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Silvio Berlusconi: the life and scandals of the former Italian prime minister – video obituary

[Silvio Berlusconi](#)

Silvio Berlusconi, scandal-ridden former Italian prime minister, dies aged 86

Health of flamboyant media tycoon who led three Italian governments had deteriorated in recent years

- [Silvio Berlusconi – a life in pictures](#)

[Angela Giuffrida](#) in Rome and [Lorenzo Tondo](#) in Palermo

Mon 12 Jun 2023 11.20 EDTFirst published on Mon 12 Jun 2023 04.43 EDT

Allies and critics have paid tribute to the former Italian prime minister [Silvio Berlusconi](#), the country's longest-serving postwar leader and one of its most divisive, who has died aged 86.

The billionaire media tycoon and former AC Milan owner who entered politics at the head of his own Forza Italia in the 1990s as the traditional parties of the right collapsed led three governments between 1994 and 2011 and succeeded in making a comeback in 2017 despite a career tainted by sex scandals, allegations of corruption and a tax fraud conviction.

He died at the San Raffaele hospital in Milan, where he had [spent six weeks this spring](#) undergoing treatment for a lung infection linked to a chronic myelomonocytic leukaemia [before being readmitted](#).

[timeline](#)

The Italian prime minister, Giorgia Meloni, whose governing coalition includes Berlusconi's Forza Italia as a junior member, said on Monday: "Silvio Berlusconi was above all a fighter. He was a man who was never afraid to stand up for his convictions, and it was exactly that courage and determination that made him one of the most influential men in the history of [Italy](#)."

The two had recently disagreed over the war in Ukraine and Berlusconi's friendship with Russian president, Vladimir Putin, who had sent him bottles of vodka for his most recent birthday. On Monday, the Russian embassy in Rome described Berlusconi as a great statesman and visionary, while Putin, in what appeared to be a deeply personal statement, said he was a "dear person, a true friend".

Matteo Salvini, the deputy prime minister, described Berlusconi as "a great friend and a great Italian man". Italy's defence minister, Guido Crosetto, described Berlusconi's death as "a great, enormous pain". "He leaves a huge void because he was great. An era is over, an era is closing. I loved him very much. Goodbye Silvio."

The former prime minister's funeral is to be held on Wednesday in Milan – a city deeply associated with Berlusconi – when Italy will also mark a national day of mourning. Supporters draped in the flags of Forza Italia and AC Milan, which he owned between 1986 and 2017, gathered on Monday outside the Milan hospital where he died.

Born in Milan in 1936 to a middle-class family, Berlusconi began his business career in property development before going on to found Mediaset, Italy's largest commercial broadcaster.

In 1994 Forza Italia was founded and Berlusconi became the first prime minister to be elected without previously having held a government office. His second term in office, [between 2001 and 2006](#), was the longest served by any Italian leader since the second world war. He [returned to power in 2008](#) but was [forced to resign in 2011](#) amid an acute debt crisis and facing allegations he had hosted "bunga bunga" sex parties with underage girls, something he denied.

He was acquitted on appeal on all charges related to the parties, but [was convicted of tax fraud in late 2012](#), for which he served his year-long sentence doing part-time community service at a residential home in Milan. His ban on running for office was [lifted in time for the general elections](#) in 2018, when Forza Italia ran in coalition with the League and Brothers of Italy but the parties fell short of the 40% required to govern.

In 2019, Berlusconi won a seat in the European parliament, and in general elections in October 2022 his party returned to power in a [coalition led by Giorgia Meloni's Brothers of Italy](#). Berlusconi was also elected as a senator.



Silvio Berlusconi (centre) with Milan's Marco van Basten, manager Arrigo Sacchi, Franco Baresi, Frank Rijkaard and Ruud Gullit in 1990 with the European Cup. Photograph: Imago/Shutterstock

Often criticised for his arrogance, sometimes obscene language, chauvinism and blurring the lines between business and politics, his rivals, too, united in paying tribute. Italy's former prime minister Matteo Renzi described Berlusconi as a history-maker. "Many loved him, many hated him; today everyone must recognise that his impact on political life but also on economic, sporting and television life was unprecedented."

Karima El Mahroug, an Italian-Moroccan woman and former dancer, known as Ruby, who attended Berlusconi's "bunga bunga" parties wrote "Farewell, President" over an image of a broken heart after the death of the media mogul.

One of the first to react was the former European Commission president Romano Prodi, perhaps Berlusconi's bitterest political foe.

"We represented different and opposing worlds, but our rivalry never turned into sentiments of animosity on a personal level, and the debate remained within the sphere of mutual respect," Prodi said.

The secretary of the centre-left Democratic party, Elly Schlein, expressed her party's "deepest condolences".

"Everything has divided us and divides us from his political vision, but the human respect to a person who was a protagonist of our country's history remains," she said. "Deepest condolences from the Democratic party."

Pope Francis sent a telegram of condolences to Berlusconi's family voicing "heartfelt participation in the mourning for the loss of a protagonist of Italian political life, who held public responsibilities with energetic temperament."

Il Cavaliere (the knight) – an honour that became his nickname – Berlusconi was often considered the "kingmaker" in Italian politics. In 2016, he had surgery to replace a faulty aortic valve, and was admitted to hospital with Covid in September 2020. He had lingering complications related to the virus, an experience he described as "the worst of my life".

He married twice, and was in a relationship with Francesca Pascale, 37, for seven years before a relationship with 33-year-old Marta Fascina, an MP with Forza Italia with whom he had a "symbolic marriage" in March 2022. He is survived by five children.

The world of sport also paid tribute. “I have lost my brilliant friend,” said the former football coach Arrigo Sacchi, whose Milan team won the Champions League in consecutive years.

Franco Baresi, a former Milan footballer, said: “I feel more alone now. He was like a father to me, a unique president who was affectionate to everyone.”

Berlusconi left AC Milan ownership in 2017 and bought the Monza football club, taking it from Italy’s second division to the top flight. A statement from Monza said: “Forever with us. A void that can never be filled. Thanks for everything, president.”

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Berlusconi represented a part of Italy that places money and power above justice and ethics. Photograph: Fabrizio Corradetti/LPS/ZUMA Press Wire/REX/Shutterstock

[Silvio Berlusconi](#)

Bunga bunga and bling aside, Berlusconi's legacy is a loss of faith in Italy's political elite

One of European politics' most controversial figures, his career was marked by tawdry sex and corruption scandals

- [Silvio Berlusconi, former Italian prime minister, dies aged 86](#)



[Jon Henley](#) *Europe correspondent*
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Mon 12 Jun 2023 04.57 EDTLast modified on Mon 12 Jun 2023 16.18 EDT

Best known for his perma-tan, gaffes, “bunga bunga” parties and outsized ego, [Silvio Berlusconi](#) was a proto-Trumpian populist, the man to beat in Rome for more than two decades, and one of European politics’ most controversial figures.

