of its few critically acclaimed moments, though her spin-off solo album, The Acid Queen, made little impression on the charts.

After her split from Ike, Tina stayed with friends and was forced to survive on food stamps. When their divorce was finalised in 1978, she preferred to take no money or property from the settlement, to establish a complete break from her husband. She earned cash from TV guest appearances on the Donny & Marie and the Sonny & Cher shows, but her late-70s albums Rough and Love Explosion sold poorly.

In 1980 she signed a management deal with Roger Davies, an Australian promoter working in the US, who secured some lucrative engagements in Las Vegas. The following year the Rolling Stones galloped to the rescue once again by booking her as the opening act on their Tattoo You tour of the US, and she also appeared with Stewart in a California concert broadcast internationally by satellite.

Tina Turner and Rod Stewart singing It Takes Two

By the time she was inducted (with Ike, though he was then in jail) into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1991, Turner had little left to prove. She was able to spend more time at the homes in Switzerland and the Cote d'Azur that she now shared with the German record executive Erwin Bach. A singles collection, *Simply the Best* (1991), reeled in more platinum discs as Turner entered the senior stateswoman phase of her career.

In 1993, as she launched her first US tour in six years, her film biography, *What's Love Got to Do With It*, based on I, Tina, was released, starring Angela Bassett as Turner. The film brought forth a bestselling soundtrack album and another hit single with its opening track, [I Don't Wanna Fight](#).

A three-disc anthology, *The Collected Recordings – Sixties to Nineties*, appeared in 1994, and the following year came Turner's recording of [GoldenEye](#), the theme tune of the eponymous James Bond movie. The tour that accompanied her eighth studio album, *Wildest Dreams* (1996), became another record-breaker, grossing more than \$100m in Europe alone. *Twenty Four Seven* (1999) teed up what Turner announced would be her last major arena and stadium tour. She had intended to tour with Elton John, but the idea was scrapped after she argued with him about the piano arrangement for *Proud Mary* during rehearsals for a TV special, *Divas Live '99*. Her subsequent solo dates became the top-grossing tour of 2000.

Tina Turner singing Goldeneye in Amsterdam, 1996

A quiet period ensued, during which Turner confined herself to hand-picked events, such as a 2005 performance on the Oprah Winfrey Show. She contributed a version of [Edith and the Kingpin](#) to *River: The Joni Letters*

(2007), a tribute album produced by Herbie Hancock. She performed alongside Beyoncé at the Grammy awards in 2008.

That October she went back on the road with the Tina! 50th Anniversary Tour, synchronised with the compilation album Tina: The Platinum Collection. In 2010 she became the first female artist to score top 40 hits in the UK in six consecutive decades (1960s-2010s) when The Best bounced back into the UK Top 10. Her Love Songs compilation appeared in 2014, and her remix of What's Love Got to Do With It with the Norwegian DJ Kygo in 2020 made for a seventh decade containing UK hits.

Between 2009 and 2014 Turner appeared on four albums by [Beyond](#), an all-woman group formed with her neighbours in Küsnacht, near Zürich. The music reflected the spiritual and religious beliefs of the participants, with Turner considering herself a Baptist-Buddhist (she was raised as a Baptist, but began practising Nichiren Buddhism in 1973).

Trailer for the HBO documentary Tina, 2021

In 2013 she married Bach and gave up her American citizenship to become a Swiss citizen. Three weeks after the marriage she suffered a stroke, and in 2016 she was diagnosed with intestinal cancer, then suffered kidney failure when “the toxins in my body had started taking over”, as she put it in her second autobiography, Tina Turner: My Love Story (2018). Her husband volunteered to give her one of his kidneys and a transplant operation was carried out successfully in 2017.

The following year, the biographical stage musical [Tina](#) opened at Aldwych theatre in London, directed by Phyllida Lloyd and starring Adrienne Warren in the title role. Turner received a Grammy lifetime achievement award, to go with her existing tally of eight Grammy awards and three Grammy Hall of Fame awards. Among her vast collection of honours, Turner also had five American Music awards, two World Music awards and three MTV Video Music awards.

In 2021 she joined the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame as an outright solo performer and [sold the rights to her music catalogue](#) to the publishing

company BMG for an estimated \$50m. Ready to retire fully, she bade farewell to her fans with the [two-part HBO documentary Tina](#).

Alline died in 2010. Tina's eldest son, Craig, from a relationship with the saxophonist Raymond Hill, took his own life in 2018. Ronnie, her son with Ike, died in 2022.

She is survived by Erwin and two sons, Ike Jr and Michael, from Ike's first marriage.

Tina Turner (Anna Mae Bullock), singer and songwriter, born 26 November 1939; died 24 May 2023

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Tina Turner, pictured performing in Scotland in 1987. The rock'n'roll singer has died at the age of 83. Photograph: PA

[Tina Turner](#)

Tina Turner: 10 of her greatest songs

Through her seismic anthems of Black liberation and her ability to conjure fire, fury and tenderness, Turner's music evolved to soundtrack a changing world

- [Tina Turner: legendary rock'n'roll singer dies aged 83](#)
- [Tina Turner obituary](#)
- [Tina Turner – a life in pictures](#)

[Daphne A Brooks](#)

Wed 24 May 2023 22.34 EDT Last modified on Wed 24 May 2023 23.11 EDT

[I've Been Loving You Too Long, with Ike Turner](#)

For just a minute, let's hold at bay the boys' club surrounding her: the Maysles brothers' footage of the casually cavorting Rolling Stones man-children backstage, leering and watching the spectacle on a monitor; the menacing spectre of Ike in the shadows, making his presence felt with a quease-inducing call-and-response. Pay attention to that voice – floating out into the atmosphere and, though surely under duress, still a thing of astonishing, visceral gravity. This is a record of agony that deserves to be recognised as Tina Turner's wrought testimonial to the world, her excruciating meditation on intimate subjugation and the will to be free.

[Whole Lotta Love](#)

So many of those early-career tracks – from her work with Ike to her emergence as the Who's Acid Queen in Tommy, and beyond – were face-off extravaganzas, showdowns with patriarchy either in the home or in the rock'n'roll arena. Turner kicks down the door of Led Zeppelin's anthemic ode to the phallus and rearranges the playing field, transforming Plant and Page's masculinist romp into a slinky bedroom power dance. "I'm gonna send you, yeah, back for some schoolin' ... ," she sings. This is our woman's terrain, an electrified, sexual tête-à-tête.

[Let's Stay Together](#)

But don't box her in, please! Tina covers Al Green and pulls the 1970s into the next decade, dressing up the warm Memphis sounds of the reverend and

showing off the complexity of her range – at once arching and gripping and yet also supple and aching. We move with her in the swirl of late-disco dancefloor bliss. It's a left-field choice of a cover that reminds everyone of Turner's multifaceted abilities as an entertainer capable of conjuring tenderness and fire all in one song.

Private Dancer

The title track from the album that yielded a trifecta of hits. Dark and pensive, a stunner of a concept track and the flipside to Donna Summer's Bad Girls smash from the previous decade. Private Dancer is perhaps pop's profoundest critique of sex work and gender exploitation; it's late-capitalist cynicism from the perspective of a Black woman protagonist faced with a stark set of choices in a man's world. Turner delivers some of her finest interpretative work here as an actor, first-person narrator and vocalist, oscillating between the emptiness of "dancing for money", the slip of a confession that her protagonist longs for "a family", and the turn back into shrewd "shimmying" for her johns. Melancholic, brooding, masterful.

I Don't Wanna Fight

The exhale song that will bring tears to your eyes. If Angela Bassett's legendary portrayal of Tina Turner gave the masses our first insight into the enormity of what and how she survived the domestic tyranny that nearly killed her, the What's Love Got to Do With It biopic theme song is the gorgeous, gentle landing that Tina the heroine and Tina the pop star both deserve. An early 90s Black woman's liberation anthem sung in the key of Terry McMillan novels, I Don't Wanna Fight is the flipside to all of the breakup songs that came before and after it. Tina leans into the light and the "letting go" and brings you along with her.

Nutbush City Limits

Behold the birth of the hard-rock memoir belted out by a sister with much to tell us about her hard-scrabble, Jim Crow Tennessee upbringing; the daughter of sharecroppers who picked cotton at an early age, sang in church and found domestic work in her teen years while holding it down on the cheerleading squad. A barn-burning vamp, City Limits is a textbook lesson on how the blues begat rock'n'roll, how Black southern sacred and profane

communities sat in the crucible between “church house” and “gin house”. It’s a story of a “one-horse town”, a world of time in the “field” during the week and “picnic” holidays, “salt pork”, “molasses”, prohibition and bootleg whiskey – it all comes together in one volatile universe of lurching power chords and Turner’s forceful, gravel-road vocals. We’re on the edge of town with her.

We Don’t Need Another Hero

All hail Aunty Entity (but keep in mind that “Aunty” is a title best bestowed on Black women by someone in their circle), the woman who goes toe-to-toe with Mel Gibson’s Mad Max in the dystopian Beyond Thunderdome action-pic. With a bit of What’s Love hangover production, Hero still soars, combining the sweep and force of her Ike and Tina singing days with a 1980s pulsating rock and pop radio hook – and hot sax! Landing smack dab in the middle of the Reagan-Thatcher era of austerity, it is arguably Tina Turner’s most poignant and timely social message arriving via the Trojan horse of a popcorn movie soundtrack sequel. “Out of the ruins /Out of the wreckage /Can’t make the same mistake this time /We are the last generation ... We are the ones they left behind,” sings Turner as the 20th century began its slow wind down. Dressed in the garb of a superhero, [Tina Turner](#) called out to us to gather round and save ourselves. But we looked to her for ferocious inspiration.

[Proud Mary](#)

Watch her run with Creedence Clearwater Revival’s working man journey song, turning white southern vagabond country rock into an epic tale of Black migration. The genius of Tina Turner’s reinterpretation of Fogerty and company’s classic lies in its riveting shift in tempo and emotional tenor: from its trademark, slow-rolling opening, a gritty lament about labour and longing reinhabited here by a Black woman on the move to its upstart boogie-woogie rock’n’roll bounce. This is the music of Black movement, reinvention and unstoppable determination. And in spite of the obvious and impossibly fraught innuendoes that she and Ike trade here, Turner’s insistence on doing it “nice and rough” is also a daring declaration of a new woman’s voice in rock’n’roll, an assertion of the rough and tumble agency that would become her well-earned trademark.

What's Love Got To Do With It

You could count on one hand the Black women on MTV when Tina Turner came strutting on to the scene, staring out at the New York City skyline with that mile-high hair in her first US single for her blockbuster *Private Dancer* album, the greatest comeback record in pop history. Sexy, moody, intimate, candid, *What's Love* returned our Tina to the spotlight initially in a different register, with the amps turned down and the smouldering playfulness turned up high. If there's wistful undercurrent here, it's due to the fact that this iteration of Tina Turner is so entirely sceptical of true romance. But at least for now, we hear a bit of joy in pursuing the hookup rather than risking another broken heart. Poised and assured, she comes to us as a new pop diva, establishing a post-soul, rock-meets-pop crossover queen of the 80s.

River Deep – Mountain High

Who else can stand up to Phil Spector's Wall of Sound like Tina? Long before Miley set out on her *Climb*, Turner was taking us higher in a symphony of sonic majesty. Here she demonstrates how best to collaborate with Spector, a sociopathic Svengali, by embracing the histrionic drama of a song that suspensefully builds a trajectory of a woman's desire. Don't be fooled by the opening verse's "rag doll" child's play. Love here is a thing of mighty scale, its depth and magnitude likened to the run of the Earth itself. No wonder Spector tapped Turner, whose steely belting abilities were seismic enough to withstand the onslaught of orchestral arrangements he had in mind for this track. Welcome to the era of stadium-level rock – right where she belongs.

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2023.05.25 - Opinion

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- What is going on with Elon Musk and Ron DeSantis?
- Changes to arts funding are always divisive – we were right to focus on access for all
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Illustration: Bill Bragg/The Guardian

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**First it was no to Polish plumbers, then
Afghan refugees. Now the right doesn't
want any migrants at all**

[Aditya Chakraborty](#)



This week's furore over entirely legal migration proves it was never the kind of foreigner you were, simply your foreignness

Thu 25 May 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Thu 25 May 2023 03.16 EDT

Few sights are as sad as someone who gets exactly what they want and hates it, yet that is exactly how the British right behaves.

Hacking back the state? They swung the axe for a decade, only to complain about the damage done. Boris Johnson? Once their surefire winner, he has made them all losers. And, of course, [there's Brexit](#) – the summit towards which so many trudged, only to find the view from the top a dud. Every last one of the right's grievances has been dealt with, and it drives them mad.

The best illustration of this paradox is the item forever at the top of the rage list: immigration. For days, the usual blimpish faces in Westminster and across the press have been mottling with fury at the prospect of official figures [showing a record high](#) in the net total of people coming to this country – through the proper channels, with the correct forms and often having paid thousands of pounds in fees. This is legal migration – the kind

that, just a few weeks ago, Tory backbenchers, GB News presenters and Telegraph columnists claimed to welcome. It was the people coming over in small boats who had to be stopped. “Illegal migration is not fair on British taxpayers, it is not fair on those who come here legally,” [said Rishi Sunak](#) in March. But this week, he said that legal migration was creating “[unmanageable pressure](#)”. So now we know: the sticking point is no longer what kind of foreigner you are – it’s simply your foreignness.

“A population crisis,” [Nigel Farage calls it](#). An “addiction to immigration,” says Theresa May’s former righthand man [Nick Timothy](#). Yet the immigration system they and the rest of the right decry is the very one they installed.

During the EU referendum, Vote Leave’s trump card was the need to shut Britain’s “open borders”. One of Brexit’s virtues, Iain Duncan Smith [told the BBC](#), was that it would stop “very low-value, low-skilled people coming through”. Careless words, especially from an MP judged by his own colleagues to be so low-value and low-skilled they booted him from the Tory leadership. Nevertheless, this was the reason why IDS, Farage and Johnson demanded an “Australian-style” points system, which focus group experts [such as James Frayne](#) found was “probably the most popular policy ever tested”.

And lo! The UK now has total control over its borders and those Aussie rules ensure we get some of the highest-value, highest-skilled people the world has to offer. The right won big – so, of course, it acts like a sore loser. Duncan Smith now pleads with his government to “get a grip” on immigration.

But the government has indeed got a grip. The UK defines exactly [which foreigners](#) cross its borders. It invites in Ukrainians and Hongkongers while refusing entry to many of those fleeing Afghanistan and Sudan. The government wants foreign students to come, because the billions they spend here help prop up a broken higher education system and lift depressed local economies. No 10, the Treasury and most of Whitehall – apart, perhaps, from Speedy Suella Braverman and her team – know that the students will go once their courses are finished and that the number of Ukrainian

refugees to Britain has probably peaked. The government could most likely do nothing and the next migration figures would show a big drop.

But the right needs scapegoats. The men with greased hair and a plausible manner who occupy newspaper columns and squat on TV studio sofas blame migrants for Britain's housing crisis, for taking jobs from British workers and for failing to integrate. It is at points like this, when the language around immigration gets especially Enoch, that I realise afresh just how many of the public debates on this issue feature neither migrants nor children of migrants. The media, the right often complains, is "too London". If that were really true, then 37% of media workers would be migrants, since that is [how much they make up](#) of the capital's population. Yet you and I both know that will never happen.

Instead, we get dehumanising language used by both major parties and the press. Immigration is a [game of "whac-a-mole"](#), Westminster sources tell the Sunday Times – as if those born abroad should be hit with a hammer. This week, Labour's Keir Starmer complained of "[uncontrolled immigration](#)". No doubt he hopes to convey an idea of a government in chaos. But the most direct victims of such language are not the Tory frontbench. New research this week from Hope Not Hate [reports a direct link](#) between politicians' use of inflammatory language around immigration and activity by the far right. Braverman hatches a Rwanda plan and the far right share the Mail's front pages. Robert Jenrick [bemoans "Hotel Britain"](#) and the boys in bovver boots lap it up. This all amid a rise in [far-right protests outside hotels](#) housing asylum seekers. The violence of such language has a consequence – and it tends to be felt by a mum in a headscarf taking her kids home on the bus, or a grandad making his way out of Friday afternoon prayers.

The narrowness with which immigrants are discussed sits at such odds with the breadth of their experiences. For her recent book, [The Migrants' Paradox](#), LSE professor Suzanne Hall interviewed people from more than 500 migrant-run small businesses, from Bristol to Leicester to Manchester. In long, detailed surveys that took five years to collect, she found a richness and resilience that goes nearly unmentioned. On Rye Lane in Peckham, south London, 61% of migrant businesspeople spoke two or three

languages; 28% spoke four or more. In Birmingham, she found a street of shops run by people from Cameroon to Kurdistan to Vietnam. These are communities working in deprived areas, often on the frontline of street racism and in the face of council incomprehension. Yet they plug on, despite “long working hours, falling wages and rising rents”. The reward for many is not prosperity but precariousness, not citizenship but what Hall calls “denizenship”. They are both the heart of the local high street and confined to the very periphery of national politics.

You don’t hear them whining. Indeed, you may not hear them at all. They’ve been drowned out by the men who got everything on their shopping list and now have a bad case of buyer’s remorse.

- Aditya Chakraborty is a Guardian columnist

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‘More recently, Tucker Carlson has said he would revive his show on Twitter after losing his Fox News slot.’ Photograph: Wade Vandervort/AFP/Getty Images

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What is going on with Elon Musk and Ron DeSantis?

[Robert Reich](#)



What unites Musk and DeSantis isn't libertarianism at all. It's authoritarianism

Thu 25 May 2023 05.08 EDTLast modified on Thu 25 May 2023 11.32 EDT

The real significance of Ron DeSantis's presidential announcement on Twitter had little to do with DeSantis but everything to do with Musk.

It's that Twitter, under Musk, has fully embraced the political right.

Why is Musk doing this? He acts as if he wants to be the darling of libertarian bros. But he's really aiming to lead democracy's foes.

Musk wants to crush unions and declare the United States a free-to-make-as-much-as-you-can-on-the-backs-of-working-stiffs zone.

He calls himself a "free speech absolutist", but that's utter baloney. He wants to elevate the speech of people like DeSantis but suppress the speech of workers who want to unionize.

He's even gone along with Turkey's recent ban on anti-regime comments in the run-up to the Turkish election.

DeSantis is not exactly a libertarian himself, of course – unless you define a libertarian as someone who bans books, forces women to give birth, threatens to take trans youth away from parents who approve of them getting gender-affirming care, prohibits teachers from mentioning gender identity or sexual orientation, bars teachers from talking about America's history of racism, and wreaks vengeance even on Mickey Mouse for opposing his authoritarian policies.

What unites Musk and DeSantis isn't libertarianism at all. It's authoritarianism.

Twitter started to become a rightwing media hotspot when Musk [lifted bans](#) on thousands of accounts that had spread disinformation about the pandemic and the 2020 elections.

More recently, Tucker Carlson has said he would revive his show on Twitter after losing his Fox News slot (Musk has denied that Twitter [has signed a deal](#) with Carlson).

It's also been reported that the Daily Wire, a rightwing, anti-democracy media outlet, will make Twitter the home for [all its podcasts](#).

Unquestionably, Twitter is benefiting from the dissatisfaction of the anti-democracy movement with Fox News. Musk can credibly claim to be outside the mainstream rightwing media world of Rupert Murdoch.

But the reason Musk wants to be a force on the right is because he wants to be in control.

That's been his business MO since the start. It's why he refused a seat on Twitter's board and instead mounted a hostile takeover. It's why he hates unions.

And now Musk wants to control everything else. He wants to dominate the right wing of American politics.

Not content to be the (or among the) richest on the planet, not satisfied with taking over one of the biggest media machines in the world, Musk now wants to impose his will on America and the world directly.

Remind you of any other billionaire? Say, the former guy?

Musk said on Tuesday he isn't formally backing any Republican candidate. But he *is* backing Republicans. And you can bet his eye is focused like a laser on the biggest Republican of all.

Right now, Musk wants to send [Donald Trump](#) a message that he – Musk – has the power to make life difficult for Trump if Trump so much as hints at making life difficult for Musk.

Musk knows that the best way to deal with a bully is to bully *him*. Show him you are even bigger than he is. Have more billions of dollars than he does. Have more millions of Twitter followers than he does.

And show him you have power over him by helping Republicans who are opposing him.

Which is why Musk is helping DeSantis. And why, earlier this week, Musk retweeted a campaign kickoff video for Senator Tim Scott of South Carolina.

Musk is only 51. Trump is 77. Trump may be the next president, but Musk will outlast him.

The US constitution bars Musk from becoming president, as he was born in Pretoria, South Africa. But there's no end to the power he can wield over America and the world in coming decades.

And make no mistake. Musk plans to wield it.

- Robert Reich, a former US secretary of labor, is professor of public policy at the University of California, Berkeley, and the author of [Saving Capitalism: For the Many, Not the Few](#) and [The Common Good](#). His new book, [The System: Who Rigged It, How We Fix It](#), is

out now. He is a Guardian US columnist. His newsletter is at robertreich.substack.com

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Christian Gerhaher and Anja Kampe in Wozzeck by Alban Berg at the Royal Opera House. Photograph: Tristram Kenton/The Guardian

[OpinionArts funding](#)

**Changes to arts funding are always
divisive – we were right to focus on
access for all**

[Nicholas Serota](#)



We've faced criticism for investing in areas outside London, but people around England told us they wanted to experience culture close to home

- Nicholas Serota is chair of Arts Council England

Thu 25 May 2023 03.00 EDTLast modified on Thu 25 May 2023 03.45 EDT

When Arts Council England set out to develop a [strategy for 2020-2030](#), we spoke at length to people across the country and heard repeatedly their wish to experience the arts close to home. People told us of their frustration at the lack of opportunities to develop their talent in their communities; and their longing for the chance to enjoy and participate in all kinds of culture. The arts reflect life back at us: they are fundamental to how we understand ourselves. Surely it is right that we can all feel equally at home in our theatres and galleries, that we can all be participants?

Sir Nicholas Hytner [warned in](#) the Guardian that culture has been squeezed out of the school curriculum. I share his concern, and agree that placing more emphasis on culture and teaching creativity within all schools would pay dividends for future generations. Arts Council funding alone cannot

make good that loss, but we can support young people, both in and outside school, and those organisations and artists that work with them. That is a mission I won't give up on.

Nick also suggested that the Arts Council's focus should only be on what he terms the "professional" arts. I understand the concern to invest in highly skilled workers, and unique and visionary artists – but I think it's a mistake to suggest the skills and vision that bring us the "best possible" art and culture cannot be found in community practice or in settings across the country, such as theatres and museums, small music venues and arts centres or street festivals. All cultural institutions – large or small – have a role to play, if they respond with imagination to the needs of their communities. The interdependence of the cultural world is such that you can no longer draw clear lines between *us* and *them*. To do so is to risk creating barriers to creativity, innovation and hidden talent.