Italy’s longest-serving postwar prime minister, Berlusconi, who [has died](#) aged 86 according to Italian media, held the job on three occasions, amassing along the way a fortune ranked by [Forbes magazine last year](#) as the country’s fourth-biggest.

Skilled in the art of not just weathering scandal but emerging from it with his profile and popularity enhanced, he faced prosecution more than 30 times on charges including embezzlement, false accounting and bribing a judge. Many cases failed to go to trial, sometimes because Berlusconi changed the law under which he had been charged.

[Only once was he convicted, for tax fraud, in 2013.](#) That led to a four-year prison term, of which three were pardoned, a year’s community service and

a six-year bar from legislative office – from which he instantly [bounced back, in 2019, as an MEP](#).

Saying [Italy](#) needed a charismatic self-made businessman to make it great again, Berlusconi, who had dabbled in music and sung on cruise ships before building a vast personal fortune as a property developer in Milan and with his Fininvest media and TV empire, founded his conservative, pro-market Forza Italia party and entered politics in late 1993.

He became prime minister in January 1994, and although his centre-right coalition government lasted barely nine months before collapsing, devoted much of his first term, according to his many critics, to passing laws and promoting policies that would protect him from prosecution and boost the profits of his private businesses.

He lost the 1996 election to the centre-left leader Romano Prodi, but triumphed again in 2001 and then became the first Italian politician in 50 years to complete a full five-year mandate, before losing again to Prodi in 2006. His third term began in 2008, after Prodi's government collapsed, and ended with Berlusconi's resignation in 2011.

Silvio Berlusconi: the life and scandals of the former Italian prime minister – video obituary

With Italy under IMF and EU surveillance that November, even his closest allies criticised Berlusconi's reluctance to take the drastic action needed to bring Europe's third-largest economy under control in the wake of Europe's financial crisis, ushering in a technocratic government. Italy's public debt doubled during Berlusconi's tenure.

In his enforced six-year absence, Italy's politics changed. The former prime minister's voters defected en masse to Matteo Salvini's far-right Lega, which formed an uneasy coalition with the anti-establishment Five Star Movement after the 2018 elections in which Berlusconi's party scored 14% of the vote – down from 37% in 2008.

But the billionaire tycoon had no difficulty winning election as an MEP and returned to the national fray last year when Forza Italia entered an uneasy

far-right led coalition with Giorgia Meloni's Brothers of Italy and Salvini's Lega.



The parallels between Silvio Berlusconi's rise and that of Donald Trump are striking Photograph: Maurizio Brambatti/EPA

Reinforcing a career-long reputation for jaw-dropping gaffes and outrageous asides, he subsequently called Meloni "patronising, overbearing, arrogant and offensive", boasted of his close ties with Vladimir Putin, and claimed Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, was to blame for his country's devastation.

No one should have been overly surprised: among many other politically incorrect sallies, Berlusconi also suggested the German centre-left politician Martin Schulz [could play a Nazi guard in a war film](#), reportedly called the German chancellor, Angela Merkel, an "[unfuckable lard-arse](#)", and, in 2008, shocked many by describing then-US president-elect Barack Obama as "[handsome, young and ... suntanned](#)".

His career was also marked by sex and related corruption scandals epitomised by [lurid tales of "bunga bunga" sex parties](#) at his luxurious villa outside Milan, claims of [unlawful sex with a 17-year old nightclub dancer](#), and subsequent allegations of witness-tampering.

The [parallels with Donald Trump are striking](#): both men began as real-estate magnates, became media stars and segued into politics. Both have made a point of undermining their country's established institutions, including the press and judiciary.

Rejected by their respective liberal establishments, both also have responded – despite their great wealth – with the populist tactic of portraying themselves as the true voice of the people against an out-of-touch and corrupt elite.

Throughout his political career, Berlusconi's dominance of the Italian media – including ownership of three television channels – drew justifiable accusations of conflict of interest and excess of influence. It would be wrong, however, to conclude that this was the sole explanation for his enduring success.

The reason Berlusconi was constantly re-elected (*"Bastava non votarlo,"* his opponents would endlessly lament: "All you have to do is not vote for him") is that he represented a part of Italy that places money and power above justice and ethics.

His legacy is likely to be not the bunga bunga parties, the bling and the vulgarity, but the Italian electorate's loss of faith in their political class – a loss that has led, ironically, to the emergence of a [new generation of altogether more radical, and harder-right, populist politicians](#).

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Silvio Berlusconi – a life in pictures

Silvio Berlusconi attends the 'Porta a Porta' TV Show on February 14, 2018 in Rome, Italy. Photograph: Elisabetta A Villa/Getty Images

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[Silvio Berlusconi](#)

Silvio Berlusconi: the life and scandals of the former Italian prime minister – video obituary

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2023.06.12 - Spotlight

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Soldiers from the Colombian air force give medical attention to the children who survived the Cessna plane crash in the Amazon jungle. Photograph: Colombian Air Force/Reuters

[Colombia](#)

Indigenous knowledge, bravery, vigilance: how young siblings survived in Colombia's perilous jungle

Thirteen-year-old Lesly Mukutuy credited with using ancestral knowledge to help keep her younger siblings alive

[*Mat Youkee*](#) in Bogotá

[@matyoukee](#)

Mon 12 Jun 2023 05.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 12 Jun 2023 13.18 EDT

Fatima Valencia, the grandmother of the four children rescued on Friday after 40 days alone [in the Colombian Amazon](#), had a simple explanation for why they had taken so long to be found despite a huge search effort: they were being [carried through the jungle by a duende](#), a leprechaun-like mythological creature said to roam the forest.

As more details emerge about four children's [incredible feat of survival](#), it has become clear that the ancestral knowledge of the eldest child played a vital role in keeping her younger siblings, including a baby who turned one during the ordeal, alive for 40 days.

Thirteen-year-old Lesly Mukutuy was able to identify edible fruits, find suitable water and avoid dangerous plants and animals thanks in part to knowledge handed down to her by Valencia.

“We have to recognise not only her bravery but also her leadership,” the minister of defence, Iván Velásquez, said on Sunday after a visit to Bogotá's military hospital, where the children are being treated for malnutrition and minor injuries. “We can say that it was because of her that her three younger siblings could survive by her side, thanks to her care and her knowledge of the jungle.”

A Cessna carrying the four children, their mother and two other adults including the pilot crashed in one of Colombia's most remote and dangerous regions on 1 May. A search team found the plane on 16 May in a thick patch of the rainforest and recovered the bodies of the adults but the children were nowhere to be found.