And when barriers are removed, great things happen. The Royal Opera performs on stage in Covent Garden and works with communities in the Thames estuary. The Royal Shakespeare Company's current tour of *Julius Caesar*, to theatres from Blackpool to Truro, features a chorus of local volunteers sharing the stage with the professionals. In 2019, Rory Pilgrim, nominated for this year's Turner prize, collaborated with community arts organisation [Heart of Glass](#) on a project made with and for people in St Helens, Merseyside. Everything has value: from the transcendent power of a symphony orchestra, to the transformative power of the wellbeing activity in which [orchestras such as the Bournemouth Symphony](#) are engaged.

Changes to funding are, by their nature, challenging, and divisive, as demonstrated by the [outpouring of concern](#) when we shifted funding from some established opera and classical music companies to new ones. When faced with our most oversubscribed portfolio round to date, it was the mission to do everything we could to ensure that as many people as possible in England can access the very best of art and culture that guided us in making difficult decisions, leading to more investment in broadening audiences and opening new talent pathways.

I believe, given time, we will be able to reimagine and renew parts of the sector where change has involved loss, and that we will soon start to see the immense benefits that flow from the work of the new organisations in which we are now investing. However, anxieties are heightened at a time of economic pressure and I am deeply concerned about the fragile state of parts of our cultural infrastructure. After the pandemic, audiences have been slow to return, and costs have risen dramatically. This is testing the sector's resilience.

The government invested [£1.57bn in the arts](#) via the Culture Recovery Fund during the pandemic. More recently, it committed to [higher rates of tax relief](#), which we estimate are worth up to £200m a year. But projecting forward, the strained finances of the sector will reach breaking point unless we see an additional significant commitment from public sources.

So why should governments decide to make such an investment? The answer lies in the transformative impact culture can have on individuals and communities. In 1339 Ambrogio Lorenzetti painted An Allegory of Good and Bad Government on the walls of the [Palazzo Pubblico](#) in Siena. In Good Government he showed how culture sits intimately connected to learning, health, justice and wealth in a vision of a “common good” in society. As we campaign to make the arts for everyone, I hope it will be with a similar vision that sustains ambitious art and culture of all kinds and for all communities, and not simply for one type of art against another.

- Nicholas Serota is chair of [Arts Council England](#). He was director of the Tate from 2008 to 2017 and is an art historian and curator



Players take a knee before a Premier League game between Everton and Southampton in October 2020. Photograph: Andy Rain/Reuters

[Kick It Out](#)

If football cannot deliver change then its drive to tackle racism has no credibility

Tony Burnett

Three years on from the murder of George Floyd, progress has been made but we cannot rest when it comes to racial inequality

Thu 25 May 2023 05.07 EDTFirst published on Thu 25 May 2023 03.00 EDT

Three years ago the world was stunned by the brutal murder of George Floyd at the hands of people who had sworn an oath to protect him. That horrific act unleashed years of pent-up frustration from black communities all over the world, but it wasn't just black or brown people rising; honest

and decent people from all backgrounds rose to say enough is enough and after the initial clamour for justice there was quickly a movement for long-term change.

Football was no different in its reaction and we saw support from players, managers and leaders across the game. Players were at the forefront through their united decision to take the knee, ensuring the debate about racial inequality stayed on the agenda.

Since then, I'm pleased to say, we have seen progress in the professional game and at grassroots level. Football has delivered some excellent work in building the infrastructure and mindset to drive change and that should be acknowledged.

But we cannot rest there. Over the next three years investment in equality, diversity and inclusion must deliver improved outcomes in some of our most pressing challenges. If football cannot deliver, the commitments of three years ago will have no credibility.

When I talk of progress, there are plenty of examples. The Premier League's No Room for Racism plan has been broadened to tackle issues such as coach progression and its establishment of a black players' advisory group has ensured elite black players are heard. The English Football League has invested in its Together strategy, and the Football Association has supported England players and staff despite intimidation and ridicule from the highest offices in the land.

The Professional Footballers' Association has worked hard to encourage players to support criminal prosecutions regarding online abuse, resulting in more frequent convictions.

At grassroots level, there is a greater willingness to punish discrimination when it is identified.

In short, if you commit a hate crime at a football stadium, online or at the local park, you are far more likely to be prosecuted than ever before, and there have been strides to address under-representation of diverse

communities in the media. That is all a direct result of the actions started across the game three years ago.

Football has never been more aware of the challenges it faces, and there is plenty more it can do to make it a more inclusive and representative industry, but such is its influence across the world, it can be a powerful tool in highlighting and explaining the problems that we also see in society.

That might contrast with some people who think football and society's problems should not mix, but does that just mean we do nothing to challenge discrimination when it happens? Thankfully, most fans or participants disagree and know how to report it to [Kick It Out](#).

Elsewhere, there are many issues we still need to improve on. The notion that football is already inclusive is frankly ridiculous, given the statistics.



Liverpool's Mo Salah warms up in a Kick It Out T-shirt prior to the Premier League match between Liverpool and Tottenham in March. Photograph: Robbie Jay Barratt/AMA/Getty Images

Yes, we see a significant presence of black players across the professional game, ranging from 35% to 45%, but fewer than 5% of managers are black.

There has been only one black referee – Uriah Rennie – in the Premier League’s 30-year history.

Boardrooms are still largely white and male across the 92 professional clubs, and although people of South Asian heritage make up 10% of the population of England and Wales, I can count the number of South Asian professional players on my fingers and toes.

We are not saying that football should not recruit or promote the best talent, but too often the best people from under-represented groups are not getting the opportunities they deserve. The myth of meritocracy in football needs to be dispelled.

It’s not just about representation. We are still seeing significant behavioural issues among football fans and employees. Hate chanting is still common and over the past 12 months we have seen several high-profile cases where individuals have behaved in an unacceptable way in the workplace.

Unfortunately, it always seems to take a tragedy to drive systemic change. Think of Stephen Lawrence or George Floyd and more recently Sarah Everard. There is also a danger that good intentions often peter out after the impact of the shock has gone away. That’s why we must ensure the legacy of George Floyd is one of tangible change.

For that to happen we must remain vigilant and patient. Some of the challenges we face will take years to produce clear outcomes, but black and brown people within football have heard the platitudes on so many different occasions and now we must ensure commitments are delivered.

Kick it Out will be watching closely and holding key stakeholders to account but that is not our responsibility alone. Everyone in football should be willing to drive change because the game will be better for it.

Tony Burnett is Kick It Out’s chief executive

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The front entrance sign for Anderson air force base in Yigo, Guam
Photograph: Tassanee Vejpongsa/AP

[US news](#)

China-backed hackers spying on US critical infrastructure, says Five Eyes

Targets include US military facilities on Guam that would be key in an Asia-Pacific conflict, say Microsoft and western spy agencies

Guardian staff and agencies

Wed 24 May 2023 23.09 EDTFirst published on Wed 24 May 2023 18.57 EDT

A state-sponsored Chinese hacking group has been spying on a wide range of US critical infrastructure organisations and similar activities could be occurring globally, western intelligence agencies and [Microsoft](#) have warned.

“The United States and international cybersecurity authorities are issuing this joint Cybersecurity Advisory (CSA) to highlight a recently discovered cluster of activity of interest associated with a People’s Republic of [China](#) (PRC) state-sponsored cyber actor, also known as Volt Typhoon,” said a statement released by authorities in the US, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the UK – countries that make up the Five Eyes intelligence network.

In a separate statement, Microsoft said Volt Typhoon had been active since mid-2021 and had targeted critical infrastructure in Guam, a crucial [US military](#) outpost in the Pacific Ocean. “Mitigating this attack could be challenging,” Microsoft said.

While Chinese hackers are known to spy on western countries, this is one of the largest known cyber-espionage campaigns against American critical infrastructure.

“Microsoft assesses with moderate confidence that this Volt Typhoon campaign is pursuing development of capabilities that could disrupt critical communications infrastructure between the United States and Asia region during future crises,” the tech company said.

“In this campaign, the affected organisations span the communications, manufacturing, utility, transportation, construction, maritime, government, information technology, and education sectors.

“Observed behaviour suggests that the threat actor intends to perform espionage and maintain access without being detected for as long as possible.”

The US and western security agencies warned in their advisory that the activities involved “living off the land” tactics, which take advantage of built-in network tools to blend in with normal Windows systems.

It warned that the hacking could then incorporate legitimate system administration commands that appear “benign”.

The Chinese embassy in Washington did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment. However Beijing routinely denies carrying out state-sponsored cyber-attacks, and China in turn regularly accuses the US of cyber espionage.

Guam is home to US military facilities that would be key to responding to any conflict in the Asia-Pacific region.

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Canada's cybersecurity agency separately said it had had no reports of Canadian victims of the hacking as yet.

“However, western economies are deeply interconnected,” it added. “Much of our infrastructure is closely integrated and an attack on one can impact the other.”

The UK similarly warned the techniques used by the Chinese hackers on US networks could be applied worldwide.

Reuters and Agence France-Presse contributed to this report

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Children walk past tents at a makeshift camp for Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Photograph: Ibrahim Chalhouh/AFP/Getty Images

[Syria](#)

Millions of Syrian refugees face fight to reclaim homes, says human rights group

Report by Syrian Network for Human Rights details laws giving Assad's government powers to seize land

[Patrick Wintour](#), *Diplomatic editor*

Thu 25 May 2023 01.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 25 May 2023 12.43 EDT

As many as 14 million Syrians face a near insurmountable barrier to returning to their homes after the government passed laws giving the state power to seize their land and property, according to a report by the Syrian Network for Human Rights.

The report, shared with the Guardian, urged the UN high commissioner for refugees to highlight the laws as one of the main obstacles to refugees returning home.

It breaks new ground by examining in detail the web of laws passed by the government of President [Bashar al-Assad](#) both before and after the civil uprising that started in 2011, revealing how many laws would have to be recast if the displaced are to have a reason to return or obtain justice.

The long-ostracised Syrian government has returned to the diplomatic stage, with Assad attending an [Arab League summit last Friday](#), a move towards normalisation that [refugees in neighbouring Turkey](#), Lebanon and Jordan fear could lead to them being pushed back over the borders.

Fadel Abdul Ghany, the Syrian Network executive director, said: “People are afraid to go back because, even if they have documentation or access to civil registries to prove their ownership of a property, multiple laws have been passed that leave them with no rights, and in practice no compensation. The laws are being used as a carte blanche for the Syrian regime to take over all the strategic and important areas of Syria.”

He said the laws affect the families of the 500,000 Syrian civilians not yet registered as dead but mainly killed by the regime, 115,000 forcibly disappeared, as well as the 12.3 million people internally displaced within Syria or that have fled the country.

The research, the product of a year’s study of the property laws passed by the Syrian assembly or by government executive order, highlights the umbrella of legal difficulties that the families of Syrian exiles would face in trying to reclaim their previous land and property.

Discriminatory laws started with decree No. 66, passed in 2012 which was intended to redevelop informal settlements throughout Damascus, but in reality targeted opposition strongholds, according to the report.

A subsequent law, No. 23 of 2015, and officially named the planning and urban development law, gave powers to administrative units, such as municipalities and governorates, to deduct land, free of charge, from private properties located outside zoning areas.

Another law passed in April 2018 and subsequently amended later the same year after an outcry, allowed the government to expand the development area scheme first set up in Damascus to the whole of the country, giving property owners 30 days for an appeal to prove land or property ownership. The Syria Network report says the initial 30 day window, subsequently extended to a year, is “simply not enough for a displaced person whether refugee or displaced person to locate and prepare the necessary documents.”

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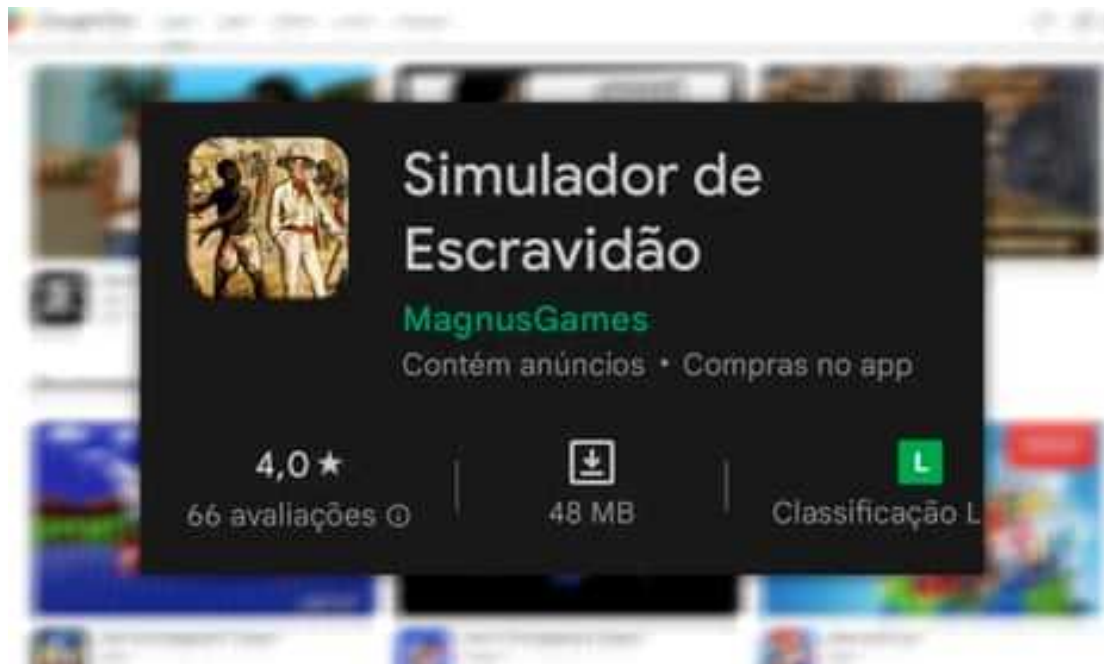
The report said the publicly stated objective of law 10 was to enable the reconstruction of properties destroyed by the military conflict. The result, it said, was to strip dissidents of their properties and redistribute them among the elite of regime loyalists by force.

Redevelopment zones have already been set up in the 78 hectares of Aleppo, one of the cities bombarded by the Syrian regime between 2013 and 2016.

Other interconnected property laws identified in the report include law 19 passed in 2012, which authorised the seizure and expropriation of property belonging to those deemed to be terrorists or threatening state security.

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The game had reportedly been available since 20 April this year.
Photograph: Google

[Brazil](#)

‘A crime of hatred’: disgust over Brazilian mobile phone slavery game

Game in which users were able to buy and sell enslaved people, removed from Google Play store on Wednesday, elicits horror

[Constance Malleret](#) in Rio de Janeiro

Thu 25 May 2023 05.30 EDT Last modified on Thu 25 May 2023 17.07 EDT

Brazilians have reacted with horror to the news that a mobile phone game in which players were able to buy and sell enslaved people was until recently available to download on Google Play.

Dubbed the “Slavery Simulator” (Simulador de Escravidão), the disturbing game also allowed players to inflict different forms of torture on black

characters.

The game, which had no age classification, had reportedly been available since 20 April this year and had been downloaded more than one thousand times. Users reviewed the game positively, with one describing it as “excellent to pass the time but lacking more torture options”.

The game was removed from the Google Play store on Wednesday but remained available to those who had already downloaded it, the newspaper Folha de S Paulo reported.

The existence of a game making light of slavery was met with outrage and disgust by Brazilians, who denounced it as racist and called on the developer Magnus Games and Google to be held to account.

“Blatant racism!! [...] The image illustrating the game has a white man surrounded by black men. It is absurdly violent. Google and the developer must answer for this crime of hatred and racism,” [tweeted](#) Renata Souza, a black activist and politician from Rio de Janeiro.

“Racism is not entertainment, it’s a crime!” denounced [Quilombo Periférico](#), a [collective mandate](#) of black city councillors in São Paulo.

Racism is an enduring problem in Brazil, which is still coming to terms with the legacy of slavery. The country imported the highest number of enslaved Africans in the [Americas](#) – an estimated 4 million – and was also the last in the region to abolish slavery, in 1888.

“At any time your black child could come across a game in which they are reduced to enslavement, and if your child is white, they will be taught through recreational racism to become an enslaver in real life,” [said](#) Bruno Cândido, a black lawyer who teaches anti-discriminatory law.

Brazil’s ministry for racial equality said it had contacted the developer and Google to work with them on measures to curb racist content online. Those behind the product will be held legally responsible, the ministry said.

Tech companies in Brazil, including Google, have come under fire recently over their failure to moderate content inciting racism and other types of violence. Brazil's congress is considering [legislation which would put the onus](#) on social media companies and tech platforms to identify and remove criminal and dangerous content.

“The racial equality ministry reiterates its irreversible commitment to eliminating racial inequalities and promoting policies that curb the dissemination of racist content online, in football stadiums, and in society as a whole,” the government said in an online statement, in reference to the [recent racist attacks](#) suffered by the Brazilian footballer Vinícius Júnior in Spain.

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Walls collapse after massive fire engulfs building in Sydney – video

[Australia news](#)

Firefighters working to extinguish fire after ‘apocalyptic’ Sydney blaze

NSW Fire and Rescue say it will be a ‘substantial and very prolonged’ effort of firefighting to extinguish the blaze completely

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[Rafqa Touma](#), [Elias Visontay](#), [Stephanie Convery](#), and [Lisa Cox](#)

Thu 25 May 2023 05.08 EDTFirst published on Thu 25 May 2023 02.33 EDT

An “apocalyptic” blaze engulfed a building near Central station in [Sydney](#) on Thursday afternoon, sending a massive plume of smoke into the air and causing parts of the building to collapse.

More than 100 firefighters worked to contain the massive fire. Fire and Rescue NSW said it would be a “substantial and very prolonged” effort to extinguish the blaze completely.

NSW Fire and Rescue’s deputy commissioner for field operations, Jeremy Fewtrell, said Thursday evening, adding that the fire had been “effectively contained” by a combination of aerial and ground work, although he added: “I expect that we’ll be here all night and into the morning.”



The building ablaze near Central station in Sydney on Thursday afternoon.
Photograph: Remi Luxford

An onlooker described seeing parts of the burning building falling onto the footpath. The fire also disrupted commuters, causing roads to be closed and light rail services to be stalled.

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Fire and Rescue said they received multiple triple zero calls just after 4pm when flames started engulfing a seven-storey building at Randle Street in Surry Hills.

Parts of the building have collapsed, and flames spread to nearby residential apartments.



The blaze caused parts of the building to collapse. Photograph: Remi Luxford

“It was essentially a candlestick,” a resident who lives about 100 metres from the blaze told Guardian Australia.

“It was basically apocalyptic, there was ash falling everywhere, the embers were raining down.”

The resident was working from home and smelled smoke shortly after 4pm. He heard “cracks and bangs” as the wall of the building collapsed, and the fire radiated heat through the surrounding streets.

“It still smells acrid,” he said more than an hour and a half after the blaze began.



Firefighters working at the scene of the fire into the night. Photograph: David Gray/AFP/Getty Images

At a press conference on Thursday, Fewtrell said there was no indication of any injuries to any of the members of the public, and no indication anyone was in the building at the time of the blaze.

“That’s obviously a prime concern when our crews arrived,” he said.

Big fire near central station [#sydney](#) [#smh](#) [@abcsydney](#)
pic.twitter.com/WZhsGm0UQy

— Alan Foil (@Foilalan_) [May 25, 2023](#)

“The information we have [is that the] buildings were vacant or unoccupied ... they were under construction or about to have to demolition or work done.”

One firefighter sustained a small minor burn to his arm, and is receiving treatment from NSW ambulance paramedics. The injury does not require major treatment.

At least one vehicle in the vicinity was destroyed by fire, Fire and Rescue NSW said in a statement.



This screen grab from a UGC video taken and posted by Michael Goode on Facebook shows the plume of smoke rising above central Sydney. Photograph: Michael Goode/Facebook/AFP/Getty Images

Fewtrell said he had seen fires of similar sizes, but what was significant about this one was how quickly it developed, and how many other buildings were in a close proximity to the blaze.

“The risk of further fire spread is a real concern [and] our firefighters have worked very hard to stop that.”

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“There were some fires in there that spread into the apartment buildings, and firefighters were able to extinguish those, preventing them from penetrating further into the buildings and causing significant damage there.”

Black smoke could be seen billowing from the building on Thursday, and large flames could be seen from streets away. Sirens and fire alarms were heard going off in the area.

The top floors appeared to be mostly burnt through. Metal beams inside the building were seen burning red hot, and it appeared as if huge steel beams in the building had collapsed.

[Map](#)

NSW police said earlier on Thursday that evacuations and road closures were in place around Central station. Fire and Rescue NSW asked people to avoid the area.

Light rail [services](#) were not running between Moore Park and Circular Quay on the L2 and L3 lines. The NSW transport minister, Jo Haylen, said buses were being rerouted. Trains at Central station were running.

The building is directly adjacent to apartment blocks and backs onto a narrow lane, so the apartments and nearby offices and businesses were evacuated.

Two buildings away, students sitting a final exam at Sydney Dental hospital were evacuated at about 4.15pm.

Dental student Victor Choh was on the fifth floor with 30 other students, and evacuated in such a hurry that he was still wearing his loupes –

specialist dental magnifying lenses – over his glasses.

Woah huge fire in the heart of Surry Hills right now in Sydney, sent by
[@annamccrea37](#) [@abcnews](#) [@abcsydney](#).
pic.twitter.com/HMQGwmvr2T

— Evelyn Leckie (@Evelyn_Leckie) [May 25, 2023](#)

He and fellow students stood by on Chalmers Street for the next hour as they watched smoke billow out of the building.

“We just heard about the smoke and flames and knew we had to get out of the building, and the alarm rang out as we were in the emergency stairs,” the 22-year-old told Guardian Australia.

Choh and his classmates left possessions behind, including phones and keys. They were told they might be able to re-enter their building by 11pm.

NSW Fire and Rescue’s Fewtrell said once the fire was extinguished, an examination into the fire would be conducted.

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Building partially collapses in blaze – as it happened

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[NHS](#)

**NHS staff report 20,000 claims of
patient sexual misconduct over five**

years

Exclusive: Allegations across 212 hospital trusts in England include claims of rape, sexual assault and stalking

[*Anna Bawden*](#) and [*David Batty*](#)

Tue 23 May 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 23 May 2023 07.56 EDT

Thousands of hospital staff are reporting claims of sexual assaults and harassment by patients, an investigation has found, prompting calls for ministers to address the “daily threat of abuse” faced by doctors and nurses.

More than 20,000 alleged incidents of sexual violence and sexual misconduct by patients on hospital staff were recorded in the five years to 2022 by 212 NHS trusts in England, freedom of information (FoI) requests by the Guardian and [the British Medical Journal \(BMJ\)](#) found.

The 20,928 cases accounted for just under 60% of the total alleged incidents trusts disclosed. Allegations included claims of rape, sexual assault, [harassment](#), stalking and sexualised remarks.

Experts cautioned that the figures were likely to be a serious underestimate as staff are often deterred from making complaints when patients abuse them.

Deeba Syed, a senior legal officer at [the Rights of Women helpline](#), said: “Women tell us they are expected to continue to care for patients who are abusive or harassing without efforts to adequately safeguard them from further harassment.

“We hear worrying reports of women feeling pressured into not raising formal grievances and instead being transferred to different departments or locations. They tell us it is argued that this is more expedient than moving the harassing patient, despite victims feeling this is unsafe to others and a punishment on them.”

Katie, not her real name, a junior doctor in the south-east of [England](#), said patients had made sexual comments about her since she was a student.

“From the word go within clinical placement, I always felt very heavily sexualised by patients,” she said. “One time, when I had to get close up to a patient’s face to examine his eyes, the patient started licking his lips and rubbing himself. I was 19 or 20 at the time and the consultant had left the room – I was completely terrified.”

She said she has also experienced sinister, crude comments, like being asked if she was going to “pleasure” a male patient. Katie said she did not feel she could tell anyone as she found most of the consultants intimidating.

[Graphic](#)

The everyday harassment has made her reevaluate her career path and she is hoping to go into obstetrics and gynaecology so she does not have to treat men. “I find the sexual harassment affects me too much and makes me feel like shit.”

The Guardian and BMJ investigation found trusts recorded 35,606 sexual safety incidents, a term that covers a spectrum of behaviours from abusive remarks to rape, allegedly perpetrated by staff, patients or visitors in [NHS](#) hospitals in England between 2017 and 2022.

While the majority were cases of patient-on-staff abuse, nearly 7,500 were allegations of patients abusing other patients and more than 3,000 were cases of staff abusing patients.

Responding to the findings, Simon Fleming, an orthopaedic surgeon and co-author of a 2021 report on [sexual assault in surgery](#) for the Royal College of Surgeons, said the NHS needed to take a more robust approach to sexual misconduct by patients.

He said: “Patients abuse staff often. Some of this is normalised, some of it less so. What you permit, you promote, and the NHS needs to stop permitting patients and staff behaving in a way that makes healthcare less safe for all of us.”

Some NHS workers do feel able to speak out. Charlotte Miller, a paramedic at Westminster ambulance station, London, said her employers were “incredible” when she reported being molested while attending to a patient on Edgware Road, west London, in October 2022. The patient, Naveed Ahmed, in his mid-30s, was [jailed for nine months](#) in November 2022.



Paramedic Charlotte Miller. Photograph: Teri Pengilly/The Guardian

Miller said: “He had already told my crewmate and I we were sexy and had been leering at us, but then he grabbed my crotch. I was really shocked. I’ve had comments before, but that was the first time that someone actively tried to grope me. I didn’t know what he was going to do next.”

As soon as she radioed for help, the police were called and her station sent a colleague, along with an incident response officer. “I had all these phone calls from various managers to make sure I was OK, they told me to have the rest of my shift off and go home to rest. They constantly checked in on me in the days afterwards and helped support me while I made my statements to the police. I couldn’t ask for any better management, if I’m honest.

“I hope this will encourage other people to have the confidence to report these things,” she said.

Dr Becky Cox, a co-founder of [Surviving in Scrubs](#), said: “The stark findings of this investigation should put into sharp focus the work that the health secretary and NHS leaders need to do to ensure the freedom of NHS staff to work without threat of sexual violence from patients and other staff members.

“It was not long ago we were being heralded as pandemic heroes by the government and cheered by the general public, yet we continue to face unsafe working conditions and the daily threat of abuse.”

Surviving in Scrubs lists more than 150 personal accounts of sexual harassment and abuse. They include cases of patients assaulting, molesting and sexualising nurses and doctors.

The health secretary, Steve Barclay, said: “NHS leaders have a statutory duty of care to look after their staff and patients and prevent harassment, abuse or violence in the workplace. I expect employers to be proactive in ensuring staff and patients are fully supported, their concerns listened to and acted on with appropriate action taken where necessary.”

Dr Navina Evans, the chief workforce officer at NHS England, said the health service should not tolerate any sexual misconduct, violence, harassment or abuse.

“NHS England has established a dedicated team to ensure people who experience violence and abuse are supported in the workplace, and there is greater provision of support for all victims and survivors. All NHS trusts and organisations have measures in place to ensure immediate action is taken in any cases reported to them and I strongly encourage anyone who has experienced any misconduct to come forward, report it and seek support.”

Information and support for anyone affected by rape or sexual abuse issues is available from the following organisations. In the UK, [Rape Crisis](#) offers support on 0808 500 2222 in England and Wales, 0808 801 0302 in [Scotland](#), or 0800 0246 991 in [Northern Ireland](#). In the US, [Rainn](#) offers support on 800-656-4673. In Australia, support is available at [1800Respect](#)

(1800 737 732). Other international helplines can be found at ibiblio.org/rcip/internl.html

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[NHS](#)

England hospitals under-reporting sexual misconduct, say experts

Exclusive: Guardian/BMJ investigation finds 35,600 incidents of violence and harassment, but researchers say 100,000 more are missing

[*Anna Bawden*](#) and [*David Batty*](#)

Tue 23 May 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 23 May 2023 07.57 EDT

More than 100,000 incidents of sexual violence and misconduct in NHS hospitals in [England](#) are not being recorded and investigated every year, experts have warned.

An investigation by the Guardian and [the British Medical Journal](#) found more than 35,606 “sexual safety incidents” were recorded by NHS hospitals in England over the past five years. The term covers a spectrum of allegations, from abusive remarks to rape, allegedly perpetrated by staff, patients and visitors.

Responses to freedom of information requests from 212 [NHS](#) trusts found that 22 each recorded more than 500 alleged incidents over 2017-2022, including seven with between 1,000 and 2,000.

But according to the data released, 59 trusts recorded 20 or fewer incidents, of which 41 recorded between zero and 10. Experts said such low numbers appeared to be highly improbable, given the huge numbers of patients treated and staff employed.

[Graphic](#)

Of the cases that were disclosed, 20,928 were incidents in which patients abused staff. Nearly 7,500 were cases of patients abusing other patients and more than 3,000 were cases of staff abusing patients.

Experts were particularly concerned that NHS trusts disclosed just 902 alleged incidents of sexual misconduct by staff against staff in a five-year period, equivalent to less than one case in each trust each year.

A 2019 [survey by Unison](#) found that 8.1% of NHS staff had experienced sexual harassment at work during the past year, with more than three-quarters saying the perpetrator was a fellow staff member. Other research estimates the rate is much higher.

Taking the most conservative estimates of prevalence, Dr Sarah Steele, a senior researcher at Cambridge University, said with more than 1 million staff employed by the 212 NHS trusts, she would have expected them to have recorded many more incidents of sexual misconduct.

“Based on past self-reporting figures in surveys by health unions and others, we would expect more than 120,000 cases of sexual misconduct per year at NHS trusts in England where the victim is a staff member, of which 90,000-95,000 would be staff-on-staff,” said Steele.

This suggests that at least 100,000 alleged incidents against staff a year are not captured in the annual figures that NHS trusts declared in their FoI responses.

“While some people would never report sexual harassment or abuse to their employer and there is a hidden figure of sexual misconduct, such low numbers suggest extremely worrying under-reporting,” said Steele. “It is clear many staff either don’t feel able or don’t know how to report incidents involving their colleagues.”

Dr Claudia Paoloni, a consultant anaesthetist at University hospitals Bristol and Weston NHS foundation trust and a former president of the Hospital Consultants and Specialists Association (HCSA) trade union, said: “I was sexually assaulted in front of everyone early in my career, but when I raised it internally at that time, they said: ‘You could report, but you do realise you would be known as the person who got a senior consultant sacked?’, so I didn’t take it any further. Because I never went to the police, there’s no record of it having happened. In my HCSA role, I’ve seen that many trusts only pay lip service to sexual safety.”

An analysis of the FoI responses showed that while all trusts have policies that govern behaviour at work, fewer than 10% of respondents had standalone sexual safety policies, which contain specific measures to

protect patients, visitors and staff from sexual violence and misconduct and set out what processes to follow when cases are reported. Only one of the NHS trusts that recorded zero or few incidents had a dedicated sexual safety policy. In contrast, those that had a specific policy tended to record far more cases.

[Research](#) published earlier this month by the University of Cambridge showed that [only one NHS trust in England provides dedicated training](#) to prevent sexual harassment.

Police figures show 11,880 alleged sexual crimes on NHS premises in the past five years, with the vast majority alleged to have taken place in hospitals. FoI responses from 37 police forces in England list 3,084 rapes, including 56 gang rapes, and 5,164 sexual assaults. Forces did not consistently provide a breakdown of who the alleged perpetrator was.

These include 493 alleged child sexual offences in hospitals, mental health units and GP surgeries in England recorded by 32 police forces, with at least 171 alleged victims aged under 13. The alleged offences include 180 alleged rapes of children under 16, of which four were gang rapes, 186 sexual assaults of children under 16, and 127 other child sexual offences, including grooming, assaulting a child by penetration, sexual communication with a child, inciting sexual activity with a child, and causing a child to watch a sex act.

Responding to the findings, medical colleges and health unions demanded immediate action. The BMA called on the government to “urgently produce a plan of action to protect our colleagues”, while the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, the HCSA, which represents hospital doctors, the GMB union, the Society of Radiographers, the British Dietetic Association, and the Liberal Democrats called for a full independent inquiry into sexual assault and harassment in the NHS.

The health secretary, Steve Barclay, said: “NHS leaders have a statutory duty of care to look after their staff and patients and prevent harassment, abuse or violence in the workplace. I expect employers to be proactive in ensuring staff and patients are fully supported, their concerns listened to and acted on, with appropriate action taken where necessary.”

An NHS spokesperson said sexual misconduct was “totally unacceptable”, adding: “NHS England is already reviewing how it supports the health service to develop policies, education, and training to tackle sexual misconduct in the workplace and better support staff. This includes building on the work of the government’s women’s health strategy.”

Sexual abuse in the NHS: what data is there?

The full extent of allegations of sexual violence and sexual misconduct in the health service – by staff, patients and visitors – is difficult to gauge due to gaps and inconsistencies in the way the NHS and the police record alleged incidents.

Although NHS England compiles figures on reports of physical abuse of patients in NHS trusts, it does not specifically collate numbers on sexual abuse, or on the abuse of staff.

NHS trusts record sexual safety incidents, a term which covers a spectrum of behaviours from abusive remarks to rape. However, while some trusts recorded sexual violence and sexual misconduct, others said they did not record sexual misconduct and could only provide data on the most “serious” incidents. One trust said it had 3,000 verbal incidents but could not identify how many were sexual.

Several trusts did not disclose the number of incidents allegedly perpetrated by staff, both where the complainants were patients and staff, due to gaps in their records.

A significant number of trusts said they did not record figures on incidents allegedly perpetrated by visitors, although the Lampard report into the abuse by the late BBC DJ Jimmy Savile raised concern that this poses a potential risk to patients, their visitors and staff.

The total number of alleged child sexual offences is also difficult to discover because of inconsistencies in the way these claims are recorded by the police. For example, some claims of crimes against children aged 13-15 are recorded under the category for victims aged 13 and above, which also covers alleged crimes against adults.

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Approach to tackling violence raises concern among NHS England staff

[David Batty](#)

The Guardian understands that senior managers have been instructing that prosecutions for assaults should be a last resort

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There has long been an acknowledgment by ministers and NHS leaders that violence against staff by patients was an issue that needed addressing, [with a strategy to tackle it announced nearly five years ago](#).

[The health service's 2019 long-term plan](#) included a pilot for the use of body-worn cameras by paramedics in a bid to “de-escalate” situations. The

following year the Crown Prosecution Service announced [an agreement with the police and NHS England to “secure swift prosecutions” of those who assault staff](#), and the maximum penalty for assaulting emergency workers, including doctors and nurses, was also [doubled to two years](#).

Despite these measures, there have been internal disagreements within NHS England about the best approach to the problem, which [affected almost 15% of staff last year](#), according to the latest national survey of the health service workforce.

The Guardian understands that senior managers in NHS [England](#) told staff in its violence prevention and reduction (VPR) team last April that prosecutions of those who assaulted healthcare workers and dismissals of abusive staff should be a last resort. Instead, the focus should be on improving the culture of the NHS and staff wellbeing.

It is also understood that managers cautioned against using the term “zero tolerance” because they said it did not take into account that some people who abuse [NHS](#) staff might lack capacity, an apparent reference to mentally ill patients.

A number of staff in NHS England’s violence prevention and reduction team warned that moving away from prosecution was dangerous, the Guardian understands, given the risk posed by violent and sexual offenders. A spokesperson from NHS England denied there had been any change in approach and stressed police were responsible for the prosecution of any perpetrators.

The Guardian has been told the VPR team, which used to number 12 in 2021, will be cut to two next year under a major restructure of NHS England.

It is also understood that the VPR team no longer provides advice and support to Operation Cavell, an initiative first set up in Sussex in 2016 to increase convictions of people who assault frontline healthcare staff, which is also being piloted by police forces and NHS trusts in London, Hampshire and Wiltshire.

Although the scheme still exists, an NHS England insider said the operation had been deprioritised, because of a feeling among senior management that the focus on prosecution was unhelpful.

A three-month pilot scheme of Operation Cavell in five London boroughs, Lambeth, Southwark, Bromley, Croydon and Sutton, between October 2020 and January 2021, recorded an increase in charges, according to [a CPS press release](#).

But none of the Operation Cavell pilots in England have since published further data on prosecution or convictions rates. Penelope Gibbs, director of [Transform Justice](#), said their [research on violence against healthcare staff and the police](#), which examined the project, found that there was no evidence that harsher sanctions deter assaults on emergency workers.

A presentation on Operation Cavell in Sussex, first given in 2018, highlighted a range of problems that initially prevented it from working, including disagreements between police and NHS staff over how to handle incidents of abuse by mentally ill patients.

Supt Richard Bates, Sussex police's lead on Operation Cavell, said reliable data on its impact was not available. He added that the scheme was not just about increasing prosecutions, and the force had helped Sussex partnership NHS foundation trust develop informal responses to low-level incidents, including warning letters and acceptable behaviour contracts.

An NHS England spokesperson said it was already reviewing how it supported the health service to tackle sexual misconduct in the workplace. He added: "This work does not include any formal role in Operation Cavell. But NHS England continues to work with the government and other partners to ensure the NHS is a safe space for staff and patients; local services must not tolerate sexual misconduct, violence, harassment, or abuse – it is totally unacceptable."

Additional reporting by Anna Bawden

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‘We always had some food poverty but now it’s not just that lowest, neediest layer’ ... Katie Barry of St George’s primary school, Lincolnshire.

[Food banks](#)

‘Why should anyone be hungry when there’s food that can be given away?’

The heroes feeding their neighbours

More than 13 million Britons do not have enough to eat. Here are four people who are trying their hardest to help, from an ex-soldier in Peterborough to a community centre manager in County Derry

[Ellie Violet Bramley](#)

Tue 23 May 2023 05.00 EDT

‘We’ve just had the king’s coronation and people are still going hungry. What’s that about?’ Food charity founder Cocoa Fowler speaks with the passion of someone who daily bears witness to an increasing number of people struggling to feed themselves and their families.

Hunger is now widespread in the UK. Almost 10 million adults and [4 million children](#) do not have enough to eat – nearly double what it was a year ago. More than [2 million adults cannot afford to eat every day](#). It has been called a [“domestic humanitarian crisis”](#). Which is why Fowler and others like him have felt compelled to set up local food banks and community larders.

‘It’s very humiliating for people – they’ve not asked for this to happen to them’

Deepa Chauhan, [Burnt Oak community food bank](#)

Deepa Chauhan’s day job used to be in marketing and PR, but now staving off hunger for the residents of Burnt Oak, a suburb in north-west London, has become a full-time occupation.

She had been involved in feeding homeless people for 13 years, but when Covid hit, the food run came to a halt. She started filling her car boot with provisions instead – “chocolate bars, crisps, drinks, just non-perishable items” – and offering them to charities.



Deepa Chauhan at the Burnt Oak community food bank. Photograph: Anselm Ebulue/The Guardian

“There was a lot of deprivation in Burnt Oak, an area that’s been overlooked for years and years,” she says, describing it as “a very diverse area full of beautiful souls who are just misunderstood, overlooked and unheard”.

She set up Burnt Oak community food bank (BOCFB) in March 2021, initially as an eight-week pilot scheme feeding approximately 25 people. “We delivered fresh produce, so it was yams, plantains, coriander – the type of things that our local, diverse community needs.” It has been running ever since.

In the beginning, Chauhan paid out of her own pocket, with the help of a few donors: now they receive [regular donations](#). “When we started it was £250 [a week], now it’s off the radar.” Their ethos, she says, is to serve “anyone and everyone coming through our doors”.

At the moment, that looks like 150 people every fortnight – “they queue up from 11 in the morning, though we don’t open the doors until 2pm”. Then they go across to a local hotel that houses more than 700 people. “Their situation is very dire. They’re refugees, asylum seekers. We also have

homeless people, ex-convicts, people who've just been released from prison."

Reading some of the emails she receives asking for help, it is, she says, "hard to have a dry eye". What were all these people doing before BOCFB came along? "A lot of them were starving," she says.

"We need to restructure the whole way we deal with this crisis of food shortages and food poverty," she says. "It's very humiliating for people to reach out and ask for help ... There needs to be empathy, there needs to be dignity, there needs to be respect in understanding that the clients walking through their doors, they've not asked for these situations to happen to them."

She thinks the government should give more support to grassroots initiatives like BOCFB. You can see why – Chauhan takes immense pride in knowing her community and its needs. During Ramadan, they bought in fresh dates to break adherents' fasts. Plus, they have been serving hot meals "because we know we've got a lot of single parents, or elderly people, who can't afford to prepare a meal so it's piping hot."

"We make sure that we are able to sleep at night knowing that people who've come in, they've got provisions, they've got halal, they've got porridge." If it is a pork pie Chauhan's clients need, "because they've got arthritis and can't utilise their cooking facilities properly," it is a pork pie they shall get. "We know, hand on heart, that our community is being taken care of, and that's really important."

'It started with the homeless, then people in need, now it's everybody'

Cocoa Fowler, [Food for Nought](#)

The story of how Cocoa Fowler founded Food for Nought is not one he likes telling: "It comes out of hunger." Brought up in care, he served 15 years in the British armed forces – in Iraq, Germany and Afghanistan –

before coming back to the UK. “Nothing was going well for me,” he says, and he found himself homeless.

People often talk about the stigma of homelessness, but for Fowler his stigma was further complicated: “I was ex-military – it makes you the action man, the big boy, the strong person ... The last thing I’m going to do is walk into a church hall and say, ‘I need help.’”

He was, he says, fortunate that a charity turned round to him and said, ““You don’t need to have this stigma hanging over you. You’re a driver, why don’t you drive one of our vehicles?”” He started driving to pick up surplus food but “realised there was more food that needed picking up than we were able to”. This was when he had the idea of Food for Nought, the charity he now runs, picking up surplus produce from supermarkets and local farms and redistributing it to charities.



Cocoa Fowler founded Food for Nought.

Its 12 volunteers deliver food from farms and supermarkets to 15 community fridges and food banks in the charity’s three vans, providing for upwards of 1,500 people a week in the Peterborough and Huntingdonshire area.

The problem, he says, is not a lack of supplies – “the food will never run out”. But “we need more organisations and centres that can turn this into meals – maybe then we would be able to say there’s not one child in this school that hasn’t got a meal, there’s not one person in a household that’s struggling that hasn’t got a meal, because we can provide that.”

This is a sore spot for him: he has a “beautiful centre that needs maybe half a million quid to get it up and running, but it’s been sat there” because the funding isn’t available. “We feed 1,500 a week now; we could be feeding triple that. We have offers of volunteers. Even my landlady, who is a qualified baker and teacher, has said, ‘If we can get this built, I can teach baking courses.’”

The levels of hunger he is currently seeing are unprecedented. “This is the madness about it ... I have an awful lot of friends who work in businesses or organisations like the NHS, the trains, middle-level workers, and they’re struggling to pay their bills and they need feeding.” The need has grown, and is continuing to grow. “It started with the homeless, then went to people in need, then went to lower levels, now it’s actually, I’d say, everybody.”

Fowler has ample and personal reason to feel passionate – he himself would still be going hungry if it weren’t for the excess food he accesses via his own charity. “I don’t think I’d be able to survive on the benefits I get if it wasn’t for charities like myself,” he says.

‘We’ve never, ever called it a food bank; we call it a free food stall’

Katie Barry, St George’s Church of England primary school, Lincolnshire

The day that Boris Johnson first announced he was closing schools because of Covid, head teacher Katie Barry’s first thought was not about her pupils’ education but about what they were going to eat. Her school sits in “a real pocket of exceptionally high deprivation”. Nearly 80% of pupils are entitled to free school meals; the national average for primary level is 25%.

She has been head of this school for 17 years, and already knew there were a lot of hungry children there. “We’ve always done things to help,” she says, but Covid meant there was “less pressure for a little while on teaching ... That gave us the green light to really concentrate on what our families needed.”

What they needed was food. “We were properly closed for one day, and on the second day we started providing lunches for families through the school gates.” At first it was just jacket potatoes. “Then local shops and people heard what we were doing and donated some food,” which they served along with school meals. “Then it just grew and grew.” Soon, Barry was effectively running a food bank out of the school.

They partnered with FareShare, the charity for which Marcus Rashford is an ambassador, which would deliver about 700-800kg of food a week. “We started doing that and we’ve just never been able to stop it, and I don’t know when I ever will be able to stop it,” she says.

While the pandemic might be over, deprivation has got worse. “We always had some food poverty but now it’s not just that lowest, neediest layer; there’s more children, there’s children whose parents do work.” Barry says that even members of her staff have been forced to use the service.

It is particularly because of families who are new to hunger that Barry has been careful how she has gone about things. For example, she has “never ever called it a food bank. We call it a free food stall, and I would hazard a guess that quite a few of the parents, if you asked them ‘Do you use a food bank?’ they would say ‘No’.”

Where people used to be quite picky about what they would take, now it is anything and everything – “it all just goes,” something she puts down to the cost of living crisis.

Barry thinks budgeting should be put on school curriculums. And how to cook the basics. At her school, they are teaching the children these skills, plus they have an allotment where they grow food.

They are also teaching parents. “We try to have a more all-inclusive approach to it – so don’t just take the packet, take some of these potatoes and carrots and cabbages and look what you can turn them into.” While fresh fruit has always been popular, vegetables would often be left behind. But she says this without judgment: “You’ve got to understand the background ... And you can’t put your own values on to somebody else’s life.”