On Friday the four children – members of the Huitoto Indigenous community – were found in a small jungle clearing 3 miles (5km) from the wreckage, in an area where snakes, mosquitoes and other animals abound.

Several times search teams had passed within 50 metres of the clearing. They were finally able to pin the children down thanks to a cry from Cristin, the youngest of the siblings.

He was just 11 months old when the plane came down while the children were travelling with their mother from the Amazonian village of Araracuara to San José del Guaviare.



Colombian military personnel check on one of the surviving children during their transfer to Bogotá. Photograph: Colombian air force/AFP/Getty Images

The children's great-uncle, Fidencio Valencia, said the siblings had survived by eating *fariña*, or cassava flour, and by using their knowledge of the rainforest's fruits.

So far the children have given few details of their ordeal, but conversations with family members suggest they have may have hidden from the search team out of fear.

"They were afraid out there, with the dogs barking," said Fidencio Valencia, having spoken to the children on Sunday. "They hid among the trees ... they ran."

Colombia releases footage of children found alive in jungle after plane crash – video

Valencia told the media outlet Noticias Caracol that the children were starting to talk and one of them said they hid in tree trunks to protect themselves.

Alicia Méndez, a journalist with the newspaper El Tiempo, said that at one point the children had heard a message in their native language recorded by Fatima Valencia and transmitted from a helicopter, but they were scared to respond.

Henry Guerrero, an Indigenous man who was part of the search group, told reporters that the children were found with two small bags containing some clothes, a towel, a torch, two mobile phones, a music box and a drink bottle.

He said they used the bottle to collect water in the jungle, adding that after they were rescued the youngsters complained of being hungry. "They wanted to eat rice pudding, they wanted to eat bread," he said.

Aside from the shock and trauma of the crash and their mother's death, the children may have had reason to fear the olive uniforms of the search party. Manuel Ranoque, father of the two younger children, claims that members of the Carolina Ramírez Front, an ex-Farc dissident group active in the region, had a history of threatening him and his family.

Father of children who survived plane crash in Colombia says their mother told them to leave – video

Ranoque, who served as governor of a Huitoto community, said the threats had forced him to leave the region to Araracuara, in Caquetá in Colombia's southern Amazon region. The family had visited Ranoque there in April and were returning to San José de Guaviare in a chartered Cessna when the engine failed and crashed into a region where the rebel group operate. On 20 May the army confirmed it had [found an abandoned Farc dissident camp 2.8km from the crash site](#) but quickly ruled out speculation that the children had been kidnapped by the group.

Ranoque said the children would tell their own stories in time.

No one can accuse the military of not doing enough to find the siblings. They used 11 aircraft, distributed 10,000 flyers and launched 100 food kits into the search area of 323 sq km, even at distances further than the children could have been expected to reach on foot. More than 150 soldiers and 200 volunteers from local Indigenous communities and a team of 10 Belgian shepherd dogs took part in the search.

At first the troops from the Colombian special forces acted silently, accustomed to tracking down rebel groups in the jungle. “We realised we had to modify the procedure, to make noise and call Lesly’s name, to make them see us,” a soldier involved in the rescue told El Mundo on condition of anonymity. Of the Indigenous volunteers, he said: “They taught us about the jungle, their traditions and their deep spirituality.”

[Colombia map](#)

It was perhaps telling that [the first people to find the children were members of the Indigenous search team](#), who had been calling out in native languages. On the morning of the rescue they partook in a ritual with yagé (ayahuasca), a traditional jungle medicine with psychedelic properties.

“They were found by an Indigenous guardian who took yagé and with the support of the army’s technology,” said Luis Acosta, coordinator of the Guardia Indígena. “Those who take yagé see far beyond what we see. He

becomes a doctor, a panther, a tiger a puma. He sees beyond because it's a holistic medicine. He had the capacity to look.”

Speaking on Saturday, Fatima Valencia also credited the spiritual and natural worlds for her grandchildren's survival.

“I give thanks to Mother Earth, because she released them.”

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[Housing](#)

Find out where you can afford to buy or rent in Great Britain

In nearly half of postcode districts the typical household cannot afford to buy a home, while in others a sustainable rent is also out of reach. Use the map below to see where is affordable for you

[‘This is just ruinous’: the Britons unable to afford their homes](#)

[Ashley Kirk](#), [Pamela Duncan](#) and [Pablo Gutiérrez](#)

Mon 12 Jun 2023 02.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 12 Jun 2023 07.25 EDT

Millions of Britons are living in areas where they are either unable to afford a mid-priced property, face a disproportionately high rent, or both, a Guardian analysis reveals.

The analysis, which is explained fully further down the page, has been conducted based on a typical local income. Readers can find out which areas are affordable for their individual, couple or family salary and an assumed deposit using this interactive tool.

How we define what is affordable for you

Category*	Mortgage cost (90% of house)	Rent cost
	As number of times annual income	As % of monthly income
Can buy, can rent	2.5 times and below	30% and below
	3.5 times and below	30% and below
	4.5 times and below	30% and below
Can't buy, can	Greater than 4.5 times	20% and below

rent

	Greater than 4.5 times	30% and below
Can't buy, can't rent	Greater than 4.5 times	Greater than 30%
Can buy, can't rent	4.5 times and above	Greater than 30%
No data available		

Hide

Enter your household information

We don't store any data you enter

Household income

Number of bedrooms

Deposit (If buying a property)

Median property price	£	[xx] times annual income
	[XBedSale_MedianPrice]	
Median rent	£	[xx]% monthly income
	[XbedRent_MedianPrice]	

The majority of areas in this postcode district fall in [LA] local authority.

Guardian graphic. Source: Twentyci for rent and for-sale prices listed in year to 4 June 2023. Salary data from ONS for year to 5 April 2022. For property buying, unless you change the deposit amount, the tool assumes a deposit of 10%. *While people could buy a property with a 90% mortgage exceeding a 4.5 loan-to-income ratio, or rent a property costing more than 30% of their monthly income, experts warn that beyond these thresholds it is unaffordable as it puts too much pressure on a household budget.

Close to half of the postcode districts (48%) included in the research are “rental traps” – areas in which a family cannot afford to buy a mid-price

property.

In a further 11% of the areas it is not only unaffordable to buy but also to rent because the cost eats into a disproportionate amount of the household's income, based on widely accepted affordability criteria.

The data, which is sourced from the marketing services company TwentyCi, gives the most detailed picture yet of the asking prices in 2,400 British postcode districts in the year to 4 June. The number is roughly 85% of all postcode districts in Great Britain.

Property prices are [outstripping the loan-to-income ratio](#) required by most banks, which is typically 4.5 times a couple's joint salary. They have [eased a little over the past year](#) across the UK as the cost of living crisis affects the market, yet still remain close to historical highs.

After years of prices accelerating at a faster pace than wages, the affordability gap – the difference between people's earnings and the cost of the properties available to buy – has risen significantly. [Figures from the Office for National Statistics](#) showed that, while earnings in England and Wales have doubled since 1997, house prices have increased at a much faster pace, multiplying by 4.5 times over the same period.

[A line graph showing how house price growth has outpaced earnings over the last three decades](#)

In the year to September 1997 a mid-range house in [England](#) cost 3.5 times the median full-time salary – ie the one at the midpoint when all incomes are put in ascending order of size. By 2022 that ratio had grown to 8.3 times a person's median earnings.

While the Guardian's analysis assumes a prospective buyer has a 10% deposit, saving for one is often a huge barrier for first-time buyers because of rents eating up an [increasing proportion](#) of people's wages, and because of [inflationary pressures on food and energy prices](#).

Rising rents and property prices have meant more people are forced to rent for longer, with the average age of a first-time buyer increasing over time: it

stood [at 34 in England in 2021-22](#). Given [many people](#) have started a family before this age, first-time buyers are often seeking two- or three-bedroom properties.

The analysis casts light on just how inaccessible the housing market can be in certain parts of the country, especially London. A couple earning the median local wage are stretched beyond their means if they wish to rent or buy in 63% of the capital's postal districts. A further 36% of areas are affordable for the same couple to rent – but they will use up at least 20% of their combined wages in doing so.

This leaves just 1% of districts – in pockets of Bexley, Bromley, and Greenwich – where a couple can afford to either rent or buy a mid-range property.

[Small multiple maps that show just how many places are affordable for local residents](#)

The problem is not confined to the capital. Most districts in the east, south-east and south-west of [England](#) are deemed unaffordable for local couples to buy or rent. In Bristol the figure is close to a quarter, while in some larger towns such as Oxford all are out of reach.

By contrast, 92% of Scottish postcode districts for which data is available were affordable for typical local couples to either rent or buy based on asking prices, closely followed by the north-east of England at 88%.

The analysis is based on the median value of all properties on the market to rent or buy in the 12 months to 4 June 2023. While this data provides the most accurate and up-to-date picture of asking prices in the housing market, an area's median price can be affected by the size of the properties on the market during this period.

The analysis excludes areas that have either a very low number of properties for rent or sale, which has led to the exclusion of some postal districts – marked in white on the interactive – especially in rural and remote areas.

David Hollingworth, a mortgage expert with the brokers L&C, said the analysis highlighted the housing market's huge barriers to entry: "Saving is hard enough but when trying to support a high monthly rental payment at the same time many will feel that they are running to stand still.

"First time buyers will often feel frustrated that they are paying a rent that is bigger than a potential mortgage payment but find it hard to meet the affordability requirements ... Higher interest rates will only make home ownership harder and is also likely to exert upward pressure on rents as well."

Francesca Albanese, the acting director of policy and external affairs at the charity Crisis, said: "The housing market is barely a market anymore. It's a rat race. With the constant focus on seeing house prices increase, we have ignored what this research so clearly shows – that more people are being priced out of the market altogether.

"Huge swathes of Great Britain are now completely out of reach for the average family, particularly first-time buyers. House prices and rents have shot up while wages have remained stagnant, leaving countless families having to watch their dreams of owning a home go up in smoke."

Colin Bradshaw, the chief executive of TwentyCi, said the low supply of affordable new builds for first time buyers was exacerbating the issue: "For those trying to make the leap from the rental sector to owner occupied, the persistence of high inflation leading to higher interest rates and consequently more costly mortgages amplifies the gap."

A government spokesperson said: "Supporting aspiring homeowners is a government priority. Since 2010, over 837,000 households have been helped to purchase a home through government-backed schemes including Help to Buy and Right to Buy.

"We have extended the mortgage guarantee scheme a year further to December 2023. This has already helped over 35,000 households with 5% deposits and we are progressing the levelling up and regeneration bill to speed up the planning system, cutting unnecessary delays so we can build more homes.

“We have delivered more than 2m homes since 2010, and we are committed to delivering 300,000 new homes per year. This is why we are investing £11.5bn to build the affordable, quality homes this country needs.”

Methodology

The rental and property purchase prices are [sourced](#), deduplicated and verified by TwentyCi. The map file is sourced from Edinburgh Datashare.

Sales are defined as the asking prices for properties listed as for sale, sold or subject to contract between 5 June 2022 and 4 June 2023. Rentals are defined as the asking prices for rents in the same period, including those where a let has been agreed.

Filters have been applied to exclude mobile homes, auction properties, shared ownership properties, land or site sales, retirement homes and properties used for short-let purposes, wherever possible. Data for [Northern Ireland](#) was not available.

The analysis is based on the median property cost per postcode district, excluding postcode districts where there were fewer than 20 properties for either sale or rent in the period covered by the analysis.

Proportions (eg 48% of postal districts) are based on the total number of districts which met this criteria: 2,407 postal districts in total.

Earnings are defined as the median gross annual pay of its surrounding local authority in 2022, as sourced from the [ONS](#). Where a postcode district falls into more than one local authority, the salary amounts are drawn from local authority with the highest number of postcodes within that district. In a small number of cases, a local authority's pay data was unavailable. In these cases median property prices were compared to the regional median income.

The analysis is based on a household that has two working adults that each earn this median gross annual pay of the surrounding local authority.

Affordability is defined as follows:

- Sales: a property is considered affordable if the mortgage (defined as 90% of the median property price) does not exceed 4.5 times a couple's combined salary (as described above). The analysis assumes the prospective buyers are able to raise a deposit (10% of the mortgage price).
- Rents: rentals are considered affordable if it makes up no more than 30% of a couple's median gross monthly pay (as described above).

Consideration was given to standardising the data analysis based on a set number of bedrooms. After consultation with experts the decision was taken to base the analysis on the median of all properties in an area compared with the combined income of the median household, in keeping with typical property metrics. As a result, an area's median value for rent or buying could be impacted by the mix of housing stock on the market at the time of analysis.

For example, the BD1 district had a majority of one-bedroom properties in the analysis, which may be as a result of a number of one-beds coming on the market in the time period covered and not because that was the prevalent property type in that area.

The Guardian does not store any data you enter when using the “compare your household” tool on this page.