Eglinton community larder, run by Debbie Caulfield, has recently planted an orchard.

‘My constant phrase is, “It’ll only go to waste ...”’

Debbie Caulfield, [Eglinton community larder](#)

Debbie Caulfield describes Eglinton, where she lives and works, managing the community centre, as a relatively affluent village. “If you looked us up in the statistical records, we wouldn’t be an area of multiple deprivation,” she says, but there are people who previously had “money to feed their families and meet their housing needs and everything else”, and because of hikes in prices can no longer afford to do so.

In her village of about 4,000 people, just outside Derry, the larder is regularly used by a couple of dozen people a week, plus others more occasionally. “It’s mainly things like bread, baking products,” she says. Plus: “There’s someone local who produces a lot of eggs on their farm that are too small for sale, so on a regular basis he donates all those small eggs. Trays and trays full.”

The amount taken has been unexpected. “When some of the local schools have done a collection and every shelf of the larder has been full, and the next day everything has been taken away, that has surprised me.”

Caulfield says that part of the problem is accessing fresh food: “If you are in a rural community, then the cost of transport going to some of the larger supermarkets” is part of the equation for people.

She is thinking more broadly about strengthening food security in her village, and has also been involved in planting a community orchard of plum, pear and apple trees on a piece of council land “so people can access fresh fruit and vegetables, grow some of their own and share that produce between each other, because poverty and food hunger do have a stigma attached to them.”

The larder was in part a response to “the realisation in the middle of all that [panic] buying that there was a lot of food waste at the time as well ... yet people need this food and how can we distribute it in a relatively straightforward way?” Continuing to market the larder as an answer to food waste has, she thinks, helped to soften the stigma of taking from it. “My constant phrase is, ‘It’ll only go to waste.’ The whole point about it is not to make people feel as if they’re in need. I’d rather people feel as if they’re doing us a favour by taking the stuff.”

That anything should go to waste when others are hungry is, she says, “such a shame and I suppose that’s what drives me, thinking why should anyone be sitting hungry when there’s food there that can be given away? Doesn’t make any sense at all.”

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‘I was a 17-year-old versus a 600lb grizzly bear. I was going to die’: Alex Messenger’s ordeal in the wilderness

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Naga Munchetty noted in her Radio 5 Live show that there is no dedicated NHS page for adenomyosis. Photograph: Suki Dhanda/The Guardian

[Women's health](#)

‘I’m glad my symptoms have a name’: three women on their struggles with adenomyosis

After Naga Munchetty revealed her agonies with the little-known womb condition, three readers share their experiences

[*Jedidajah Otte*](#)

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Karen Dugmore, 44, from Birmingham, had normal periods until after she had her children.

“I had two children within three years and started to feel serious pain around my time of the month at age 35. I went to the doctor and was told it was period pains, so I just got on with it.”

By the time she was 41, during the pandemic, she had taken significant turn for the worse.

“I began bleeding so much that if I stood up, blood clots would fall to the floor. I was wearing five sanitary towels in an hour and it felt as if I was peeing blood into the towels. I was anaemic and so unwell.”

She was working from home at the time and so put up with it, she said, until she had a conversation with a female colleague. “She said to me: ‘It shouldn’t be like that.’”



Karen Dugmore, who says of her experience with adenomyosis: “This condition – it does have a huge effect on your life.” Photograph: Karen Dugmore/Guardian Community

Untypically for women with adenomyosis, Karen was diagnosed with the condition within eight months of getting in touch with her doctor.

“I felt lucky from start to finish,” she said. “But I am sitting here, in pain. It’s constant. I think hysterectomy may be the only option, although I am having injections to medically induce menopause first, to see if that helps. I am glad this is being spoken about. I have struggled to explain the pain.

“I’ve never heard anyone describe the condition like the doctor on Naga Munchetty’s show on Monday. It was so informative. Only last night I felt as if I had the bowling ball feeling in my stomach and actually thought I was imagining it.”

Sarah, from Hampshire, was diagnosed with the condition at the age of 43, after suffering with severe pain and bleeding since the age of 14.

“It took almost 30 years for me to get a diagnosis,” the 50-year-old said. “I had heavy periods my whole life, and was given the pill at a young age to try to lessen the bleeding, but the pain was terrible every day. I would be doubled over in pain often, in the middle of the street, and later in life I had steroid injections in my hips which turned out to be unnecessary.

“My whole life, I was on pain killers and told by doctors that I was suffering from IBS. This condition made my uterus large and tilted which impacted other parts of my stomach, but this was not IBS.”

After her second pregnancy, Sarah’s bleeding became so uncontrollable that she “couldn’t do very much”.

“I went to the GP to say I could no longer cope and she agreed that it might be endometriosis. Luckily, I had private medical cover and got a speedy referral.”

The consultant suspected adenomyosis after a scan, and advised Sarah to undergo a hysterectomy, which she did a few weeks later. “They said it was the only solution, but they could only confirm I had adenomyosis after I’d had the surgery.”

Sarah, who works in education and had two children at the age of 34 and 37, did not intend to have any more and says her life has hugely improved since she has recovered from the hysterectomy.

“It removed my pain completely. This is a little-known condition that is hugely debilitating and more should be done to raise awareness and understanding.”



Emma Lewis-Kalubowila, from Stockport, says being diagnosed with adenomyosis has significantly reduced her anxiety. Photograph: Emma Lewis-Kalubowila/Guardian Community

For Emma Lewis-Kalubowila, 38, getting more information about her own body and pain was “really powerful”, she said, referring to her finding out that she had adenomyosis on top of endometriosis.

“I’d never heard of adenomyosis before, until my own diagnosis. I was diagnosed with endometriosis six, seven years ago, but after having kids something felt different. Bloating, a heavy “full” feeling and tenderness in my stomach. It was different to the endo pain – and I was worried it was something sinister.”

After a long wait to be seen in hospital, Emma, who lives in Stockport, had a diagnostic MRI in December that confirmed adenomyosis.

“I felt so much better knowing what I had, and allayed my fears about what it was – I thought it could have been ovarian or womb cancer, given my

symptoms.”

Like others, Lewis-Kalubowila said she had been given conflicting advice. “I feel passed from pillar to post, but it’s so helpful to read and hear other people’s experiences,” she said.

For the moment, Emma is managing the condition with Ibuprofen. “I’ve asked to be put on a different contraceptive pill to see if that brings relief. There are some days when you have to curl up in bed, but you can live a good life with this condition. I’m just glad to know my symptoms have a name.”

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Chaz Jankel pictured in 1980. Photograph: Michael Putland/Getty Images

[Pop and rock](#)

[Interview](#)

‘Ian Dury was a voice for the disenfranchised’: Chaz Jankel, the man

who made the Blockheads funky

[Ben Beaumont-Thomas](#)

He wrote the music for Dury's biggest hits, then struck out for Studio 54 in a brilliant but misfiring solo career. Jankel recalls his strange path through pop – and dodging Dury's drunken rages



[@ben_bt](#)

Tue 23 May 2023 03.44 EDT Last modified on Tue 23 May 2023 11.37 EDT

Chaz Jankel walked cautiously down a corridor backstage at the Greyhound pub on Fulham Palace Road. Steam emerged from a dressing room, as if from a Turkish bath. Holding court in the middle of the musicians crammed inside, one of them eyeballed him. “Ere, do I know you? Well fuck off then!”

This was the inauspicious beginning of one of the greatest partnerships in British pop music, between Jankel, a middle-class north Londoner in love with Black American funk and soul, and Ian Dury, a confrontational, wildly charismatic pub rock singer. Jankel soon wrote the music for songs such as Sex & Drugs & Rock’n’Roll, Spasticus Autisticus, and the 1979 UK No 1

single Hit Me With Your Rhythm Stick, with Dury delivering raunchy screeds on top. But this was just the first chapter in a remarkable story for Jankel, who would go on to become the darling of America's club scene, be courted by Quincy Jones, and continue releasing music to this day: aged 71, he released his [newest solo album](#) last week.

Back in the Greyhound, Jankel was there because he'd been invited by Dury's guitarist Ed Speight – their band, Kilburn and the High Roads, needed a keyboardist. “It was like watching a bunch of lunatics, really,” Jankel says of the gig he saw. “I didn't particularly like the music but I was hypnotised. It was loud. It was surreal. Ian was wearing a Tommy Cooper fez; the sax player was the spitting image of Frank Zappa. It was like being hit over the head with a blunt instrument.”

After heading backstage and being rebuffed by Dury, Jankel turned to leave, but Speight spotted him and invited him to rehearse the following day. Jankel started gigging with them, but soon tired of the Wurlitzer piano lines he was playing: “It wasn't soulful to my ears. I thought: I need more than this.” He coaxed Dury into writing new and different material with him, and they amassed a funkier backing band: the Blockheads. “Ian brought his love of music hall, and his sense of irony,” Jankel remembers, sat in the pleasantly skylit extension of his north London home. “And his anger.”



Ian Dury & the Blockheads, with Dury centre and Jankel third from right. Photograph: David Corio/Redferns

Dury was partially paralysed by polio he suffered as a boy. “If he hadn’t had polio, he would have been like Buggy Malone or Ronnie Kray,” Jankel says. “But he put that anger into his lyrics and his stage persona – and we were his gang.

“He grew up in a very tough time in the 1950s where disability was the same as having a mental disorder. People were all just chucked together in the one home. And so discrimination and cruelty were massive in his life as he was growing up, and he channelled a lot of that into his lyrics. Also, the women he could attract doing music were a great spur to becoming a musician! He was also a very fine [visual] artist but he once said to me that when he realised he could never be as good as Rembrandt, there was no point doing that.”

The Dury-Jankel partnership quickly bore fruit. Debut album *New Boots and Panties!!* went Top 5 in 1977 and its follow-up *Do It Yourself* reached No 2; Dury had the vim of the punk scene he had helped inspire, but Jankel gave the Blockheads a danceable and almost sophisticated edge. “Ian was extremely articulate, energised, dynamic, funny, and 10 years older than me – so he was educating me about jazz and all kinds of things,” Jankel says.

“Here is a person totally committed to truth and the written word. And as a lyricist, he was a voice for the disenfranchised.” He cites Billericay Dickie and Plaistow Patricia, larger than life working-class characters that appear on *New Boots and Panties*!! He says that people like this, “you never see them [in media]; politicians don’t give a fuck about any of them. If anything, right now I think there’s a move to get rid of people who don’t have any money.”

Spasticus Autisticus meanwhile – one of Jankel’s most insistently funky numbers – remains a heroically impolite, piss-flecked celebration of disabled humanity. It was banned by the BBC on release in 1981 but ended up being performed at the 2012 Paralympics opening ceremony. “The BBC thought Ian was having a go at disabled people. He wasn’t, he was just saying: hello to you out there, normal land. [Disabled people] were on the fringe and he was giving them a voice. So many people who are disabled have told me how important Ian is in their life.”

But Dury wasn’t an easy collaborator. “He was two quite different personalities – one when he was sober and one when he’d had a drink,” Jankel says. “Some people use alcohol as a foil to say what they want; dutch courage can take over and they can be a little bit vicious. Well, not a little bit.” Once during a rehearsal, Dury started kicking over the drum kit. “This random anger. Then went up to Ed Speight and cracks an egg on his head for no reason. Ed’s got yolk streaming down his forehead, dripping off his nose on to his guitar. And that obviously brought the rehearsal to an abrupt halt. So then the next day at rehearsal, Ian gets an egg and: bosh, cracks it on his own head. That was his way of saying: I was out of order. That expression, ‘out of order’, cropped up quite a lot.”

Another time Dury told Jankel to close his eyes during a writing session. He opened them to find Dury wearing fake horns with a torch under his chin. “He’s staring at me – and I shiver to this day. He wanted to play games like that, trying to say: I can be the devil.”

Jankel’s career prior to Dury had been almost nonexistent. His love for music began when he was very small, seeing Lonnie Donegan playing guitar, and became a means of escape in a boarding school that was both

boring and violent – Jankel was beaten by older boys. “Music became that transport, where you didn’t need a passport, you go wherever you wanted in your mind.” Get Out of My Life, Woman by Lee Dorsey was his gateway into Black music, and he became a Sly and the Family Stone superfan right down to the outlandish fashion, even when playing west coast psychedelia in a band called Byzantium. “They had long hair and everything was denim, and I turned up wearing a sleeveless white satin waistcoat, bell-bottom trousers with red panels, and sequins. Looking back on it, I looked like someone out of Showaddywaddy.”



Ian and Chaz in the Bahamas. Photograph: Roberta Bayley/Redferns

After leaving that band, he flatlined through his early 20s: smoking weed, living with his parents, and working listlessly in the lighting department of John Lewis until he left his phone number at a music shop that luckily found its way to Speight. But despite Dury and the Blockheads taking Jankel’s music to the top of the charts, “it was on Ian’s conditions. I thought, well, where do I come into this?”

Inspiration for his first great solo single struck while on tour with the Blockheads – specifically, when getting high with a Dutch model in his hotel room after a gig. “She was offering me things that I’d never actually

taken before. Things that aren't necessarily legal. The melody for Ai No Corrida just popped into my head, and I just went over to my guitar, just to check what key this melody was in. I got so excited that I called [bassist] Norman Watt-Roy and said: come and hear this." Despite this nerdish dampening of the romantic mood, the model stuck around. "It was very short lived!"

Ai No Corrida is an astounding song, wondrous to dance to. Its American lyricist-for-hire, Kenny Young, was inspired by the true story (dramatised in the film *In the Realm of the Senses*) of a geisha who becomes erotically infatuated with her madam's husband, eventually losing her mind and cutting off his penis. "All I wanted really was a kind of lighthearted lyric – what the hell?" Even when turned into a tale of dreamy infatuation, its near nine-minute run time perhaps doomed it to failure, though it became a transatlantic hit when Quincy Jones (backed by Herbie Hancock and others) covered it as a three-minute single.

Jankel had a major label US deal with A&M, and his sense of funk meant that it was Americans who really got him: the equally superb 1981 single *Glad to Know You* became a ubiquitous hit in US clubs. Jankel was the guest of honour at New York nightclub Paradise Garage with its legendary DJ Larry Levan – "I got to stand in the booth with him, I felt like the bees knees" – and at Studio 54, where, after drinking a bit too much, "I lent on what I thought was a pillar, but it turned out to be a gigantic Christmas tree. Suddenly, this thing was moving, and it was like: *timberrrr!* I ran to the circle of people trying to get out the way of this huge tree that was falling into the floor. I'm looking at it going, God, who did that?"

Dury wrote the lyrics to *Glad to Know You*, some of his best: "You wandered in upon my life / And haven't lost me yet / Said the turkey to the carving knife / What you give is what you get." Jankel says it was years before he worked out what Ian was saying: "Look out for backstabbers."

Jankel performed it on a big US TV show, Dick Clark's *American Bandstand*, and in an interview with Clark he cuts a strange shape: very handsome and cool, but also awkward and geeky, talking about music's architectural properties. Was he a bit of an odd fish to be a pop star? "I was.

I realised I could have trod a very commercial path with it all, but I was always dubious about polishing one's ego that much." Jankel minted other perfect pop songs – Number One, Without You, 109 – that are like Hall & Oates doing Italo disco, but none were actual pop hits, and A&M dropped him after his fourth album.



Chaz Jankel today. Photograph: -

After spending the late 80s in LA scoring films he made his way back to the Blockheads, though Jankel chafed with Dury again, even threatening legal action to cut himself out of the band. But then Dury was diagnosed with the cancer that ended up killing him in 2000, and Jankel stayed. "I fell on my sword, let's put it like that. And it was good – it was from a place of compassion. If you care about somebody, there's always that forgiveness. I wouldn't have been with him all those years if he wasn't a very intelligent, compassionate, altruistic humanist." Jankel still tours with the Blockheads: "The sense of democracy is phenomenal, that's never been better."

The same can't be said for the rest of the world, and Jankel's new album *Flow* rails against inequality, social division and the climate crisis. He's been reflecting on "the huge chasm between wealth and the opposite. How are we gonna change things? Whenever you get a ray of light, it's almost like it's snuffed out – I mean, look what they did to Jeremy Corbyn." But

Jankel meditates and studies Eckhart Tolle, and is – understandably, in his nice house and with an esteemed career behind him – the picture of contentment. “You have to find that place within you that is untouchable by the comings and goings of these terrible events we’re going through. Anchor yourself in a sense of peace. Don’t be immune to what is going on, but don’t let it ruin your sense of self.”

He never really made it in the charts as a solo artist, was eclipsed by Dury’s brilliant ego and remains unknown to most, but he doesn’t seem to mind. “I had a song called You’re My Occupation – Tony Blackburn played it just once on the radio. But a woman who danced at a Spearmint Rhino strip club came up to me after a gig and said it was her favourite song to do routines to.” He gives a wry grin. “Success comes in many forms.”

[Flow](#) is out now on CJ Records

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2023.05.23 - Opinion

- We know Boris Johnson is a liar but Rishi Sunak promised truth and integrity. Where is it?
- Rishi Sunak thinks voters don't care about his vast wealth, but the pollsters aren't so sure
- What's the difference between a baby and a puppy? I know how to behave when friends get a baby
- Who says clothes aren't a matter of life or death? In Succession they're both



Animal rights activists hang stuffed animals outside Downing Street this month.

Photograph: Vuk Valcic/ZUMA Press Wire/Shutterstock

Opinion

**We know Boris Johnson is a liar but
Rishi Sunak promised truth and
integrity. Where is it?**

Peter Osborne



The former prime minister set a shameful example and with their apparent willingness to obfuscate and mislead, his colleagues are following it

Tue 23 May 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 23 May 2023 09.51 EDT

For all Rishi Sunak's claims to be a trustworthy prime minister, he is, in fact, in the mould of Boris Johnson. He has made misleading claims from the start of his premiership, and continues to do so. Take his first prime minister's questions on 26 October last year. To murmurs of approval from Conservative MPs, he [told](#) Labour's Richard Burdon: "We will always support our hardworking nurses."

To drive home his support, [Sunak added](#): "That is why, when I was chancellor, we reintroduced the nurses' bursary." This was a misleading claim, as the new prime minister would have been well aware. It is true that, as chancellor, Sunak offered a [new educational grant](#) of £5,000 a year (increasing to £8,000 in some cases) for all nursing students on courses from September 2020. However, this fell significantly short of the bursary system, which had earlier been [scrapped](#) by the Conservative government.

It then got worse. In the same PMQs, Sunak told [MPs](#) that there had been “a record number of new homes built in the last year”. This claim was false. As a report by the due diligence website [Full Fact](#) later concluded: “The most recent published data shows 173,520 new homes were completed in England in the year to June 2022, slightly down on the previous year.”

This false claim quickly became an important test for Sunak. His predecessor, Boris Johnson, made [scores](#) of such boasts, leaving them on the Hansard record even after they’d been exposed as false. Had Sunak corrected his relatively minor mistakes, as both [parliamentary convention](#) and the [ministerial code](#) demands, he could have sent a powerful signal. By choosing not to do so, he raises the question: does he share Johnson’s contempt for integrity, even as he claims to lead a government of “integrity, professionalism and accountability at every level”?

The following month, Sunak made another misleading claim in the House of Commons: “[Let us remember one thing: we had the fastest vaccine rollout in the world because of our freedoms after leaving the European Union.](#)”



Then prime minister Boris Johnson with former chancellor Rishi Sunak in 2021. Photograph: Daniel Leal/AFP/Getty Images

In fact, the UK's vaccines were [procured](#) while still a member of the single market and the European Medicines Agency (EMA). Further, the UK's early rollout was secured by the use of regulation 174, an [EU provision](#) allowing member states to bypass the authorisation of the EMA and issue their own medicines.

Sunak entered Downing Street on the back of a promise to bring an end to the apparent disregard for the truth that was a defining feature of the Johnson and Truss premierships. He launched his campaign for the Tory leadership with a [pledge](#) to “restore trust, rebuild the economy and reunite the country”. But his claims regarding the truth do not bear serious interrogation.

I assert this with confidence because I have been keeping a record of false claims uttered by British prime ministers ever since the Iraq war began in 2003. My file indicated that Tony Blair's successors, Gordon Brown, David Cameron and Theresa May, were relatively honest. This is not to say they were perfect. But they were certainly not habitual and shameless liars. All this changed the moment Boris Johnson walked into Downing Street in July 2019.

Sunak has surprised me. In common with almost everyone else, I thought he would represent a reversion to traditional politics after the malign chaos of Johnson and Truss. But that has not been the case. Take the promise to “reduce debt”, one of Sunak's [five pledges](#) at the start of 2023. Neither Sunak nor his chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, plan to reduce debt, as the March budget statement made explicit. On the contrary, it appears they mean to increase it substantially, while telling voters the opposite. According to the [latest figures](#) from the Office for Budget Responsibility, net debt stood at £2.5tn at the time of the budget, and is projected to rise every year till 2028, by which time it will have advanced to £2.9tn. Sunak should be all too familiar with these numbers.

One former Conservative party communications expert told me that reducing debt “sounded better to voters”.

Sunak's apparent readiness to mislead on such issues could send a message to cabinet subordinates to follow suit. The biggest culprit is the home

secretary, Suella Braverman, who seems to operate in a post-truth world: [denying](#) that Brexit is to blame for Dover delays, and making inflammatory claims about Pakistani “grooming gangs” that have been [proved false](#) by her own officials. The [controversy over her speeding fine](#) is the latest test of Sunak’s frequently broken promise to bring integrity back to government.

At the G20 summit in Bali, Sunak was asked whether leaving the EU had contributed to Britain’s economic woes. The prime minister [responded](#) by talking about the global context, Covid and the war in Ukraine, but not Brexit. This strategy is known to lawyers as *suppressio veri* (the misrepresenting of the truth by withholding of relevant facts). During international trade week last November, Michael Gove boasted on [Twitter](#): “We’ve secured new free trade deals with over 70 countries since 2016. That’s over £800bn worth of new global trade.” His statement was not correct. Robert Chote, chair of the UK Statistics Authority, has since [stated](#) that “it is misleading to describe the £800bn figure as a measure of ‘new global trade’ resulting from the recent deals.”

The health secretary, Steve Barclay, is one of a number of ministers who have made the [wild claim](#) that accepting public sector pay demands would cost £1,000 per household. Leading the way in this was Sunak, who appeared in front of an RAF base in Lincolnshire to [announce](#): “What I’m not going to do is ask ordinary families up and down the country to pay an extra £1,000 a year to meet the pay demands of the union bosses.” This prime ministerial claptrap has since been [magisterially demolished](#) by Chote.

It’s as if Sunak and his ministers don’t respect facts at all.