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The average British home now costs about nine times the mid-range income. Photograph: Jill Mead/The Guardian

Housing

‘This is just ruinous’: the Britons unable to afford their homes

Millions are finding themselves priced out of renting and buying amid high inflation and mortgage rates

- [Out of reach? The tool that shows where you can afford to buy or rent in Great Britain](#)

Jedidajah Otte

Mon 12 Jun 2023 02.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 13 Jun 2023 13.18 EDT

The cost of living crisis, spiralling mortgage rates and soaring rents have exacerbated property shortages in Britain to the extent that housing is now unaffordable in vast parts of the country for the typical earner.

With the average British home now costing about [nine times the mid-range income](#) and average monthly rents in the capital and outside London [having hit record levels in the first quarter of the year](#), millions of Britons are living in areas where they can afford neither to buy a mid-priced property, nor to rent a home without spending a disproportionate part of their income, a Guardian analysis has revealed.

The leading ratings agency Moody's has predicted that [UK house prices will fall 10% over the next two years](#), owing to stubbornly high inflation and the recent spike in mortgage rates.

One of those feeling the pinch is Clara, a 42-year-old secondary school teacher and mother of two teenagers, who rents a three-bedroom house in Hemel Hempstead for £1,450 a month.

"The rent makes up 40% of mine and my partner's joint take-home income," she says, which puts it above the 30% threshold that the Affordable [Housing](#) Commission defines as affordable. "Our rent just rose again a month ago, because the landlord's mortgage payments increased.

"Rents here have always been quite high, but have gone up a lot in the area over the last 10 years. There is a very large and growing group of people here who earn too much to access any form of housing benefit, but not enough to pay rent and the bills."

In order to stay close to their children's schools, the couple have had to use credit cards and loans to keep on top of bills. "We've racked up about £13k of debt over time, just to pay our basic living costs, like petrol, food and rent," Clara says. "We both work full-time, cannot save. We felt that we had no choice."

Clara is one of dozens of people who responded when the Guardian asked readers in Britain whether they could afford their housing costs.

Tony Mono, 63, who had to give up work as a graphic designer two years ago due to health issues, moved to St Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex, from Wolverhampton in 1995.



Tony Mono, 63, is at risk of homelessness due to unaffordable housing costs in his area. Photograph: Tony Mono/Guardian Community

“Until about four years ago, it was more or less affordable to live here,” he says. “Now, I could become homeless.”

Mono, who has been renting an unfurnished one-bedroom apartment from a private landlord since 2009 for £495 a month, now faces eviction as the owner wants to sell. “I’ve been looking at flats since June last year, but it’s been virtually impossible to even get a viewing, even after I offered six months’ rent upfront,” he says.

“I’ve been told by estate agents I need to earn 30 times the monthly rent, which is ridiculous. Not many locals here will be on that kind of money, but you need £27,000 now to rent in [one of the country’s poorest coastal towns](#).”

Over the past 10 years, Mono says, there has been a steady influx of home-buyers from London, and much of the available rental property has been turned into holiday lets. The maximum rent he could pay, he says, would be £750, which would be 67% of his monthly universal credit award of £1,118.

“I’ve always been able to budget on a low income, but now my situation is unsustainable.”

While [spiralling rents make life a struggle for millions of people in Britain](#), homeowners are grappling with rising costs, too, in some cases too much to bear.

When Barbara*, 42, a single mother who works full time in marketing, bought her purpose-built two-bed leasehold flat in Chatham, Medway, in 2017, she thought she had made it. “It is a more affordable part of Kent, but it is becoming very unaffordable for me ... now I will either lose my property, or I’ll manage to sell and go back to renting.”

Barbara paid £227,000 for her home, having been told her annual service charges would cost £800. “I’ve got a relatively good income of about £2,300 a month, but I now spend about half of my take-home pay on housing costs. My service charges have gone through the roof, and my mortgage payments will go up next March. I can’t afford to pay even more.”

She wants to sell up and move to a more affordable rental locally, but worries that finding a buyer could be difficult because of the ballooning service charges. “I’d rather be spending £900 a month on rent and take my chances with a buy-to-let landlord, this is just too ruinous.”

Hannah, a 35-year-old management consultant, considers herself “incredibly lucky” to have bought a home in east London with her partner before the [disastrous mini budget of Liz Truss’s government](#) last autumn caused mortgage misery for millions.

“We bought a three-bed property for £760,000 last year – a bargain because it needs lots of work. I pay one third of our mortgage while my partner pays the rest, which reflects our earnings as individuals. My contribution is currently about a quarter of my monthly income.

“Our mortgage is affordable because we locked in a reasonable rate in August before the Truss debacle. If we had been hit by the interest hikes, we would have pulled out of the sale and stayed in our rented flat in Angel,

central London, where we paid £2,400 for a two-bed. We moved out east because we couldn't afford to buy more than a shoebox in Angel."

Rents in the couple's neighbourhood have been skyrocketing, Hannah says. "The two-bed flat next door was rented for £2,400, the landlord increased the cost to £3,200, so the tenants moved out and it's now empty."

While housing costs are particularly unaffordable in the south-east and parts of the south-west, householders further north are also struggling.



Joe Scott says his rent in Leeds has 'basically doubled' in six years. Photograph: Guardian Community

Joe Scott, 26, who works in sales for an insurance brokerage, decided to stay in Leeds after university, and is currently renting a single room in a house with seven other flatmates.

"My rent is £535 a month, just over 33% of my post-tax salary of about £1,600, including quarterly commission of up to £500," he says.

Housing has become dramatically more expensive since he moved to the city eight years ago, he says. "In the past six years, my rent has basically doubled. I don't have to miss meals, but managing is relatively tough. I

haven't been on holiday since 2018. My girlfriend lives in Oxford, I go and see her once a month."

Scott says local rates are being driven up by large numbers of students. "The university accommodation blocks are nowhere near big enough, and although many properties have been converted into HMOs, there's still huge demand for rooms. My area, Headingley, has almost no families left, they've all been kicked out to create student housing."

Scott says his experience with Leeds landlords has been "awful". "My current one has ignored my messages about repairs for weeks. I'm moving out in June, and if I want to have a similar room in the area, I know I'll have to pay £600, maybe more."

*Name has been changed

This article was amended on 13 June 2023 to remove some personal details.

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The pleasure principle: is a little bit of indulgence the secret to success?

The latest research shows delayed gratification is not always a guarantee of wellbeing – carefully planned moments of pleasure can be hugely beneficial

[David Robson](#)

Mon 12 Jun 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 12 Jun 2023 09.36 EDT

We may live in a largely secular society, but the Protestant work ethic is still alive and strong. The [“lazy” and “entitled”](#) millennials, we have been told, are workshy and self-indulgent. They spend too much and save too little – behaviour that is not only harming their future prospects, but those of the [world economy](#).

We should have the grit of our elders, apparently – who weren’t scared to suffer some hardship with the promise of a better life ahead. Except they too are coming under criticism for enjoying the life that they struggled to earn. According to the UK chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, it is time for the over-50s to put away their golf clubs and [start contributing](#) to the economy again.