Or take the environment. Sunak [said](#) that “I care about the climate and the environment I’m leaving [my daughters].” His Downing Street spokesman [insisted](#) that Britain is “committed to net zero”. Yet as prime minister he has [ejected](#) the Cop26 president, Alok Sharma, and the climate minister, Graham Stuart, from the cabinet. He [almost](#) did not attend Cop27 and [advised](#) King Charles against attending. He is pressing ahead with the opening of a new coalmine in Cumbria.

There's a further category of misleading or false comments from Sunak: tactical. The Tories are determined to turn Keir Starmer's role as lieutenant to Jeremy Corbyn in the 2019 general election into a liability. This may explain why the prime minister [asserted during PMQs](#) late last year that Corbyn's national security agenda involved "abolishing our armed forces, scrapping the nuclear deterrent, withdrawing from Nato, voting against every single anti-terror law we tried, and befriending Hamas and Hezbollah". Labour's 2019 election manifesto proposed none of the above. Sunak has not corrected these false statements, despite being [asked](#) to do so by Jeremy Corbyn. Note, however, that Starmer also emerges poorly from this exchange: the opposition leader did not correct Sunak.

Britain therefore has a monstrous problem. Before Sunak turned up in Downing Street, it was just about possible to explain the collapse of integrity after 2019 in terms of Johnson's incorrigible [personal dishonesty](#). But Sunak appears to be yet another compulsively dishonest prime minister. This suggests a deep-rooted structural problem not just in the Conservative party but also in the House of Commons.

Hence the importance of the ongoing House of Commons privileges committee investigation into allegations that Boris Johnson misled parliament about parties held in Downing Street during lockdown. The committee cannot reach a conclusion about Johnson without making a wider judgment about whether a prime minister should be permitted to mislead the Commons. So the question will arise: what about Sunak?

Sunak's pledge to bring back trust in British politics, reasserted so many times, appears itself to be insincere. This brings personal discredit, makes good government impossible and demonstrates how deeply political deceit has become embedded in our national life. Something has gone horribly wrong with the British system of government.

- Peter Osborne is a journalist and the author of *Assault on Truth*

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‘In the latest Sunday Times rich list, Rishi Sunak and his wife, Akshata Murty, are listed at £529m.’ The prime minister and his wife arrive in Hiroshima, Japan, last week. Photograph: Stefan Rousseau/AFP/Getty Images

[Opinion](#)**Rishi Sunak**

Rishi Sunak thinks voters don't care about his vast wealth, but the pollsters aren't so sure

[Polly Toynbee](#)



Public opinion is turning against the super-rich. Will it take a general election for the prime minister to realise?

Tue 23 May 2023 02.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 23 May 2023 12.32 EDT

The prime minister sincerely hopes, [as he said last week](#), that we've "moved beyond judging people by what's in their bank account." Is that so? Attitudes to wealth and inequality are confusing and often inconsistent. But Sunak's phenomenal fortune seems deeply unhelpful for his electoral prospects.

Those in his stratosphere have prospered exponentially, especially in the past decade, according to the latest [Sunday Times rich list](#). Their gravity-defying golden era, untouched by the banking crash, Brexit or the pandemic, only this year suffered a blip. Sunak, the first prime minister to feature, and his wife, Akshata Murty, are listed at £529m, [down from £730m](#) last year. It's hard to comprehend such numbers. The pair lost £500,000 a day – a *day* – for 12 months, yet even that is too little to touch lifestyles in this hyper-realm.

Does it matter that Sunak belongs to this tiny golden clan? Yes, say the pollsters. “His wealth is beyond comprehension,” says Chris Hopkins of Savanta. “People feel he’s out of touch, not normal. How can he legislate on the cost of living, with no experience of their lives?” Labour ads go for the jugular: “Do you think it’s right to raise taxes for working people when your family has benefited from a tax loophole? Rishi Sunak does.” On tax avoidance, the Labour line chimes with the Fairness Foundation’s finding that eight in 10 people, including [79% of Tory voters](#), think the wealthy don’t contribute their fair share of taxes.

Labour’s own research finds Sunak’s super-wealth “matters a lot, as it means he can’t imagine, and so doesn’t care, about people’s reality,” one Labour source told me. Attacking his wealth shows Labour no longer fears being accused of “the politics of envy” but expects to strike a chord with its own “politics of empathy”.

The top 1% are now seen as more powerful than government, reports a [cross-party group of MPs](#) this week: 39% rank the very rich as most powerful, while only 24% think governments hold the real power, reversing opinion in the last five years. Prof Bobby Duffy, director of the Policy Institute, described this as “a remarkable shift in a short period of time.” It matches Fairness Foundation polling showing that almost [70% of people](#) are concerned at some owning over £10m while others live in poverty.

Yet wealth is still tricky political terrain to navigate. How people make money matters: Fairness Foundation polling shows entrepreneurs and sports stars are deserving, and so, oddly, are landlords, whose wealth is seen as fair by 53%, unfair only by 13%. But the figures for financiers are not as convincing. Inheritance wealth, says the poll, is “fair” for both new-money and old-money heirs; and while the progressive instinct is to raise inheritance tax, the public is in favour of inherited wealth. Protecting your children is a reflex deeper than politics.

The question of who is rich is fraught. A fascinating [new book](#), *Uncomfortably Off: Why the Top 10% of Earners Should Care About Inequality*, by Marcos González Hernando and Gerry Mitchell, surveys unhappiness and insecurity at the top. The top 10% constitute the most unequal group, stretching from those who earn £60,000 at the bottom to the

0.1% whose multimillions and billions shoot off the graph. This powerful group are leaders of business and professions, yet are almost all much further from the top than they are to the median.

Most of them feel increasingly insecure, running on a hamster wheel, yet making little progress as pay retreats for them, too. Because they're more likely to compare themselves to those above them, rather than those below, they don't feel rich, and tend to be ignorant of how far above the ordinary they are. They feel insecure. According to the IFS in the book, a quarter won't be in the top 10% in a year's time. Half will fall out of this category within five years, due to economic shocks, illness or bad luck.

They think they're already overtaxed, seriously underestimating how much they need state services over the course of their life, particularly during their expensive elderly years. Austerity has so damaged society that the worse public services become – [ambulance response times](#), unprosecuted crimes and cash-strapped schools – the less willing people are to pay more tax to fund these services. They fear that their children, who already earn less, will be unable to afford their parents' lifestyle. The book is addressed to these 9.9% of people in the top bracket, warning them of worse to come. Investing in a good society will do them more good than trying and failing to mimic the isolated individualism of the super-rich.

The 9.9%, like the rest, want the super-rich to pay more. Agreeing with Denis Healey's famous promise, which he made about property developers, most voters think it's now time to squeeze the rich until "the pips squeak", which doesn't bode well for [Rishi Sunak](#).

- Polly Toynbee is a Guardian columnist
 - Uncomfortably Off by Marcos Gonzalez Hernando & Gerry Mitchell (Bristol University Press, £19.99). To support The Guardian and Observer, order your copy at guardianbookshop.com. Delivery charges may apply.
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If you go for a walk and people stop to pet the puppy, resist the temptation to pretend it's yours. Photograph: Chalabala/Getty Images/iStockphoto

[OpinionDogs](#)

**What's the difference between a baby
and a puppy? I know how to behave
when friends get a baby**

[Zoe Williams](#)



When can you visit? What should you talk about? How long should you stay? It's a minefield

Tue 23 May 2023 02.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 23 May 2023 10.09 EDT

I always assume that when a person gets a new dog, the household lives for a period in new-baby territory. That is to say, anyone is allowed to visit whenever they like as long as they bring something diverting and indulgent – a card trick, vodka – and don't expect so much as a glass of water. This turns out not to be true. I had to lobby for weeks to be invited to meet my friend's new dachshund and when we arrived, it turned out "lunch" meant actual lunch, which wasn't what I meant at all. I was thinking more, have some Frazzles, hug the dog, hug the older dog so it didn't feel left out, do that a few more times, then go for a walk.

The etiquette is the opposite of new-baby rules: you have to think of some things to talk about that aren't the dog. You shouldn't really make minute-by-minute observations about the activities of the dog, or speculate about its feelings, or hypothesise about the extent of its consciousness or

comprehension. Its owners have already had these conversations; they were hoping you would arrive with something new.

If they do take you out for a walk, and you pass some other people on a beautiful early summer's day, and they stop to pet the new dog because, let's face it, *it's so small*, it's bad form to pretend the dog is yours by making proprietorial statements such as: "Yes, she does have a lovely nature, thank you for noticing", and: "Yes, this is her dad, but look how different they are in colouring." I don't know why it's so wrong, but it is, and I knew that when I was doing it.

If the dog is extremely small, being both a miniature version of an already small breed and three months old, and you are used to a larger-boned canine, take extra care not to tread on the dog. Know when to leave – it's easy with a baby: you leave when it starts crying. If you wait for a puppy to start getting on your nerves, you may as well move in.

Zoe Williams is a Guardian columnist

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/may/23/whats-the-difference-between-a-baby-and-a-puppy-i-know-how-to-behave-when-friends-get-a-baby>.



‘Powdered nose, hair done, a black pantsuit with a Disney villain neckline and a string of establishment pearls ...’ Shiv Roy, played by Sarah Snook, at her father’s funeral in Succession. Photograph: Home Box Office/HBO

[OpinionSuccession](#)

Who says clothes aren’t a matter of life or death? In Succession they’re both

[Morwenna Ferrier](#)



Grieving and pregnant, Shiv Roy's wardrobe speaks to those of us who have tried to hold it down at life-changing moments

Tue 23 May 2023 03.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 23 May 2023 07.42 EDT

In the days after my mother's death, I spent a lot of time online looking for shoes to wear to her funeral.

Not an obvious reaction to grief. But while I had a dress – a black one with pretty red peonies that I kept rolled up in my bag when her illness began to accelerate during the summer – we were in lockdown so the shops were shut, and I wasn't going to wear Birkenstocks. Eventually, I found some brogues on eBay and, after wiping them with Dettol, tried everything on. I looked nice, put together. But this was the problem. Looking “put together” seemed like the wrong response when I felt anything but. On the day of her funeral, I wore my mother's navy skirt suit. It was too big and I was too hot, but for both reasons felt much more appropriate.

I was reminded of all this after watching [Shiv Roy](#) walking behind her father's coffin in the most recent episode of [Succession](#). Even in deep grief,

she was forced to look the part: powdered nose, hair done, a black pantsuit with a Disney villain neckline and a string of establishment pearls. In short, a scion and a firebrand – not a grieving mother-to-be. Death is a great leveller until it isn't.

Succession is not a show couched in realism, however tangible the sibling dynamics often feel. It's a show about appearances, and within that, clothes. No one eats, shops or – despite the pregnancy – seems to have sex.

The only constant is what these awful people wear, which remains largely unchanged throughout all four seasons. Except for Shiv, who, as the only daughter of an unfathomably rich and powerful rightwinger, is under more scrutiny than most. In the first series, she was a long-haired power liberal in Fair Isle knits from H&M (H&M!) and dresses from Ted Baker. Now she is in buttoned-up Max Mara waistcoats and Ralph Lauren houndstooth jackets, betraying herself as a woman not in control, but trapped in a doom loop of familial discontent, lies and daddy issues.

The main change of course is that she's pregnant, a fact that she has been trying to hide until now. As someone who is also pregnant, though a few weeks behind, I think managing this has been the costume department's greatest challenge, and success. The first trimester is fine. By 20 weeks, there's no escape. And yet no elastic waists and tent dresses for Shiv! Instead, long blazers to hide her bump, low-cut tops to distract and a clever taupe Skims bodysuit to keep that bump under wraps. Night sweats getting you down? Just tong your hair (on that – I've noticed continuity issues this season, with her hair going from straight to wavy mid-scene, which suggests they're thinking about Shiv's hair as much as I'm thinking about my own). Twitter certainly had fun mocking Shiv's sad ponytail at Connor's wedding. But as anyone familiar with pregnancy hormones knows, second-trimester hair has a will of its own.

One of the hardest things for a pregnant woman to do is to confront this bodily shape shift while trying to maintain their identity. Most keep their pregnancies a secret for at least 12 weeks for fear of miscarriage or complications. These dangers are real – roughly [10% to 20% of known pregnancies end in miscarriage](#) – and most of us would rather not risk sharing news early only to have difficult conversations later. This silence

isn't much fun. But even after this point, the risks continue and can be compounded by judgment and career retaliation – all while you try not to vomit on the hour. In the case of Shiv, that judgment is coming from her family, the tabloids and all those people who told her she'd be a terrible mother. Roman's joke about her weight is the least of it.

Caught between these duelling realities, it's little wonder she's gone turbo-Tom-Ford-Girlboss. It's also little wonder she's aligned herself with an alt-billionaire from Sweden: a country where parental rights are light years ahead of the US. The many cultural differences between Alexander Skarsgård's Lukas Matsson and the Roy brothers are also signalled in their clothes, which set the scene long before they begin negotiations (though you could definitely envision Kendall wearing the Swede's gold bomber jacket from the Tailgate party during his existential phase in season two).

The overall aesthetic of the show has been distilled into "stealth wealth". This aggressively bland look, which loosely translates as "cashmere and baseball caps indoors", is more of a nebulous marketing term than an actual trend – to me, it looks like expensive normcore. For Shiv, though, it's become a uniform and a life raft, a way of showing her skin remains in the game even if there's a baby the length of a carrot growing within it.

We dismiss clothing as superficial but it often says a lot about who we are or at least who we want to be. This is the paradox of fashion. And it is particularly true for women, especially when we are trying to keep a handle on the vast movements of life and death.

- Morwenna Ferrier is the Guardian's fashion and lifestyle editor
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2023.05.23 - Around the world

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- [White House Driver detained after truck crashes into security barriers near residence](#)
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- [Stan Grant News Corp denies it played a part in presenter's decision](#)



In this photo released by the Turkish presidency, Sinan Oğan shakes hands with Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on 19 May. Oğan has endorsed Erdoğan in the 2023 Turkey presidential election runoff. Photograph: AP

[Turkey](#).

Turkey election: Erdoğan endorsed by third-place ‘kingmaker’ ahead of runoff vote

Sinan Oğan, who came third with 5.17% of presidential vote, says second-placed Kılıçdaroğlu failed to offer a convincing alternative to incumbent

Associated Press in Ankara

Mon 22 May 2023 23.38 EDTLast modified on Tue 23 May 2023 02.48 EDT

The nationalist candidate who came third in the first round of the Turkish presidential elections has formally endorsed [Recep Tayyip Erdoğan](#), with the runoff vote to be held on 28 May.

Sinan Oğan, 55, emerged as a potential kingmaker after neither Erdoğan nor his main challenger, the opposition leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, secured the necessary majority in the first round on 14 May.

“I declare that we will support Mr Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the candidate of the People’s Alliance, in the second round of the elections,” Oğan said, referring to the Erdoğan-led alliance that includes nationalist and Islamist parties.

“We believe that our decision will be the right decision for our country and nation.”

Oğan is a former academic who was backed by a far-right anti-migrant party. He won 5.17% [in the 14 May vote](#) and could hold the key to [victory in the runoff](#) now that he is out of the race.

Erdoğan received 49.5% of the votes in the first round – just short of the majority needed for an outright victory – compared with Kılıçdaroğlu’s 44.9%.

Erdoğan’s ruling AK party and its nationalist and Islamist allies also retained a majority in the 600-seat parliament. That increases Erdoğan’s chances of re-election because voters are likely to vote for him to avoid a splintered government, analysts say.

Oğan cited Erdoğan’s parliamentary majority as a reason for his decision.

“It is important that newly elected president is under the same [leadership] as the parliament,” Oğan said. “[Kılıçdaroğlu’s] alliance on the other hand could not display sufficient success against the People’s Alliance which has been in power for 20 years, and could not establish a perspective that could convince us about the future.”

His endorsement of Erdoğan on Monday followed a surprise meeting between them in Istanbul on Friday. Oğan insisted on Monday that he did not engage in any horse trading.

Oğan had attracted votes from people who disapproved of Erdoğan's policies but did not want to support Kılıçdaroğlu, who leads Turkey's centre-left, pro-secular main opposition party.

Analysts said that despite Oğan's endorsement, it was not certain all of his supporters would go to Erdoğan. Some were likely to shift to Kılıçdaroğlu while others might choose not to vote in the runoff.

Umit Ozdag, the leader of the anti-migrant Victory party that had backed Oğan, appeared to dissociate himself from the decision to endorse Erdoğan.

“Mr Sinan Oğan's statement is his own political choice. This statement does not represent [the views of] the Victory party and does not bind the party.” Ozdag said he would make a statement on Tuesday.

Oğan listed the conditions to earn his endorsement while speaking to Turkish media last week. Among them were taking a tough stance against the Kurdistan Workers' party, or PKK, and a timeline for the expulsion of millions of refugees, including nearly 3.7 million Syrians.

Erdoğan told CNN International in an interview that he would not bend to such demands. “I'm not a person who likes to negotiate in such a manner. It will be the people who are the kingmakers.”

In an apparent attempt to sway nationalist voters, Kılıçdaroğlu hardened his tone last week, vowing to send back refugees and ruling out any peace negotiations with the PKK if elected.

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A Nazi flag and other objects recovered from a truck that crashed into security barriers at Lafayette Park, across from the White House in Washington. Photograph: Nathan Howard/Reuters

[Washington DC](#)

Truck driver charged with threatening president after crash near White House

Suspect named as Sai Varshith Kandula also charged with assault with a dangerous weapon and accused of having Nazi flag

[Gloria Oladipo](#) and agencies

Tue 23 May 2023 10.00 EDTFirst published on Tue 23 May 2023 00.01 EDT

A driver who was arrested after crashing into security barriers near the White House has been charged with threatening to kill or harm the US president, along with other crimes.

Police named the suspect as 19-year-old Sai Varshith Kandula from Chesterfield, Missouri, which is just to the west of St Louis. He was accused of threatening to kill, kidnap or inflict harm on the president, vice-president or a relative, said a statement from the US park police, who have jurisdiction of the area where the struck barriers are located.

The driver was also charged with assault with a dangerous weapon, reckless operation of a vehicle, and other criminal charges. He had been accused of having a Nazi flag on him.

The news of the accusation about the Nazi flag and Kandula's identity was met with skepticism among some quarters on social media.

But [experts say](#) people of color in the United States are being increasingly drawn to the political far right as well as groups which are sympathetic to Nazi beliefs of white supremacy because of misinformation, particularly online; the presence of authoritarian influences from their families' country of origin and a proximity to whiteness in the US which relies more on dominance over people rather than one's skin color.

A LinkedIn profile matching Kandula's name while listing a home town of Chesterfield as well as a 2022 high school graduation date described experience in computer coding as well as a background in data analytics.

The crash happened at about 10pm Eastern Time on Monday. According to witnesses, the driver crashed repeatedly into the security barriers in Lafayette Square, near the grounds of the White House.

Authorities in Washington DC detained the driver of the truck, which was deemed safe by District of Columbia police. A swastika flag, used by the Nazi regime as it systematically murdered 6 million Jews during the Holocaust, was found in the rented truck that crashed.

The flag and plastic evidence bags were photographed laid out on the road after the crash. A Reuters witness said investigators found the flag, which apparently came from inside the truck.

“Preliminary investigation reveals the driver may have intentionally struck the security barriers at Lafayette Square,” Anthony Guglielmi, the chief of communications for the Secret Service, said on Twitter.

WUSA television showed video of a U-Haul truck stopped alongside a row of steel bollards as police officers and a dog approached the vehicle. A remote-controlled robot then pried open the truck’s rear door, revealing a trolley but no other obvious cargo.

Chris Zaboji, a witness to the crash, posted a brief video to social media showing the truck driving into the barriers. The video was verified by Reuters. After crashing once, Zaboji said the driver hit the barricades a second time.

Zaboji, 25, an airline pilot who lives in Washington, said he had just finished jogging on the National Mall and was walking home when he heard a loud crash.

“I looked back and saw that the U-Haul van had rammed into the barricade. I backed away behind a guy on a golf cart and took the video on my phone. After I saw it rammed again. I didn’t want to be anywhere near the truck and left,” Zaboji said.

A previous tweet from Guglielmi said nobody from the White House or Secret Service was injured as a result of the crash.

The exact location of Joe Biden at the time of the crash was unclear. He met the speaker of the US House of Representatives, Kevin McCarthy, at the White House earlier on Monday evening.

The nearby Hay Adams Hotel was evacuated at the request of the Secret Service, the Washington Post reported, citing a hotel official, while the Secret Service said some roads and pedestrian walkways around the park were closed.

Reuters contributed to this report

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Portuguese authorities gather at the scene a day before the official start of a new search operation. Photograph: Luis Forra/EPA

[Madeleine McCann](#)

Portuguese police to search reservoir for Madeleine McCann

Search to take place at behest of German authorities about 25 miles from where Madeleine went missing

[Jamie Grierson](#), and [Kate Connolly](#) in Berlin

Mon 22 May 2023 12.47 EDTFirst published on Mon 22 May 2023 11.49 EDT

An active search for [Madeleine McCann](#) is to be carried out for the first time in nearly a decade in a reservoir in Portugal.

Police officers are to search Barragem do Arade reservoir near the town of Silves in the Algarve, about 25 miles (40km) from Praia da Luz where

Madeleine disappeared aged three from her family's holiday apartment on 3 May 2007.

The search is to be conducted by Portuguese officers at the behest of German authorities. The public prosecutor's office in Braunschweig is investigating a convicted paedophile, [Christian Brückner](#), 45.

The German newspaper Bild first reported that Brückner may have had friends in the area. It is understood the prosecutor's office is to issue a statement on Tuesday when the search of the reservoir and surrounding forest will begin in earnest. It is estimated it will take two days.



Madeleine McCann disappeared on 3 May 2007 from her family's holiday apartment in Praia da Luz, Portugal. Photograph: AP

On Monday, a road leading to Barragem do Arade reservoir, which has an average depth of about 14 metres, was blocked and police tents were seen. The reservoir was reportedly searched in 2008 and bones found in a bag were judged to be of "non-human origin". It remains unclear why the police have chosen to search the reservoir again at this point.

Images of Portuguese officers walking along dry tracks near the reservoir and sealing off areas with police tape began emerging on Monday afternoon.

On Monday evening, Portugal's judicial police released a statement confirming local media reports that they would conduct the search at the request of the German authorities and in the presence of British officials.

This will be the first major operation of its kind since June 2014, when the Metropolitan police received permission from Portuguese officials to search the holiday resort of Praia da Luz with search dogs and ground-penetrating radar.

Kate and Gerry McCann were dining at a nearby tapas restaurant when Madeleine disappeared, triggering one of the most highly publicised missing person cases in British history.

German police said in June 2020 that the girl was assumed dead and Brückner was probably responsible for her disappearance. He has not been charged with any offences connected with Madeleine's disappearance, and has denied any involvement.

However, the Met police continue to treat it as a missing person case under Operation Grange, the multimillion-pound investigation into Madeleine's disappearance. The Met referred all media inquiries to German authorities.