The gospel of self-restraint clearly runs very deep in the cultural psyche and, until recently, psychological research had seemed to confirm that delayed gratification was indeed the secret to long-term success. Yet some recent research has come to question these ideas. While moderate levels of willpower are almost certainly beneficial, people who attempt to avoid all kinds of indulgences are neither happier, nor healthier. They are not even more successful at achieving their goals.

By embracing rather than shunning our short-term desires, and knowing when and how to indulge them, we may enjoy greater wellbeing with no cost to our productivity.

The long and the short of it

By definition, delayed gratification is the idea that putting off temporary pleasure in the moment will lead to greater contentment once we have met our longer-term targets.

The research may be best represented by the famous [“marshmallow test”](#), in which children were asked to resist eating one marshmallow immediately with the promise of enjoying two marshmallows a quarter of an hour later. Years later, those who had succeeded in the marshmallow test got better grades at school and progressed more quickly in their careers.



“Me want it but me wait”: the Cookie Monster learns an apparently valuable lesson. Photograph: Interfoto/Alamy

The finding proved to be so influential that it inspired education programmes devoted to building character; the idea even infiltrated *Sesame Street*, as the [Cookie Monster](#) learned to deal with his cravings – and taught viewers to do the same. “Me want it but me wait,” he sang in the accompanying electropop pastiche.

But does delayed gratification always lead to better wellbeing? Signs that this might not be the case were already apparent in the 1990s. Analysing the state of the evidence, Prof David Funder at the University of California, Riverside found that children who scored well on self-control also grew up to be overly reserved and lacked curiosity. He also pointed to research showing that women with very high levels of self-control tend to be at greater risk of depression, for instance. “The correlates of delay of gratification are definitely a mixed bag,” he [concluded](#).

Later research suggested that people with the highest levels of self-control may suffer from feelings of regret. They can struggle to appreciate the present moment, and when looking back over their lives, they come to resent the sacrifices they have made.

Only with perspective could they recognise how much richer their life might have been with a little less self-denial

To investigate this possibility, Prof Ran Kivetz of Columbia University and his doctoral student Anat Keinan [asked](#) university alumni to reflect on their winter breaks from 40 years previously. The researchers found that the ageing graduates were much more likely to lament having had too much self-control than too little at this key moment in their youth. Their regret over the pleasures that they had missed from being too sensible, such as turning down the chance to travel, was much greater than any guilt over their moments of indulgence – the times they had skipped their studies, spent too much and acted irresponsibly.

Interestingly, the researchers found exactly the opposite views among current undergraduates: these students were much more likely to endorse the standard view that self-control was preferable to indulgence. It was only with the perspective of a lifetime that the alumni could recognise how much richer their life might have been if they had practised a little less self-denial.

People with low self-control are often said to have a kind of psychological myopia, but Kivetz and Keinan proposed that many suffer the opposite problem – a psychological longsightedness that leaves them so deeply focused on their future goals, they cannot enjoy all the delicious distractions of the present moment.

Strategic indulgence

Besides ignoring these long-term regrets, historical psychological research might have overstated the short-term consequences of momentary indulgences. According to one prominent theory, any lapse would only encourage more slip-ups, as we find ourselves falling for further temptations.

If you are on a diet, for instance, one slice of cake may soon lead to another, until all your good intentions are in tatters. Similarly, once you start watching videos on YouTube, you may find that the whole morning has passed by without you getting any work done. For this reason, indulgences were seen as “failures” that should be avoided.

This idea also has religious origins. “This abstinence idea has its roots in Christianity,” says Prof Lile Jia at the National University of Singapore. Yet recent research shows that intermittently giving in to our desires can often be better for our wellbeing, without putting us on a slippery slope to failure. The trick, it seems, is to plan the indulgences in advance.



Is giving in to temptation a slippery slope? Conventional wisdom has it that one thing (or doughnut) leads to another... Photograph: Andriy Popov/Alamy

Consider a study of dieters, aptly titled [The Benefits of Behaving Badly on Occasion](#), conducted by Prof Rita Coelho do Vale at the Católica Lisbon School of Business and Economics in Portugal and colleagues at Tilburg University in the Netherlands. All the participants wished to lose weight and aimed to consume an average of 1,500 calories a day. For those in the control condition, there was no opportunity for variation. Those in the “behaving badly” condition, however, were asked to eat just 1,300 calories

on six days of the week; they could then enjoy a blowout of 2,700 calories on the seventh. Over the first two weeks, the researchers tracked the participants' feelings of motivation and their general mood. They then followed up again one month later to find how much progress they had made.

As you might expect of people on calorie-restricted diets, the participants in both conditions lost a few kilos. On average, their body mass index dropped from about 25, which is considered overweight, to about 24, which is just within the “normal” category. There were, however, significant differences in their experiences of the diet: the people who had planned those days of indulgence reported more positive feelings and remained more motivated throughout. The participants who simply cut their calories without the treat days, in contrast, seemed to find it much harder work to maintain their self-control and stick to the diet. That could be crucial for a dieter's long-term success.

Jia has noted similar phenomena in [his research](#) comparing the habits of students with high and low grade point averages (GPAs) at US universities. He was interested in the ways that they responded to big-time collegiate sports games – American football, basketball and baseball. These are an important part of student life in the US, but also a huge distraction from their studies. If successful self-control simply involves avoiding short-term pleasures in the pursuit of long-term goals, then you would expect the high-GPA students to have shunned the matches in the run-up to their exams.

To find out if this was the case, Jia and a colleague at Indiana University Bloomington asked 409 students to take an online questionnaire a week before a home basketball game against a long-standing rival team. They reported their general attitudes to basketball, and then gave an hour-by-hour plan for their studies on the day before the game, the day itself and the day afterwards.



Go, team! Students who structure their study around sporting events do better than those who forgo them entirely. Photograph: avid_creative/Getty Images/iStockphoto

Overall, the low- and high-GPA students hoped to devote roughly the same amount of time to studying over those three days; the big difference lay in the way they distributed those studies. The more successful students planned to take much more time off on the day of the game, but compensated for that with a few extra hours on the days either side of the match. The low-GPA students, in contrast, planned to skip the game entirely.

Crucially, a follow-up study confirmed that the more academically successful students were much more likely to have actively participated in watching the collegiate games and celebrating afterwards – and this brought significant pleasure. “They were enjoying the activities more,” says Jia. That would have then put them in a better psychological state to continue their studies the next day.

Jia’s latest research suggests that the advantages of “strategic indulgence” may come from an increased sense of autonomy – a finding that may be useful for anyone hoping to avoid procrastination at work.

Avoiding guilt

There are many ways that we could incorporate this new view of self-control by including a few strategic indulgences into our own lives. We can set up pleasant diversions in a long working day or schedule regular treats during our health kicks. If we're saving money, we may set a date each month to enjoy the odd luxury as a reward for our frugal living.

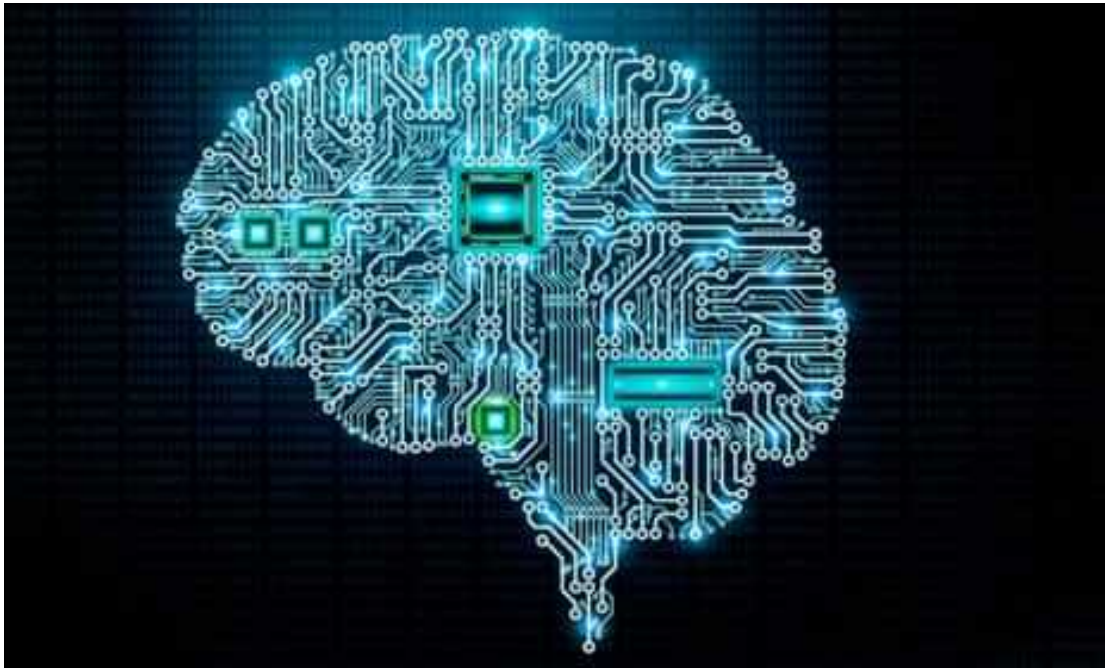
Just as importantly, this research should teach us to look a little more kindly upon those unplanned indulgences that may accidentally take us a step away from our long-term goals. You may think that guilt and self-criticism will help you to learn from your mistakes, but recent [psychological literature](#) shows that they are often counterproductive. By increasing our stress levels, and [reducing our sense of self-efficacy](#), these emotions can impair our motivation. You would do much better to treat yourself with a little self-compassion, relishing the pleasure before looking for practical means to get back on track.

As the study of university alumni showed, balance is the key – we should aim to weigh up the needs of our present or future selves to ensure that we are serving the health and happiness of each. And contrary to the self-help puritans, a little bit of hedonism is sometimes exactly what you need.

- David Robson is the author of *The Expectation Effect: How Your Mindset Can Transform Your Life* (Canongate, £10.99). To support the *Guardian* and *Observer* order your copy at guardianbookshop.com. Delivery charges may apply

2023.06.12 - Opinion

- When I lost my job, I learned to code. Now AI doom mongers are trying to scare me all over again
- The kids are back from university – and I'm counting on them to restore my sanity
- Novak Djokovic's 23rd grand slam is a record – but please don't call him the GOAT
- Dogs represented a love I could never attain – so I gave up waiting, and adopted a wonderful cat



‘There’s a concerted effort on the part of Silicon Valley to make us believe that the human mind is predictable, replicable and unsophisticated.’
Photograph: MattLphotography/Alamy

[OpinionArtificial intelligence \(AI\)](#)

When I lost my job, I learned to code. Now AI doom mongers are trying to scare me all over again

[Tristan Cross](#)

Silicon Valley wants to make us believe humans are predictable and our skills replaceable. I’ve learned that’s nonsense

Mon 12 Jun 2023 05.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 12 Jun 2023 11.04 EDT

I spent the best part of the 2010s working in new media, which – if you enjoyed being repeatedly laid off and then being inundated with jeering messages inveigling you to “learn to code” because your industry was doomed – was a great big laugh. Eventually, the fun began to wear off and

in an act of subversive defiance (or cowardly resignation), I took their goading advice, learned to code and pivoted to what I'd hoped would be a far more secure career in “web development”, only for recent advances in AI to supposedly render coding jobs [a waste of time](#), too. It seems I have accidentally timed my career change to coincide with a mass rollout of AI chatbots that have also learned to code, and that are – in many respects – already far better at it than me.

Code can appear alarming to the uninitiated: inscrutable “languages” that mostly read like a calculator having a stroke, but, according to AI's most fervent evangelists, they no longer need represent any barrier at all. Why bother wrapping your head around the needlessly convoluted nerdspeak required to display white text on a black background, when you can now simply ask a chatbot to do this in layperson's terms and it will promptly serve up your code, complete with instructions?

Playing around with various chatbots, you'll still experience the AI making a fair amount of mistakes – which a working knowledge of code helps correct – but you can also just talk these through with the AI, and it will attempt to solve them for you. It's not difficult to envisage a not too distant future where they can discern users' needs and walk them through solutions, the role of a human developer seemingly consigned to history.

It's tempting to succumb to the fatalism around AI job theft here. The technology's loudest cheerleaders are themselves the most eager to cultivate it, encouraging us to surrender to a robotic new dawn, where devoting the time to learn skills, perform tasks or know about anything may as well be considered a thing of the past. But it fundamentally confuses the ability to shortcut how to do something with developing a full understanding of why you would.

AI chatbots haven't broken some omertà around coding. They have simply digested a load of resources and open-source materials that were already made freely available online for human beings to learn from. A user could attempt to skip this phase by leveraging a chatbot's grasp of this knowledge, but in doing so, would forfeit ever grasping what decisions the machine was

making on their behalf, why it was making them, whether they were even any good and, crucially, what else was possible.