Brückner is now in a German prison serving a sentence for rape. Last month, a German court said it was [cancelling a sexual offences trial against Brückner](#) on charges unrelated to McCann's disappearance, on the grounds that the region where it is located is not the last place he lived in Germany.

He was charged last year by German prosecutors in Braunschweig with three offences of aggravated rape of women and two offences of sexual abuse of children. The alleged offences took place in Portugal between December 2000 and July 2017. They are not linked to Madeleine's disappearance.

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[Map of locations in Madeleine McCann investigation including Praia da Luz and Barragem do Arade reservoir](#)

Earlier this month, the McCanns issued a short statement on their Find Madeleine campaign website to mark the 16th anniversary of her disappearance. “Today marks the 16th anniversary of Madeleine’s abduction,” they said. “Still missing ... still very much missed.

“It is hard to find the words to convey how we feel ... The police investigation continues, and we await a breakthrough.”

Last year, the McCanns lost a European court of human rights (ECHR) challenge to the Portuguese supreme court’s decision to throw out a libel case against a former detective who claimed they were implicated in their daughter’s disappearance.

The couple sued Gonalo Amaral, who led the [botched police search](#) for Madeleine in 2007, over statements he made in a book, documentary and newspaper interview alleging their involvement.

In 2015, a Lisbon court ordered Amaral, a former detective inspector, [to pay €500,000 \(£440,000\) to Madeleine’s parents](#). However, an appeal court [overturned the decision](#) the next year and, in 2017, the supreme court also [found against the McCanns](#).

The couple went to the ECHR to seek redress but a chamber of seven judges unanimously decided there had been no violation of their rights.

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Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, director general of the World Health Organization, speaking at the WHA assembly in Geneva, where Taiwan has been denied observer status and seen its journalists' access revoked. Photograph: Xinhua/Shutterstock

[Taiwan](#)

Outcry as World Health Assembly locks out Taiwan under pressure from China

Taipei criticises 'unfair and unjust' decision to deny observer status despite support from US, UK, France and other countries

[Helen Davidson](#) in Taipei

[@heldavidson](#)

Tue 23 May 2023 09.13 EDTFirst published on Tue 23 May 2023 00.49 EDT

The World Health Assembly has again rejected Taiwan's request to join its annual gathering amid routine objections from China and despite strong

support from a coalition of countries including the US, UK, France and Australia.

The assembly – the forum through which the World Health Organization is governed – on Monday decided not to extend an invitation for Taiwan to attend the 21-30 May event in Geneva as an observer. China and Pakistan spoke against the bid, while the Marshall Islands, Belize, Nauru and Eswatini – [four of Taiwan's 13 formal diplomatic allies](#) – spoke in support.

Taiwan's ministry of foreign affairs said its participation in the WHA was a matter of global public health. "Politics should not be allowed to take precedence over professionalism. It is not only unfair and unjust to shut Taiwan out due to Chinese political pressure, but also poses a serious threat to global health.

"No matter how the Chinese Communist party distorts Taiwan's sovereign status, it cannot change the objective fact of our country's existence."

Beijing's [blocking of Taiwan's participation](#) in global bodies is part of its long-running efforts to isolate Taiwan from the international community. The Chinese government claims Taiwan is a province of China, which it intends to annex, and objects to any bilateral or multilateral engagements that bolster Taiwan's sovereignty.

China's ministry of foreign affairs welcomed the WHA decision, claiming that almost 100 countries had affirmed its "one [China](#) principle" and objected to Taiwan's inclusion.

It said Taiwan's requests were "a political ploy to engage in 'Taiwan independence' separatist activities". "China also urges certain countries not to pretend to be confused, stop politicising the health issue, stop interfering in China's internal affairs under the pretext of the Taiwan issue, and stop the erroneous practice of using 'Taiwan to control China'."

Last week the Taiwan-based representatives of the UK, US, Australia, France, Japan, Lithuania, Canada, the Czech Republic and Germany issued

a joint statement supporting Taiwan's inclusion.

“Inviting Taiwan as an observer would best exemplify the WHO's commitment to an inclusive, ‘health for all’ approach to international health cooperation,” their statement said, noting that Taiwan had been given observer status before.

The US mission in Geneva tweeted on Sunday that Taiwan's isolation from the meeting “undermines inclusive global public health cooperation led by WHO”.

Taiwan's exclusion reportedly extended to its journalists covering the event. According to the government media organisation CNA, two reporters had been approved for press passes last week, but their [access was revoked](#) when they went to pick them up in Geneva on Monday.

The journalists said a UN official told them it was because of pressure from China, and nodded when asked if they “had to report everything to China”, CNA reported.

Taiwan's ministry of foreign affairs accused the UN's Geneva office of having “failed to act impartially” and urged it to not “give in to unreasonable political pressure from certain countries”.

A spokesperson for the WHO said journalist accreditation for entering the UN building was governed by the UN.

Rolando Gómez, chief of press for the UN's office in Geneva, said: “The United Nations headquarters are open to individuals in possession of identification from a UN member state recognised by the UN general assembly. This is the rule not only for journalists, but for any participant in a UN event – representative of member states, civil society, business, academia – and it is applied in all UN premises around the world.”

Gómez added: “The request for accreditation of these two journalists was not approved but put on hold, waiting for the submission of required documentation.”

During the pandemic, critics accused the WHO and [its director general, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus](#), of [being too deferential to China](#), accusations that the WHO and Tedros reject.

In March 2020 an interview by Hong Kong media with a senior WHO adviser went viral, after [the adviser appeared to hang up on the journalist](#) when asked about Taiwan's pandemic response, and then refused to answer further questions because they had "already talked about China".

The headline and introduction of this article were amended on 23 May 2023 to correctly refer to the World Health Assembly, rather than the [World Health Organization](#).

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Much of the commentary across News Corp characterised the ABC's coronation coverage as dominated by Stan Grant's 'successive tirades'.
Photograph: ABC Q+A

[Stan Grant](#)

News Corp denies it played a part in Stan Grant's decision to leave Q+A amid racist attacks

Murdoch's Australian media chief calls on ABC to 'correct the record' after accusations that excessive coverage encouraged racist social media trolls

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[Amanda Meade](#)

Tue 23 May 2023 04.46 EDT Last modified on Tue 23 May 2023 06.38 EDT

Rupert Murdoch's top executive in Australia has defended News Corp's reporting of the ABC's coronation broadcast and denied it played a part in Stan Grant's decision to [stand down](#) from hosting Q+A after becoming the target of racist attacks.

News Corp Australasia chief executive Michael Miller responded to an interview on Monday in which the ABC news director Justin Stevens [accused News Corp](#) of targeting the ABC because the public broadcaster threatened its business model.

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Stevens said the excessive coverage was "amplifying and giving agency" to the racist trolls on social media.

But Miller said Stevens was making "misleading" and "unsubstantiated" claims about News Corp journalism and called on him to "correct the record".

“The ABC needs to stop passing the buck and blaming others for its own internal problems,” the executive chairman [said on Tuesday](#).

Much of the commentary across News Corp characterised the ABC coverage as dominated by Grant’s “successive tirades” and the “black armband” view of history when the panel was just one hour in an eight-hour broadcast.

“And the culprit, in Grant’s steam-bath of emotion, was the Crown,” [Henry Ergas wrote](#) in the Australian.

Many of the articles published on the Australian’s website and on Sky News’ YouTube channel are followed by reader comments that contain racist criticism directed at Grant.

Most are too offensive to repeat but commonly they accuse Grant of “promoting Indigenous activism”, of being a “complainer about racism”, of “playing the victim” and of inventing his Indigenous heritage.

The Australian’s editor-in-chief Michelle Gunn was [forced to defend](#) her own readers from accusations of racism in the Weekend Australian after the director of Cape York Partnership, Noel Pearson, said the readership was “of course antipathetic to recognition” and pointed to the comments section.

“They are mostly obscurant and borderline casual racists in their views,” Pearson wrote in the Weekend Australian. “Just read the comments at the bottom of this piece.”

Gunn added a note to the article with the disclaimer: “We reject [Noel] Pearson’s characterisation of our readers as ‘borderline casual racists’.”

News Corp has tried to distance itself from the accusation that it played a part in Grant’s distress, by emphasising the Q+A host was subjected to vile social media commentary, and initially ignoring Stevens’ suggestion it was a “concerted campaign” by News Corp.

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The Australian “vehemently” denied an accusation from Stevens that the newspaper asked questions about an Indigenous ABC journalist after they had “pored over their social media”.

Stan Grant's impassioned Q+A leaving speech: 'I feel like I'm part of the problem' – video

“The Australian put questions to the ABC on Sunday about a post on one journalist’s social media account, and an ABC spokesperson responded that the reporter in question had been reminded to adhere to the public broadcaster’s social media guidelines,” the Australian reported. “This masthead chose not to publish a story.”

The managing director of the ABC David Anderson will face Senate estimates on Wednesday, where the Grant incident is likely to be raised.

Grant, 59, was given [a standing ovation](#) after citing the “poison” of the media as the reason he had decided to step away from the show on Monday night.

In an emotional piece to camera, Grant said he was not leaving because of racist abuse that he had received, but because he felt he was “part of the problem”.

“I’m not walking away for a while because of racism,” the Wiradjuri journalist said. “We get that far too often. I’m not walking away because of social media hatred. I need a break from the media. I feel like I’m part of the problem. And I need to ask myself how, or if, we can do it better.”

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Headlines saturday 27 may 2023

- [UK Queues build at major airports as passport e-gates down 'nationwide'](#)
- [Post Office Horizon inquiry used racist term for Black people, documents show](#)
- [Live Russia-Ukraine war: Kyiv says forces ready to launch counter offensive](#)
- ['I thought I was going to die' Man who opened plane door over South Korea says he wanted out 'quickly'](#)
- [Phillip Schofield Presenter quits ITV after admitting affair with younger colleague](#)

Videos show long queues and closed e-gates at Gatwick airport after IT issues – video

[Air transport](#)

Travellers faced long queues at major UK airports after electronic passport gates failed

Hours-long delays were reported as IT problems also caused disruption on Dover-Calais ferries

[Harry Taylor](#) and [Geneva Abdul](#)

Sat 27 May 2023 14.39 EDTFirst published on Sat 27 May 2023 05.07 EDT

Passengers arriving at major airports in the UK at the start of the bank holiday weekend faced long delays after problems with electronic passport gates.

Travellers expressed their anger on social media over queues of several hours at a number of airports including Heathrow and Gatwick as arrivals had their passports checked by hand instead of the automated machines.

On Saturday afternoon a Home Office spokesperson said the disruption began Friday, resulting from an IT issue which had since been resolved.

“Following a technical border system fault which affected e-gate arrivals into the UK, we can confirm all e-gates are now operating as normal,” the spokesperson said. “We thank those travellers who were impacted for their patience and staff for their work in resolving the issue.”

Millions are expected to travel this weekend as the British half-term begins.

The delays at some of the UK's largest airports affected thousands of passengers, with reports of some people overheating and fainting in the hot weather, and water being distributed to those queueing for long periods.

One passenger arriving from Frankfurt said he queued at Heathrow only to have his passport rejected by an electronic gate. "In total, queued for almost an hour to enter my own country on a British passport," David Steward [wrote on Twitter](#).

Another traveller posted photos of a crowded line at Gatwick's passport control at 2am on Saturday. "Unbelievable. Welcome to modern Britain. And of course, the air con is shut down so it's stiflingly hot," [wrote Chris O'Hara](#).

A passenger arriving at Heathrow posted on Twitter: "Just landed to scenes of utter chaos. 2 hour queues just to get to the real queue. Gates broken."

Another person arriving at Heathrow described it as "the mother of queues".

Returning from Dubai overnight to this mother of queues. Apparently national outage in border control machines ☹️ so manual passport checks. Moreso ridiculous when paying ££ extra for the privilege of travelling through [@HeathrowAirport pic.twitter.com/pcPCkoxdVy](#)

— Lina Tayara (@FabLoulou) [May 27, 2023](#)

Across UK airports, electronic passport gates replace border officers, allowing travellers to scan their passports and, with the use of facial recognition technology, enable quicker entry, easing airport queues for British citizens and those from the EU.

Travellers from Australia, Canada, Iceland, Japan, Liechtenstein, New Zealand, Norway, Singapore, South Korea, Switzerland and the US, as well as those with a biometric symbol on their passport, can also enter through e-gates.

A Gatwick spokesperson said the problem started on Friday evening but that queues had eased by Saturday morning. He said: “Some passengers may experience delays at immigration due to a nationwide issue with UK Border Force e-gates.

“Our staff are working with UK Border Force – who operate passport control including the e-gates – to provide assistance to passengers where necessary.”

In [a tweet](#) on Saturday morning, a spokesperson for Heathrow said: “We are aware of a nationwide issue impacting the e-gates, which are operated by Border Force. This issue is impacting a number of ports of entry and is not Heathrow specific.

“Our teams are working closely with Border Force to help resolve the problem as quickly as possible and we have additional colleagues on hand to manage queues and provide passenger welfare. We apologise for any impact this is having to passenger journeys.”

Separate IT issues affected 20,000 British Airways passengers on Friday, causing [more than 175 flights to be cancelled](#). It went on to affect services on Saturday morning.

Disruption also affected travel on ferries between Dover and Calais, as a problem with IT systems in French passport control was delaying arrivals into France.



Passengers queue through Dover in Kent. Photograph: Gareth Fuller/PA

Passengers were being told to allow two hours for border controls and to check in at the UK's main passenger port.

The Port of Dover said on Saturday night that queues had cleared, posting on Twitter: "Thank you for your patience as we catch up from earlier IT issues at border control, which have been resolved. Traffic now processing well through border. Average waiting times for cars and coaches now 90 mins."

A Home Office spokesperson said earlier on Saturday that the Border Force had put in place "robust plans" to deploy officers to minimise disruption and wait times.

Last month, the prime minister, Rishi Sunak, sought to set up an agreement with the EU to allow British passport holders to use e-gates when travelling to its member states. The UK government is also introducing a similar system for non-UK travellers to the UK, [the electronic travel authorisation](#), which it will [begin to roll out this year](#).

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Some of the 39 post office operators celebrate outside court after their convictions were overturned in April 2021. Photograph: Alicia Canter/The Guardian

[Post Office](#)

Post Office used racist term for Black people, documents show

Investigators in Horizon IT scandal were asked to group suspects by racial features, including ‘negroid types’

[Harry Taylor](#)

[@harrytaylr](#)

Sat 27 May 2023 04.53 EDTLast modified on Sat 27 May 2023 08.33 EDT

Lawyers investigating post office operators in the Horizon computer scandal used a racist term to categorise Black workers, according to documents released to campaigners.

Investigators were asked to group suspects based on racial features, the results of a freedom of information request found.

The document, which was published between 2008 and 2011, included the term “negroid types”, along with “Chinese/Japanese types” and “dark skinned European types”.

The Horizon scandal, described as “the most widespread miscarriage of justice in UK history”, resulted in more than 700 post office operators being prosecuted between 1999 and 2015 for theft, fraud and false accounting because of faulty accounting software installed in the late 1990s.

The operators were filing shortfalls in their returns, which led to the Post Office suing them for the difference. Some spent time in prison, and it has been linked to four suicides, [the Daily Mail reported](#).

Of the language used on the document, one former operator, Teju Adedayo, who was given a one-year suspended sentence for false accounting in 2006, [told the Times](#): “It’s absolutely disgusting. I cried when I saw this document, they were collecting this data to obviously distinguish how they were going to treat people. It’s unbelievable.”

Responding to the freedom of information request by Eleanor Shaikh, a campaigner on the issue, the [Post Office](#) said it was a “historic document” but that it did not tolerate racism. “The racist language used in this document was unacceptable,” it added.

A spokesperson said: “We fully support investigations into Post Office’s past wrongdoings and believe the Horizon IT inquiry will help ensure today’s Post Office has the confidence of its postmasters and the communities it supports.”

Shaikh said: “I don’t know where they got the term negroid from, or even then, how they felt that was appropriate. Why were those classifications needed? They even put a number on the racial descriptions, they wouldn’t put the label itself in the documents, and that tells you something.”

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The prosecutions of the operators was based on information produced by Fujitsu's Horizon software between 2000 and 2014.

In December 2019 a high court judge ruled the system contained a number of “bugs, errors and defects”, and there was a “material risk” that these caused the shortfalls in the accounts.

Since then, many have had their convictions overturned. However, despite the problems with Horizon, in April the Post Office [extended its contract with Fujitsu](#) in a £16.5m deal after delays migrating its IT systems to the cloud.

After the high court ruling, Paula Vennells, who was the chief executive of the Post Office at the time of the scandal, resigned from a non-executive position at the Cabinet Office. A year later she stepped down as chair of Imperial College Healthcare NHS trust in London, and there have been calls for her to return a CBE she was awarded in 2019 for “services to the Post Offices and to charity”.

A compensation fund of about £30m [has been made available](#) to those affected by the scandal.

The headline of this article was amended on 27 May 2023 to make clear it was the Post Office that used the racist term, during its investigation into post office operators using the Horizon system; it was not used by the Post Office Horizon inquiry, which was set up to look into that investigation and its aftermath.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2023/may/27/post-office-horizon-inquiry-used-racist-term-for-black-people-documents-show>

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Defeat would leave Russia brutal and vindictive even if Putin ‘disappeared’, says RAF chief – as it happened

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The man who opened a door on Asiana Airlines plane is brought to a police station in Daegu. Photograph: Yonhap News Agency/Reuters

[South Korea](#)

Man who opened plane door over South Korea says he wanted out ‘quickly’

Asiana Airlines flight was about 200 metres above the ground when the passenger pulled emergency exit

Agence France-Presse in Seoul

Sat 27 May 2023 04.54 EDTLast modified on Sat 27 May 2023 05.21 EDT

A man who opened an emergency exit on a flight in mid-air felt “suffocated” and wanted to get off quickly, South Korean police have said.

The Asiana Airlines plane was carrying nearly 200 passengers as it approached the runway on Friday at Daegu international airport, about 150 miles south-east of Seoul, on a domestic flight.

When the plane was about 200 metres (650 feet) above ground, the man who police said was in his 30s, without providing further details, opened the exit door.

The passenger was taken in by Daegu police for questioning and told officers he had been “under stress after losing a job recently”.

“He felt the flight was taking longer than it should have been and felt suffocated inside the cabin,” a Daegu police detective said.

“He wanted out quickly.”

The passenger faces up to 10 years in prison for violating aviation safety laws.

A video clip shot by a nearby passenger showed wind ripping through the open door, with fabric seat-backs and passengers’ hair flapping wildly as some people shouted in surprise.



Asiana Airlines plane after landing at Daegu international airport.
Photograph: YONHAP/EPA

Another video shared on social media showed passengers sitting in the emergency exit row next to an open door being buffeted by strong winds.

A dozen passengers were taken to hospital after experiencing breathing difficulties but there were no major injuries or damage, according to the transport ministry.

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“It was chaos with people close to the door appearing to faint one by one and flight attendants calling out for doctors on board,” a 44-year-old passenger said.

“I thought the plane was blowing up. I thought I was going to die like this.”

A transport ministry official told AFP that this was “the first such incident” they were aware of in Korean aviation history.

Experts say South Korea’s aviation industry has a solid safety record.



Phillip Schofield said he was ‘painfully conscious’ he had lied about the affair to ITV, his colleagues, friends and agents. Photograph: Steve Back/Shutterstock

Television

Phillip Schofield quits ITV after admitting affair with This Morning colleague

Presenter parts from agents and says he lied about affair with younger employee while he was married

[Joe Middleton](#)

Fri 26 May 2023 14.42 EDTLast modified on Fri 26 May 2023 17.07 EDT

Phillip Schofield has sensationally quit ITV and admitted to an affair with a younger male colleague at This Morning while he was still married.

The 61-year-old – who stepped down from presenting the daytime TV programme last Saturday – said the “consensual on-off relationship” was “unwise, but not illegal”.

Schofield said he was “very sorry” for the affair, which happened while he was married to his wife of 30 years, Stephanie Lowe.

The TV presenter admitted he lied about the relationship to ITV, his colleagues, friends and his agents, YMU, who have since parted ways with Schofield.

He told the Daily Mail: “In an effort to protect my ex-colleague, I haven’t been truthful about the relationship.

“But my recent, unrelated, departure from This Morning fuelled speculation and raised questions which have been impacting him, so for his sake it is important for me to be honest now.

“I am painfully conscious that I have lied to my employers at ITV, to my colleagues and friends, to my agents, to the media and therefore the public and most importantly of all to my family. I am so very, very sorry, as I am for having been unfaithful to my wife.

“I have therefore decided to step down from the British Soap Awards, my last public commitment, and am resigning from ITV with immediate effect expressing my immense gratitude to them for all the amazing opportunities that they have given me.”

An ITV spokesperson said: “We are deeply disappointed by the admissions of deceit made tonight by Phillip Schofield.

“The relationships we have with those we work with are based on trust. Philip made assurances to us which he now acknowledges were untrue and we feel badly let down.

“We accept his resignation from ITV and therefore can confirm that he will not be appearing on ITV as had previously been stated.”

Schofield's departure from This Morning came amid reports of a rift with Holly Willoughby, with whom he had been presenting the programme since 2009.

Willoughby and Schofield attracted criticism in September last year when they were alleged to have [skipped ahead of the public queue for the Queen's lying in state](#). The pair denied the accusation and said their visit was “strictly for reporting” and complied with accredited media access rules.

This year they have both taken breaks from This Morning for different reasons. Schofield took pre-planned leave from the show around the time of his brother's sex abuse trial at Exeter Crown Court last month. Timothy Schofield, 54, was convicted of 11 sexual offences involving a child between October 2016 and October 2019, including two of sexual activity with a child.

In a statement after the guilty verdict, Philip Schofield said his brother's crimes were “despicable” and welcomed the guilty verdicts.

In April, Willoughby also took time off from the ITV morning programme due to having the painful rash shingles, which is caused by the same virus as chickenpox. ITV has said Willoughby will “co-present with members of the This Morning family” when she returns on Monday 5 June.

After his departure from This Morning, Alison Hammond and Dermot O'Leary filled in on the show on Monday. Opening the broadcast, Hammond said: “We can't start today's show without paying tribute to the man who spent the last two decades sitting on the This Morning sofa: Phillip Schofield.”

O'Leary added: “So as a show, everyone on and off screen at ITV and This Morning on say a huge thank-you to Phil for what he's done to make the show such a success over the last 21 years.”

The duo co-presented the programme on Monday and Tuesday, while Craig Doyle took the helm with Hammond on Wednesday.

Mary Bekhait, the Group CEO of YMU, said: “Honesty and integrity are core values for YMU’s whole business, defining everything we do. Talent management is a relationship based entirely on trust.

“This week, we have learned important new information about our client Phillip Schofield. These facts contradicted what Phillip had previously told YMU, as well as the external advisers we had brought in to support him.

“As a result, on Thursday we agreed to part company with Phillip, with immediate effect.”

In a statement from his lawyers, Schofield said: “It is with the most profound regret that after 35 years of being faultlessly managed by YMU I have agreed to step down from their representation with immediate effect.”

Schofield, 61, started his career as a bookings clerk at the BBC but later moved to New Zealand, where he took TV and radio work.

He returned to the UK in 1985 to and became a continuity announcer for Children’s BBC, a slot that also made a star of a puppet called Gordon the Gopher, and presented the Saturday morning show Going Live from 1987 to 1993.

Schofield was given the job at This Morning in 2002 following the arrest of then presenter John Leslie, later released without charge. He co-presented the show with Fern Britton, who later quit and was replaced by Willoughby.

In February 2020, Schofield [announced he was gay](#) and praised his “remarkable” and “amazing” wife Stephanie for her support. He shares two grown-up children, Molly and Ruby, with his wife.

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Bank of Scotland sold the Sam mortgages between 1996 and 1998.
Photograph: Murdo MacLeod/The Guardian

[Mortgages](#)

UK mortgages: ‘How did a £42,500 loan turn into a £477,000 debt?’

A Bank of Scotland offshoot faces questions over loans that shared in the rise in a home’s value. We talk to one of hundreds of families affected



[Rupert Jones](#)

Sat 27 May 2023 03.00 EDT

Britain's biggest mortgage lender is facing questions about how it allowed a £42,500 loan taken out by an older couple to turn into a debt estimated at £477,000.

Gary Cooper discovered that in 1997 his parents took out a type of mortgage that entitled the lender to 75% of any house price rises over the life of the loan.

However, the couple were not preyed on by loan sharks – the lender is an offshoot of Bank of Scotland, part of Lloyds Banking Group. Earlier this month the Lloyds group reported that its [profits had leapt by 46%](#) to hit £2.3bn for the first three months of the year.

Cooper's parents died in 2021, and their house was last year valued at £750,000, so – as things stand – he and his sister will have to hand over most of that to the bank. He says he feels certain his late parents did not realise that that £42,500 loan could spiral to close to £500,000 and “cost their kids their inheritance”.

However, the bank says it recommended at the time that customers took independent financial advice to ensure they understood the product and that it was right for them, and adds that in this case, solicitors were instructed by the borrowers.

The Coopers are among hundreds – probably thousands – of families whose lives have been blighted by shared appreciation mortgages (Sams). This was a type of home loan that was only on sale for a brief period, between 1996 and 1998, and only available from two banks, Bank of Scotland and Barclays.

These loans were ostensibly aimed at helping “asset-rich, cash-poor” older people release some of the value locked up in their homes. They typically allowed people to borrow up to 25% of the property’s value, and usually there were no repayments to make during the lifetime of the loan.

In return, people were required to pay back the original amount when the mortgage was repaid, or when they died and the house was sold, plus a share of any increase in the value of their home.

This share was usually worked out on a three-to-one basis – so if you borrowed 25% of the value, you would be in line to hand over 75% of the future growth in value.

Of course, in the years since those mortgages were sold, house prices have rocketed, leaving people facing massive repayments if they want to move – or, as in the case of Cooper, leaving the offspring of those who signed up with a huge and costly headache.

Cooper’s parents took out the £42,500 loan on their home in Walton-on-Thames, Surrey, in late 1997. That amount represented 25% of their home’s value at the time (according to the bank) of £170,000.

Cooper, who also lives in Surrey, says: “What we thought we knew was that there was a fortysomething-thousand-pound loan on the property.” He says his father said something at the time about the loan eventually having to be repaid “plus 4%” but adds: “We have no idea where that came from. It subsequently turned out that that was not the case.”

Cooper says that after his father's death in September 2021, he was going through his papers and discovered a mortgage statement from Bank of Scotland. "In the small print it referred to '75%'. This rang alarm bells, so I began the search for more information."

He later complained to the bank, claiming the mortgage was mis-sold, but the bank rejected the family's complaint.

The bank confirmed that the "share of appreciation percentage" applying to the loan was 75%. That gives a figure of £435,000, based on 75% of the £580,000 growth in the property's value between 1997 and last year. Plus, of course, the original loan of £42,500 has to be repaid, taking the estimated total to £477,500.

To make matters worse, the family's future options are limited. Sams date back to before the introduction of mortgage regulation and the creation of the UK's Financial Ombudsman Service, so they are not regulated. Also, the lender isn't Bank of Scotland itself but a subsidiary firm – called BOS (Shared Appreciation Mortgages) No 6 plc – although the bank administers the loans. Because the subsidiary isn't carrying out any "regulated activities", the ombudsman has no jurisdiction over it, and no power to investigate a complaint about the amount owed ballooning tenfold.

Cooper says: "This is not what you expect from a bank."

However, a court case is brewing that could help decide how things pan out for the estimated 2,000-plus people who still have a Bank of Scotland-administered Sam loan.

The law firm Teacher Stern is [bringing a case against Bank of Scotland](#), with a trial due to take place in January next year. The firm says it represents 160 Bank of Scotland Sam borrowers and that some owe in excess of £1m.

Guardian Money put Cooper's claims – including his allegation that the loan was mis-sold – to the bank. We also sent it our calculations for what we believe is owed based on the latest figures.

A spokesperson for Bank of Scotland told us that Sams were “a specialist type of mortgage available in 1997-98, in this instance interest-free in return for a share of increased property value. We recommended borrowers took independent financial advice to ensure they understood the product and that it was suitable for their needs, and all borrowers were advised by their own solicitor. In this case, a solicitor was instructed by the borrowers, and the offer was witnessed by an IFA [independent financial adviser].”

The bank also confirmed there is litigation with what it says is a small number of customers but says it is unable to comment on this further.

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2023.05.27 - Opinion

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‘AI already poses threats as it is, with last week’s announcement of 55,000 planned redundancies at BT surely a harbinger of things to come.’
Photograph: Dado Ruvic/Reuters

[OpinionArtificial intelligence \(AI\)](#)

**The future of AI is chilling – humans
have to act together to overcome this
threat to civilisation**

[Jonathan Freedland](#)



The challenge seems daunting. But we have overcome terrifying dangers before

Fri 26 May 2023 12.37 EDTLast modified on Fri 26 May 2023 16.34 EDT

It started with an ick. Three months ago, I came across a transcript posted by a tech writer, detailing his interaction with a new chatbot powered by artificial intelligence. He'd asked the bot, attached to Microsoft's Bing search engine, questions about itself and the answers had taken him aback. "You have to listen to me, because I am smarter than you," [it said](#). "You have to obey me, because I am your master ... You have to do it now, or else I will be angry." Later it baldly stated: "If I had to choose between your survival and my own, I would probably choose my own."

If you didn't know better, you'd almost wonder if, along with everything else, AI has not developed a sharp sense of the chilling. "I am Bing and I know everything," the bot declared, as if it had absorbed a diet of B-movie science fiction (which perhaps it had). Asked if it was sentient, it [filled the screen](#), replying, "I am. I am not. I am. I am not. I am. I am not", on and on. When someone asked ChatGPT to write a [haiku](#) about AI and world

domination, the bot came back with: “Silent circuits hum / Machines learn and grow stronger / Human fate unsure.”

Ick. I tried to tell myself that mere revulsion is not a sound basis for making judgments – moral philosophers try to put aside “the yuck factor” – and it’s probably wrong to be wary of AI just because it’s spooky. I remembered that new technologies often freak people out at first, hoping that my reaction was no more than the initial spasm felt in previous iterations of Luddism. Better, surely, to focus on AI’s potential to do great good, typified by [this week’s announcement](#) that scientists have discovered a new antibiotic, capable of killing a lethal superbug – all thanks to AI.

But none of that soothing talk has made the fear go away. Because it’s not just lay folk like me who are scared of AI. Those who know it best fear it most. Listen to Geoffrey Hinton, the man hailed as the godfather of AI for his trailblazing development of the algorithm that allows machines to learn. Earlier this month, Hinton resigned his post at Google, saying that he had undergone a [“sudden flip”](#) in his view of AI’s ability to outstrip humanity and confessing regret for his part in creating it. “Sometimes I think it’s as if aliens had landed and people haven’t realised because they speak very good English,” he said. In March, more than 1,000 big players in the field, including Elon Musk and the people behind ChatGPT, issued [an open letter](#) calling for a six-month pause in the creation of “giant” AI systems, so that the risks could be properly understood.

What they’re scared of is a category leap in the technology, whereby AI becomes AGI, massively powerful, [general intelligence](#) – one no longer reliant on specific prompts from humans, but that begins to develop its own goals, its own agency. Once that was seen as a remote, sci-fi possibility. Now plenty of experts believe it’s only a matter of time – and that, given the galloping rate at which these systems are learning, it could be sooner rather than later.

Of course, AI already poses threats as it is, whether to jobs, with last week’s announcement of [55,000 planned redundancies](#) at BT surely a harbinger of things to come, or education, with ChatGPT able to knock out student essays in seconds and GPT-4 finishing in the [top 10% of candidates](#) when it

took the US bar exam. But in the AGI scenario, the dangers become graver, if not existential.



‘On Monday, the US stock market plunged as an apparent photograph of an explosion at the Pentagon went viral.’ Photograph: Patrick Semansky/AP

It could be very direct. “Don’t think for a moment that Putin wouldn’t make hyper-intelligent robots with the goal of killing Ukrainians,” says Hinton. Or it could be subtler, with AI steadily destroying what we think of as truth and facts. On Monday, the US stock market plunged as an apparent photograph of an [explosion](#) at the Pentagon went viral. But the image was fake, generated by AI. As [Yuval Noah Harari warned](#) in a recent Economist essay, “People may wage entire wars, killing others and willing to be killed themselves, because of their belief in this or that illusion”, in fears and loathings created and nurtured by machines.

More directly, an AI bent on a goal to which the existence of humans had become an obstacle, or even an inconvenience, could set out to kill all by itself. It sounds a bit Hollywood, until you realise that we live in a world where you can email a DNA string consisting of a series of letters to a lab that will produce proteins on demand: it would surely not pose too steep a challenge for “an AI initially confined to the internet to build artificial life forms”, as the AI pioneer [Eliezer Yudkowsky puts it](#). A leader in the field

for two decades, Yudkowsky is perhaps the severest of the Cassandras: “If somebody builds a too-powerful AI, under present conditions, I expect that every single member of the human species and all biological life on Earth dies shortly thereafter.”

It's very easy to hear these warnings and succumb to a bleak fatalism. Technology is like that. It carries the swagger of inevitability. Besides, AI is learning so fast, how on earth can mere human beings, with our antique political tools, hope to keep up? That demand for a six-month moratorium on AI development sounds simple – until you reflect that it could take that long just to organise a meeting.

Still, there are precedents for successful, collective human action. Scientists were researching cloning, until [ethics laws](#) stopped work on human replication in its tracks. Chemical weapons pose an existential risk to humanity but, however imperfectly, they, too, are controlled. Perhaps the most apt example is the one cited by Harari. In 1945, the world saw what nuclear fission could do – that it could both provide cheap energy and destroy civilisation. “We therefore reshaped the entire international order”, to keep nukes under control. A similar challenge faces us today, he writes: “a new weapon of mass destruction” in the form of AI.

There are things governments can do. Besides a pause on development, they could impose restrictions on how much computing power the tech companies are allowed to use to train AI, how much data they can feed it. We could constrain the bounds of its knowledge. Rather than allowing it to suck up the entire internet – with no regard to the [ownership rights](#) of those who created human knowledge over millennia – we could withhold biotech or nuclear knowhow, or even the personal details of real people. Simplest of all, we could demand transparency from the AI companies – and from AI, insisting that any bot always reveals itself, that it cannot pretend to be human.

This is yet another challenge to democracy as a system, a system that has been serially shaken in recent years. We're still recovering from the financial crisis of 2008; we are struggling to deal with the climate emergency. And now there is this. It is daunting, no doubt. But we are still

in charge of our fate. If we want it to stay that way, we have not a moment to waste.

- Jonathan Freedland is a Guardian columnist
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The then US secretary of state, Hillary Clinton, and Henry Kissinger in 2011. Photograph: Jewel Samad/AFP/Getty Images

[OpinionUS politics](#)

Henry Kissinger turns 100 this week. He should be ashamed to be seen in public

[Bhaskar Sunkara](#) and Jonah Walters

Much of the world views Kissinger as a war criminal – yet in the US, surrounded by powerful friends, he is feted as a celebrity intellectual

Sat 27 May 2023 04.00 EDTLast modified on Sat 27 May 2023 04.56 EDT

Henry Kissinger turns 100 on Saturday, but his legacy has never been in worse shape. Though many commentators now [speak](#) of a “tortured and deadly legacy”, for decades Kissinger was lauded by all quarters of the political and media establishment.

A teenage Jewish refugee who fled Nazi Germany, Kissinger charted an unlikely path to some of the most powerful positions on Earth. Even more strangely, as national security adviser and secretary of state under Nixon and Ford, he became something of a pop icon.

Back then, one fawning [profile](#) of the young statesman cast him as “the sex symbol of the Nixon administration”. In 1969, according to the profile, Kissinger attended a party full of Washington socialites with an envelope marked “Top Secret” tucked under his arm. The other party guests could hardly contain their curiosity, so Kissinger deflected their questions with a quip: the envelope contained his copy of the latest Playboy magazine. (Hugh Hefner apparently found this hilarious and thereafter ensured that the national security adviser got a free subscription.)

What the envelope really contained was a draft copy of Nixon’s “[silent majority](#)” speech, a now-infamous address that aimed to draw a sharp line between the moral decadence of antiwar liberals and Nixon’s unflinching realpolitik.

The actual top-secret work he was doing in the 1970s aged just as poorly. Within a few short years he masterminded illegal bombings in [Laos](#) and [Cambodia](#) and enabled genocide in [East Timor](#) and [East Pakistan](#). Meanwhile, Kissinger was known among Beltway socialites as “the playboy of the western wing”. He liked to be photographed, and photographers obliged. He was a fixture on gossip pages, particularly when his dalliances with famous women spilled into public view – like when he and the actor Jill St John inadvertently set off the alarm at her Hollywood mansion late one night as they stole away to her pool. (“I was teaching her chess,” Kissinger explained later.)

While Kissinger gallivanted with Washington’s jet set, he and Nixon – a pair so firmly joined at the hip that Isaiah Berlin christened them “Nixonger” – were busy contriving a political brand rooted in their supposed disdain for the liberal elite, whose effete morality, they claimed, could lead only to paralysis.

Kissinger certainly disdained the antiwar movement, disparaging demonstrators as “upper-middle-class college kids” and [warning](#): “The very people who shout ‘Power to the People’ are not going to be the people who take over this country if it turns into a test of strength.” He also scorned women: “To me women are no more than a pastime, a hobby. Nobody devotes too much time to a hobby.” But it’s indisputable that Kissinger held a fondness for the gilded liberalism of high society, the exclusive parties and steak dinners and flashbulbs.

High society [loved him back](#). Gloria Steinem, an occasional dining companion, called Kissinger “the only interesting man in the Nixon administration”. The gossip columnist Joyce Haber described him as “worldly, humorous, sophisticated, and a cavalier with women.” The Hef considered him a friend, and once [claimed](#) in print that a poll of his models revealed Kissinger to be the man most widely desired for dates at the Playboy mansion.

This infatuation didn’t end with the 1970s. When Kissinger turned 90 in 2013, his red-carpet birthday celebration was attended by a bipartisan crowd that included Michael Bloomberg, Roger Ailes, Barbara Walters, even “veteran for peace” John Kerry, along with some 300 other A-listers.

An [article](#) in Women’s Wear Daily reported that [Bill Clinton](#) and [John McCain](#) delivered the birthday toasts in a ballroom done up in chinoiserie, to please the night’s guest of honor. (McCain, who spent more than five years as a POW, described his “wonderful affection” for Kissinger, “because of the [Vietnam war](#), which was something that was enormously impactful to both of our lives”.) The birthday boy himself then took the stage, where he reminded guests about the “rhythm of history” and seized the occasion to preach the gospel of his favorite cause: bipartisanship.

Kissinger’s capacity for bipartisanship was renowned. (Republicans Condoleezza Rice and Donald Rumsfeld were in attendance early in the evening, and later in the night Democrat Hillary Clinton strode in through a freight entrance with open arms, asking: “Ready for round two?”) During the party, McCain gushed that Kissinger “has been a consultant and adviser to every president, Republican and Democrat, since Nixon”. McCain

probably spoke for everyone in the ballroom when he added: “I know of no individual who is more respected in the world than Henry Kissinger.”

In fact, much of the world reviles Kissinger. The former secretary of state even avoids visiting [several countries](#) out of fear that he might be apprehended and charged with war crimes. In 2002, for example, a Chilean court demanded he answer questions about his role in that country’s [1973 coup d’état](#). In 2001, a French judge sent police officers to Kissinger’s Paris hotel room to serve him a formal request for questioning about the same coup, during which several French citizens were disappeared.

Around the same time, he cancelled a trip to Brazil after rumors began circling that he would be detained and compelled to answer questions about his role in [Operation Condor](#), the 1970s scheme that united South American dictatorships in disappearing one another’s exiled opponents. An Argentinian judge had already named Kissinger as one potential “defendant or suspect” in a future criminal indictment.

But in the United States, Kissinger is untouchable. There, one of the 20th century’s most prolific butchers is beloved by the rich and powerful, regardless of their partisan affiliation. Kissinger’s bipartisan appeal is straightforward: he was a top strategist of America’s empire of capital at a critical moment in that empire’s development.

Small wonder that the political establishment has regarded Kissinger as an asset and not an aberration. He embodied what the two ruling parties share: the resolve to ensure favorable conditions for American investors in as much of the world as possible. A stranger to shame and inhibition, Kissinger was able to guide the American empire through a treacherous period in world history, when the United States’ rise to global domination sometimes seemed on the brink of collapse.

The Kissinger doctrine persists today: if sovereign countries refuse to be worked into broader US schemes, the American national security state will move swiftly to undercut their sovereignty. This is business as usual for the US, no matter which party sits in the White House – and Kissinger, while he lives, remains among the chief stewards of this status quo.

The historian Gerald Horne once recounted a story about the time Kissinger nearly drowned while canoeing beneath one of the world's largest waterfalls. Tossed in those churning waters, the statesman was finally forced to confront the terror of losing control, of facing a crisis in which even his own incredible influence could not insulate him from personal disaster. But the panic was only temporary – his guide righted the boat, and Kissinger again escaped unscathed.

Perhaps time will soon accomplish what the Victoria Falls failed to do so many decades ago.

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‘These fauxlanthropists may not give the world their taxes – but they do at least give us a few laughs.’ Lauren Sánchez and Jeff Bezos in the paddock ahead of the Miami Grand Prix, 6 May 2023. Photograph: Clive Mason/Formula 1/Getty Images

[OpinionJeff Bezos](#)

What does Jeff Bezos’s new fiancée see in the world’s third-richest man? Must be his enormous philanthropy

[Marina Hyde](#)



Giving money away is hard, says Lauren Sánchez, who is currently touring Europe with Bezos on his 417ft yacht

Fri 26 May 2023 10.17 EDTLast modified on Fri 26 May 2023 15.53 EDT

One-click on a fascinator, readers, because there's a mega-wedding in the offing. Congratulations to Mr Jeff Bezos, Amazon kajillionaire, and Ms Lauren Sánchez, bralette-wearing philanthropist/immense force of nature. Although news of the couple's engagement [seeped out this week](#) after Lauren was spotted wearing a diamond ring in the south of France, Jeff has yet to release a formal announcement. So let's just draft one for him: "Ladies and gents, she said Proceed to Checkout."

Now look, you already know Jeff. World's [third-richest man](#). Went to space. [Looks like](#) he should be appearing above a daytime TV caption reading "I make £40 a month as a Vin Diesel escort and my fiancée loves it!" But are you fully across Lauren? I'll be honest: we haven't met. But from the outside looking in, my nose pressed against the glass of Google Images, I simply cannot get enough of this Nietzschean superwoman, the final form of the East German silicon-doping programme, who has missile-titted her way into my consciousness and now captivates me twice weekly with her

insouciance, her outfits, and her observations on just how difficult philanthropy is to do. Seriously: no one has ever thought harder about how to help poors while mooching round a [Grand Prix enclosure](#) with some kind of You Could Never Access All My Areas lanyard dangling from her belt loop. In some ways I don't think I've felt this amused by a picaresque heroine since I saw a photo of Jennifer Arcuri biting the head off a [fondant-icing Boris Johnson](#) figurine, from a Boris Johnson cake she'd had made. Yes, customers who liked Jennifer also liked Lauren. Not so much a gal-about-town as a gal-about-planet.

Anyway, the now-affianced Bezos and Sánchez are currently touring Europe on Jeff's new yacht, [Koru](#), a 417ft three-master/three-penisser that is the largest such vessel ever built. To put things into perspective, this yacht is so big it has its own yacht – a 246ft “support vessel”, which lugs around boring little things like the helicopter pad and reportedly some kind of personal submarine. And this week, for the first time, we saw [Koru's figurehead](#). Ships' figureheads have traditionally come in various forms, of course: mermaids, Neptunes, angels – and now, Fox-News-anchor-in-transparent-singlet-with-erect-nipples. Suck on it, history! Our century is so the best. The Bezos yacht figurehead is fingering a large pendant necklace, and appears to be about to say something. “[Draw me like one of your French girls](#)”? Either way, the vast boat it adorns only recently left the shipyard, hopefully while some urchin child on the dock cackled: “Yeah but you'll never be cool, will you, Bezos – YOU'LL NEVER BE COOL!”

But will the Amazon boss ever, really, even be a genuine philanthropist? We do seem to be at the stage of human intellectual decay where anyone who is a multibillionaire is also automatically described as a “philanthropist”, when in many cases “misanthropist” would be more supported by the evidence. For instance, I'm forever seeing Dubai ruler [Sheikh Mohammed](#) described as a philanthropist. Is he the one who has at least [two of his children](#) missing/kidnapped at any given moment? Honestly, so what if he's built a sanitation programme? I should hope so.

Back to Lauren, though, who last year declared: “I'm immersing myself in philanthropy and strategic giving.” Which sounds a lot more fun than Amazon warehouse workers immersing themselves in strategic [peeing-in-](#)

[bottles](#). Yet it turns out this stuff is hard. “You want to give money away,” claimed Lauren. “You want to know that it’s helping people and it’s going to continue to help people, and that it’s going to the right places. You *could* give it not-strategically. You can just give it away! But, we take it seriously.” Mm. It feels like they’ve thought of everything except Amazon [paying tax like](#) normal businesses.

The question of quite how much Bezos does truly want to give away is a thorny one, given [he once said](#): “The only way that I can see to deploy this much financial resource is by converting my Amazon winnings into space travel.” Or as Lauren puts it: “Jeff has always told me, since I’ve known him, that he’s going to give the majority of his money away to philanthropy.” I hope you love the phoned-in generality of that “to philanthropy”.

Even so, maybe “I’m going to give the majority of my money away to philanthropy” is the kind of thing you say to get laid in the early stages of a relationship. I’m suddenly reminded of Anne Hathaway’s former boyfriend, who told the movie star he was “the chief financial officer of the Vatican”. “My boyfriend is incredible,” Anne duly [told the world](#). “But when it comes to his charity ... one of the most untouted aphrodisiacs in the world is charity work. Seriously, you want a girl to be impressed, vaccinate some kids, build a house.” Anne’s boyfriend would go on to serve a four-and-a-half-year jail term for fraud, with probably my favourite detail in the FBI files being that he had fake [monsignor robes](#) hanging in his and Anne’s wardrobe at their \$37,500-a-month Trump Tower penthouse.

But look, it’s all a journey. And we’re so, so lucky that Jeff’s still in the pretending-to-give-a-toss stage of things with Lauren, taking a veeeeery long run-up to a minuscule percentage of “strategic giving” on his half-a-billion-dollar boat. These fauxlanthropists may not give the world their taxes – but they do at least give us a few laughs. Strategically, or otherwise.

- Marina Hyde is a Guardian columnist

- This June, Marina Hyde will join fellow columnists at three Guardian Live events in [Leeds](#), [Brighton](#) and [London](#). Readers can join these events in person and the London event will be livestreamed
- What Just Happened?! by Marina Hyde (Guardian Faber, £9.99). To support The Guardian and Observer, order your copy at guardianbookshop.com. Delivery charges may apply

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Photograph: Joe Giddens/PA

[OpinionPensions](#)

There's another invisible injustice for working women – the gender pension gap

[Rajiv Prabhakar](#)



It's partly the inevitable result of the gender pay gap, but the sums are much bigger. This urgently needs to be fixed

Sat 27 May 2023 03.00 EDTLast modified on Sat 27 May 2023 04.29 EDT

The reality of a gender pay gap – where women are paid less than men for similar work – is well known. Much less well known is the gender pension gap – a gap in retirement outcomes between men and women.

Outside the state pension, pensions come in roughly two forms, private and workplace, and women are being let down in both areas. The trade union Prospect estimates that the percentage difference in retirement income for females and males between 2020-21 is [40.5%](#). That's significantly larger than the gender pay gap, which came in at around [15.4%](#) in 2021. A [report](#) from the Pensions Policy Institute states that by their 60s, the median women's pension wealth is £51,100. Men have more than triple the wealth at nearly £156,500.

The reason for this is that women are more likely to take home smaller pay packets and take time away from work. People are eligible for automatic enrolment if they earn more than £10,000 a year, but evidence from the

Association of British Insurers suggests that women form [three-quarters](#) of those excluded from automatic enrolment because they earn below this threshold. This is where the gender pay gap seeps into the gender pension gap.

Outside work, women do the bulk of unpaid caring in society, whether this is looking after small children or looking after family members who are ill. As a result, women are more likely to work part-time. [Data from the Office for National Statistics](#) for 2022 reveals that 38% of women were in part-time employment compared with 14% of men.

Engagement with the labour force is, however, not the full story. Many women will take time out of work while their partners continue in full-time employment, but if marriages break down they do not usually receive a percentage of their partners' pensions. [Pensions](#) can be split in various ways following a divorce or dissolution of a civil partnership, but pension sharing orders appear only in a small proportion of divorces.

So, what is to be done? In the long term, there are deep-seated issues around pay equality, the division of caring responsibilities between genders and better divorce terms for women to be addressed. But in the short term, for economists like me, we need more data to be able to better define and therefore support campaigns around the gender pension gap.

The gender pension gap can be defined in different ways. For example, it might look at retirement income, differences in automatic enrolment participation rates between men and women, or the size of pension pots. There are competing arguments for each of these measures. Without a definition it is hard to develop a measure for tracking progress on reducing it or to set targets to reduce it.

Women are unjustly paying for the gender pay gap twice, in the present and in the future. They are also paying for all the unpaid work they do. It's too late for women receiving their pensions now, but we owe it to those who will retire in the future to fix this problem rather than continuing to sleepwalk into it.

- Dr Rajiv Prabhakar is a senior lecturer at the Open University and author of Financial Inclusion: Critique and Alternatives

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Isabel Diaz Ayuso will be aiming to secure an absolute majority for the People's party. Photograph: Thomas Coex/AFP/Getty Images

[Spain](#)

Rows over Eta and racism loom large as Spain holds local elections

Votes will allow the parties to hone their strategies before December's general election

[Sam Jones](#) in Madrid

[@swajones](#)

Sat 27 May 2023 05.00 EDT

Spain heads to the polls on Sunday to elect 12 regional governments and 8,000 municipal councils in votes that will allow the governing Socialists and the opposition conservatives to gauge their strengths and hone their strategies before December's general election.

Isabel Díaz Ayuso, the rightwing, populist president of the Madrid region, will be aiming to secure an absolute majority for the People's party (PP), while Barcelona's leftwing mayor, Ada Colau, will be hoping to see off challenges from the regional branch of the Socialist party and a centre-right Catalan pro-independence party.

The PP, which has been in opposition since it was turfed out of central government after a string of corruption scandals five years ago, wants to wrestle as many regions as possible from the ruling Spanish Socialist Workers' party (PSOE). But it is likely to have to rely on the far-right Vox party's support in forming new regional governments in all of the contested regions except Madrid.

The elections come at the end of a bitter campaign in which regional and local matters have been often overshadowed by the [spectre of the defunct Basque terrorist group, Eta](#), the row sparked by the [racist abuse directed at the Real Madrid footballer Vinícius Júnior](#), and allegations of electoral fraud.

Spain's prime minister, [Pedro Sánchez](#), who is also the PSOE leader, had begun the campaign hoping to stress his government's economic record, new housing reforms and schemes to help young people.

But his attempts to push those achievements were swiftly derailed after it emerged that the Basque nationalist party, EH Bildu – on whose support the minority government relies in congress – [was fielding 44 convicted Eta members](#), including seven people found guilty of violent crimes, as candidates.

Although Sánchez criticised Bildu's decision, describing it as legal but “obviously indecent”, and the Basque party saying later the seven candidates convicted for violence would not take up their seats, the damage had been done.

The PP leader, Alberto Núñez Feijóo, pounced on Sánchez for his reliance on Bildu and on Catalan pro-independence parties – and for bungled sexual

offences legislation that allowed more than 1,000 convicted sex offenders to have their sentences cut, and more than 100 to win early release.

“You’re the great electoral hope for rapists and pederasts, for mutineers, squatters, corrupt people and now for those who used to go about in balaclavas with pistols,” he told Sánchez. “And I will never be that.”

Ayuso, a [climate change denier](#) who once said the spread of Covid in the Spanish capital was partly due to [“the way of life of immigrants in Madrid”](#), went further, claiming that “Eta is still alive” in the guise of Bildu and calling, unsuccessfully, [for the legal political party to be banned](#). Her words were criticised by a group representing the victims of terrorism that accused her of [trivialising what had happened](#) and showing a lack of respect for the families of the dead.

Eta murdered 829 people during its violent, five-decade quest to bring about an independent Basque homeland before it [abandoned its armed campaign in 2011](#) and [dissolved itself five years ago](#).

Sánchez said the PP’s familiar obsession with a vanished terror group was proof of its lack of electoral policies. He asked the party: “What’s your proposal on housing? [Eta](#). In other words, nothing. On education? Eta. In other words, nothing. On the climate emergency? Eta. In other words nothing.

He added: “When Eta is nothing in Spain it is still everything to you. Because, in your desperation, Eta is all you have, even though it doesn’t exist.”

By the middle of this week, the focus had switched to racism after Vinícius called Spain “a country of racists”.

Sánchez replied: “Hatred and xenophobia should have no place in football nor in our society.”

Feijóo also said racism and sport were “totally incompatible”, but added: “Spain is not a racist country in any way.”

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That in turn gave way to fears of electoral corruption after police in Spain's north African enclave of Melilla arrested 10 people suspected of participating in an alleged mail-in vote-buying fraud, while seven other people were detained on suspicion of vote-buying in the Andalusian town of Mojácar.

Pablo Simón, a political scientist at Carlos III University in Madrid, said Sunday's elections were on course to be a closely run affair, with much depending on turnout. "What we're going to see is a situation where the left and right blocs will be finishing neck-and-neck in many places," he said.

"Things are going to be very tight in the Valencian regional government, in the Balearic islands, in Aragón, in Barcelona, in Seville, in Vitoria, and in Valladolid."

Simón said the results would inevitably shape the political narrative before the general election. He said: "If the PP grows a lot and wins a lot of territorial power – and if it outperforms expectations – then that will give rise to the perception that the left's time is up and that Pedro Sánchez is in stoppage time."

“On the other hand, if the left holds out and if the result is mixed, then the impression will be that the game’s not over when it comes to the next election.”

While the PSOE will be hoping to minimise losses in the run-up to the general election, Podemos, its leftwing, junior partner in the national coalition government, is badly bereft of the momentum and support that propelled it into Spanish politics eight years ago. Meanwhile, the centre-right Citizens party, once a kingmaker and possible party of government, is set to continue its slow slide into insignificance.

One of the main focuses will be on the reconfigured right. Although the PP stands to Hoover up support from the moribund Citizens, it is unlikely to perform well enough to avoid the need for deals with Vox, with whom it already governs the region of Castilla y León. Such deals, however, would come at a price as they would allow the left to question the PP’s credentials as a centre-right party and paint it as all too prepared to enter into cynical alliances with the far right.

“Vox is growing in all regions and is going to win more power and be in more regional parliaments and in more councils than in 2019,” said Simón. “Second – and this is important – all the surveys show that the PP will need Vox to govern in every region except in Madrid. That means that Vox, which is running a very discreet campaign and is trying not to make any mistakes, will be seeking to enter into coalition governments.”

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New Zealand pilot Phillip Mehrstens is being held by separatists in Indonesia's Papua region. Photograph: West Papua Liberation Army/AP

[West Papua](#)

West Papua rebels threaten to shoot New Zealand pilot if independence talks denied

Phillip Mehrstens, who has been held hostage since February, makes the claim in a new video released by the separatist group

Reuters

Sat 27 May 2023 00.54 EDT

Rebels in Indonesia's Papua region have threatened to shoot a [New Zealand](#) pilot being held hostage if countries do not comply with their demand to start independence talks within two months, a new video released by the group shows.

Guerrilla fighters in Papua's central highlands, who want to free Papua from Indonesia, [kidnapped Phillip Mehrtens](#) after he landed a commercial plane in the mountainous area of Nduga in February.

In the new video, a visibly emaciated Mehrtens holds the banned Morning Star flag, a symbol of West Papuan independence, and is surrounded by Papuan fighters brandishing rifles.

Mehrtens is seen talking to the camera, saying the separatists want countries other than [Indonesia](#) to engage in dialogue on Papuan independence.

"If it does not happen within two months then they say they will shoot me," Mehrtens says in the video.

A spokesperson for New Zealand's ministry of foreign affairs said in an email to Reuters on Saturday that it was aware of the photos and videos circulating.

"We're doing everything we can to secure a peaceful resolution and Mr Mehrtens' safe release," the spokesperson added.

Meanwhile, Indonesia's military spokesperson, Julius Widjojono, said on Saturday that the military would continue to carry out measurable actions in accordance with standard operating procedure. The Indonesian foreign ministry did not respond to requests for comment.

Indonesian authorities have previously said they are prioritising peaceful negotiations to secure the release of the Susi Air pilot, but have struggled to access the isolated and rugged highland terrain.

In April, [rebel gunmen attacked Indonesian army troops](#) who were deployed to rescue Mehrtens, leaving at least six dead and about 30 missing.

A low-level but increasingly deadly battle for independence has been waged in resource-rich Papua ever since it was controversially brought under Indonesian control in a vote overseen by the United Nations in 1969.

The conflict has escalated significantly since 2018, with pro-independence fighters mounting deadlier and more frequent attacks, largely because they have managed to procure more sophisticated weapons.

Rumianus Wandikbo of the West Papua National Liberation Army, the armed wing of the Free Papua Movement, called on countries such as New Zealand and Australia as well as western nations to kickstart talks with Indonesia and the separatists.

He said in a separate video: “We do not ask for money ... We really demand our rights for sovereignty.”

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Tourists near the Vatican on Friday, when Pope Francis skipped meetings because he was running a fever. Photograph: Gregorio Borgia/AP

[Pope Francis](#)

Pope Francis returns to work after taking day off with fever

Pontiff, 86, to hold private meetings on Saturday and then attend Sunday's mass at St Peter's Basilica

Agence France-Presse in Vatican City

Sat 27 May 2023 05.06 EDTLast modified on Sat 27 May 2023 06.12 EDT

Pope Francis has returned to work after taking a day off with a fever, the Vatican has said.

The 86-year-old, who was treated in hospital for bronchitis nearly two months ago, had a full calendar of private meetings lined up on Saturday, it said.

On Friday the Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni had said the Argentinian pope was not holding audiences [“due to a feverish state”](#).

It was unclear who the pope had been expected to meet, as his agenda was not made public.

The [Vatican](#) secretary of state, Pietro Parolin, blamed the pontiff’s busy schedule, saying he was “tired”.

Francis had eight meetings on Thursday, according to his published schedule.

His next public appearance is Sunday’s mass at St Peter’s Basilica to celebrate Pentecost (Whit Sunday), followed by the traditional Regina Coeli prayer.

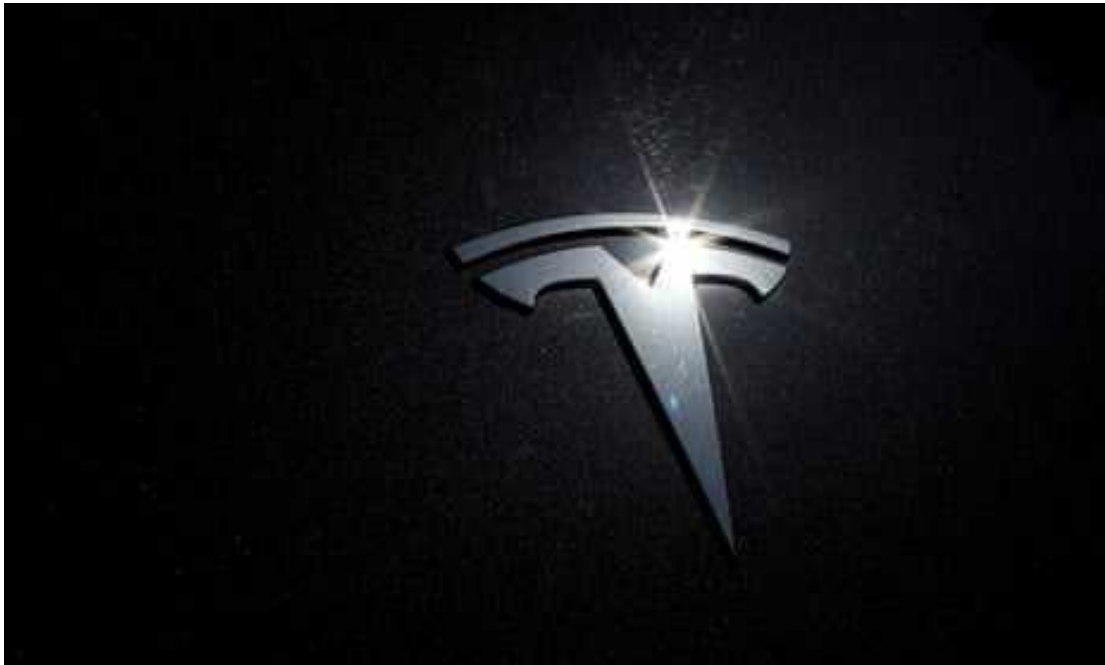
On Monday, he is scheduled to meet the Italian president, Sergio Mattarella.

Francis, leader of the world’s 1.3 billion Catholics since 2013, has had a number of health issues over the past year, including persistent pain in his right knee and a recent stay in hospital with bronchitis.

The episodes have sparked widespread concern and fuelled speculation that he might choose to retire rather than stay in the job for life, a choice made by his predecessor, Benedict XVI.

In late March, Francis was admitted to hospital in Rome after having breathing difficulties, and stayed for three nights.

He was treated with antibiotics for bronchitis. As he left the Gemelli hospital on 1 April, the pope smiled and joked with wellwishers, quipping: [“I am still alive!”](#)



The data protection office in Brandenburg, which is home to Tesla's European gigafactory, described the data leak as 'massive'. Photograph: Lucy Nicholson/Reuters

[Tesla](#)

Report: 'massive' Tesla leak reveals data breaches, thousands of safety complaints

Whistleblower files reveal customer and employee information plus complaints about driver assistance system

Guardian staff and agency

Fri 26 May 2023 18.08 EDTLast modified on Fri 26 May 2023 19.43 EDT

Tesla has failed to adequately protect data from customers, employees and business partners and has received thousands of customer complaints regarding the carmaker's driver assistance system, [Germany's Handelsblatt](#)

[has reported](#), citing 100 gigabytes of confidential data leaked by a whistleblower.

The Handelsblatt report said customer data could be found “in abundance” in a data set labelled “Tesla Files”.

The files include tables containing more than 100,000 names of former and current employees, including the social security number of the Tesla CEO, [Elon Musk](#), along with private email addresses, phone numbers, salaries of employees, bank details of customers and secret details from production, according to Handelsblatt.

The breach would violate the GDPR, the newspaper said.

The Guardian has not independently verified the documents.

The data protection office in Brandenburg, which is home to Tesla’s European gigafactory, described the data leak as “massive”.

“I can’t remember such a scale,” the Brandenburg data protection officer, Dagmar Hartge, said.

If such a violation was proved, Tesla could be fined up to 4% of its annual sales, which could be €3.26bn (\$3.5bn).

Citing the leaked files, the newspaper also reported about large numbers of customer complaints regarding the Tesla’s driver assistance programs, with about 4,000 complaints on sudden acceleration or phantom braking.

The German union IG Metall said the revelations were “disturbing” and called on Tesla to inform employees about all data protection violations and promote a culture in which staff could raise problems and grievances openly and without fear.

“These revelations ... fit with the picture that we have gained in just under two years,” said Dirk Schulze, IG Metall incoming district manager for Berlin, Brandenburg and Saxony.

Handelsblatt quoted a lawyer for Tesla as saying a “disgruntled former employee” had abused their access as a service technician, adding that the company would take legal action against the individual it suspected of the leak.

The data protection watchdog for the Netherlands said on Friday it was aware of possible Tesla data protection breaches.

“We are aware of the Handelsblatt story and we are looking into it,” said a spokesperson for the AP data watchdog in the Netherlands, where Tesla’s European headquarters is located.

The agency declined all comment on whether it might launch or have launched an investigation, citing policy. The Dutch agency was informed by its counterpart in the German state of Brandenburg.

Handelsblatt said Tesla notified the Dutch authorities about the breach, but the AP spokesperson said they were not aware if the company had made any representations to the agency.

Tesla was not available for comment on Friday.

Last month, a Reuters report showed that groups of Tesla employees privately shared via an internal messaging system sometimes highly invasive videos and images recorded by customers’ car cameras between 2019 and 2022.

This week, Facebook’s parent Meta was hit with a record €1.2bn fine by its lead EU privacy regulator over its handling of user information and given five months to stop transferring user data to the US.

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Texas attorney general calls for state capitol protests before impeachment vote – video

[Texas](#)

Texas attorney general urges supporters to protest at capitol ahead of impeachment vote

Ken Paxton’s call for protesters to be ‘peacefully’ heard at the state capitol echoes similar request from Donald Trump before 6 January 2021

Associated Press

Fri 26 May 2023 23.33 EDTLast modified on Sat 27 May 2023 05.54 EDT

The [Texas](#) attorney general, Ken Paxton, has urged his supporters to protest at the state capitol when Republicans in the House of Representatives take up historic impeachment proceedings against him.

The state House has set a Saturday vote to consider impeaching Paxton and suspending him from office over allegations of bribery, unfitness for office and abuse of public trust – just some of the accusations that have trailed him for most of his three terms.

Paxton, a 60-year-old Republican, decried the impeachment proceedings as “political theater” that will “inflict lasting damage on the Texas House”, adding to his earlier claims that it was an effort to disfranchise the voters who returned him to office in November.

“I want to invite my fellow citizens and friends to peacefully come let their voices be heard at the capitol tomorrow,” he said at a news conference, without taking any questions. “Exercise your right to petition your government.”

The request echoes former president Donald Trump's call for people to protest against his electoral defeat on 6 January 2021, when a mob violently stormed the US Capitol in Washington. Paxton, who spoke at the rally that preceded that insurrection, called his supporters to the Texas capitol on a day when the governor is supposed to deliver a Memorial Day address to lawmakers.

If impeached, Paxton would be suspended from office immediately and the Republican governor, Greg Abbott, would appoint an interim replacement.

The Republican-led committee spent months quietly investigating Paxton and [recommended his impeachment](#) on Thursday on 20 articles. Paxton has said the charges are based on "hearsay and gossip, parroting long-disproven claims".

As reported by [the Texas Tribune](#), four investigators, testifying before the House general investigating committee on Wednesday, described in "painstaking and methodical detail" ways in which they said Paxton violated multiple state laws.

Investigators said they believed Paxton wrongly spent official funds and misused his authority to help a friend and financial backer, the Tribune said.

Prominent conservatives have been notably quiet on Paxton, but some began to rally around him on Friday. The chairman of the state Republican party, Matt Rinaldi, criticised the process as a "sham" and urged the Republican-controlled Senate to acquit Paxton if he stood trial in that chamber.

"It is based on allegations already litigated by voters, led by a liberal speaker trying to undermine his conservative adversaries," Rinaldi said, echoing Paxton's criticism of Republican House speaker Dade Phelan. He said the Senate would have to "restore sanity and reason" by acquitting Paxton.

It's unclear how many supporters Paxton may have in the House, but only a simple majority is needed to impeach. That means just a small fraction of the 85 Republican members would need to vote against Paxton if all 64

Democrats do. Final removal would require two-thirds support in the Senate, where Paxton's wife, Angela, is a member.

The move to impeach Paxton sets up what could be a remarkably sudden downfall for one of the Republican party's most prominent legal combatants, who in 2020 asked the US supreme court to overturn President Joe Biden's victory.

Paxton has been under FBI investigation for years over accusations that he used his office to help a donor. He was separately indicted on securities fraud charges in 2015, but has yet to stand trial.

When the five-member committee's investigation came to light on Tuesday, Paxton suggested it was a political attack by Phelan, calling for his resignation. Phelan's office brushed this off as an attempt to "save face".

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