‘Playing around with various chatbots, you’ll still experience the AI making a fair amount of mistakes.’ Photograph: Jaap Arriens/NurPhoto/Shutterstock

One of the most gratifying aspects of web design and development is the lateral thinking involved. There is rarely ever an objective and singular correct way to go about achieving something. You have to consider all the different contexts a user will encounter on your site, how you want them to interact with it, what you want to elicit in them, whether what you’ve put together will make their phone immediately overheat and explode, killing them instantly, and so on. A machine trained to aggregate and condense the entire web to its most predictable forms doesn’t think like this, and neither does a user reliant on one.

I’ve been fortunate enough to carve out a practice working on projects where I have been hired not just because I possess coding knowledge the client doesn’t, nor for my creative ideas, but for the combination of the two, and how they inform one another. As well as having been professionally fruitful to learn to code, I also – regrettably, given how I was browbeaten into it – actually ... enjoy it? The rush when a harebrained idea improbably

works is like nothing else. I unironically think and say things like: “I believe in the capacity for the browser to be an absurdly creative and innovative medium”. There are projects I endeavour to make, whether someone pays me or not.

And while AI may diminish certain aspects of my earning power, but I’m not about to have such a low opinion of my craft that I think it’s essentially the same as typing a command into a chat box. Nobody should.

And yet there’s a concerted effort on the part of Silicon Valley to make us believe that the human mind is predictable, replicable and unsophisticated, and that the arts and adjacent sectors are reducible to a set of equations and keywords, because they’ve spent billions creating machines that can now knock out forgeries of creative endeavour and mildly amusing images of Harry Potter characters wearing Balenciaga.

Asked about potential use cases for AI, OpenAI (creator of [ChatGPT](#)) co-founder Greg Brockman gave a [revealing prediction](#) about what he saw as the future of entertainment. “People are still upset about the last season of Game of Thrones, but imagine if you could ask your AI to make a new ending that goes a different way, and maybe even put yourself in there as a main character.”

The ability for people to do this has already existed since time immemorial, inside of their own heads. It speaks to such a paucity of imagination on the part of AI’s exponents that they’re asking us to imagine having an imagination. Such people cannot conceive of deriving enjoyment and gratification from creating art, or why someone would prefer to craft their own stories instead of outsourcing the entire process to a machine. They lack even the basic conviction in their own ideas to come up with Game of Thrones fan fiction without asking a computer to do their homework.

The heaviest salivating around the potential of AI is coming from those who see it as an exciting costcutting measure that might allow capital to finally become unshackled from its old adversary, labour. It’s absurd nonsense to suggest that humanity’s collective recorded cultural output has been essentially concluded, bottled and corked at this specific point in

history, that it was all merely fodder and data points for training [AI models](#) which will take it from here, cheers.

Ingesting every piece of art ever into a machine which lovelessly boils them down to some approximated median result isn't artistic expression. It may be a neat parlour trick, a fun novelty, but an AI is only able to produce semi-convincing knock-offs of our creations precisely because real, actual people once had the thought, skill and will to create them.

The spectre of AI will be used as a threat and a cudgel by those who see creative pursuit as only possessing worth if it can be monetised, but they're wrong. A machine has no capacity for self-expression, no compulsion to communicate: this is who I was, this is how I felt and this is what I stood for. We do, and in all of our endeavours we need to start refusing attempts to make us forget how valuable our humanity really is.

- Tristan Cross is a Welsh writer based in London

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Back in our lives ... but can we be dragged back into civilisation?
Photograph: Nataba/Getty Images/iStockphoto

[OpinionFamily](#)

The kids are back from university – and I’m counting on them to restore my sanity

[Emma Beddington](#)



There's no getting away from it: my husband and I have really let ourselves go since the boys left

Mon 12 Jun 2023 02.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 12 Jun 2023 09.33 EDT

University exams are over, so our sons will be home soon. That means we have spent a full academic year as empty-nesters and I'm apprehensive about what they will find on their return – and not just the brown, crispy corpses of the elder's houseplants. We haven't fallen apart, split up or sunk into desperate sadness. We missed them, but they seemed happy enough, so we were happy for them. However, their absence has made us ... what? Odd? I think that's it: odd.

For a start, they haven't been back since we installed two chairs in front of the glass door to the garden, where we now spend all our free time, like Statler and Waldorf from the Muppets, commenting, usually unfavourably, on the local birds. I'm uncomfortable at the thought of our sons overhearing this stuff ("Here comes double-chin magpie"; "Starlings are real assholes"). We each have our own eccentric refinements of armchair time: I have identified a specific pigeon nemesis to rage against, while my husband has installed one of his numerous gadgets for monitoring and complaining

about household electricity consumption in his eyeline. He even calls it “my pigeon”.

Domestically, things have deteriorated dramatically. We do one load of washing a week, if that – the “not dirty enough to wash” floordrobe situation is intense – and I have largely kept my promise never to cook again. Unlike the groaning bird food shed, the human cupboards are as bare and austere as my father’s were when I would visit him in my university days – the only treat he could offer was a two-pack of shortbread fingers pilfered from some Great Western train. I’m not sure how to reconcile this with the two hours of vintage MasterChef Australia we watch every night, but I can now judge the “cuisson” on a mud crab at 20 paces and know how to use lemon myrtle or add macadamia crumb for a “crunchy element”, skills I have no intention of ever using. Basically, we need a dose of vigorous filial scorn to drag us back in the vague direction of civilisation. I hope we’re not already too far gone.

- Emma Beddington is a Guardian columnist

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'They defined me': Djokovic credits record success to rivalry with Nadal and Federer – video

[OpinionTennis](#)

Novak Djokovic's 23rd grand slam is a record – but please don't call him the GOAT

Ben Bramble

If there is any meaningful sense in which we can ask who is the greatest of all time, the answer can not simply be given by crudely adding up slams

Mon 12 Jun 2023 00.36 EDTLast modified on Mon 12 Jun 2023 05.45 EDT

Now that [Novak Djokovic](#) has won his 23rd grand slam tennis tournament (and there is little prospect of Nadal equalling him), many people are saying Djokovic is the greatest of all time. But many of these people also feel a certain reluctance in saying this. Federer seems at least as great.

But can the numbers lie? Yes!

Suppose a tennis player comes along who is 10 feet tall. Every serve is an ace. He never loses a service game. He wins 30 grand slams. Is he the GOAT (greatest of all time)? No. The idea is ridiculous.

Or suppose that in the next few years there is another world war, and the majority of young men are conscripted. But the grand slams are still played, and Dave wins 30 of them. Is Dave the greatest? Certainly not.

If there is any meaningful sense in which we can ask who is the greatest of all time, the answer can not simply be given by crudely adding up slams.

You've got to factor in other things, like who else was playing at the time, and physical advantages.

So, let's do that. Since 2019, Djokovic has won eight slams. But during this time, Federer was too old and injured to play his best, and the competition was generally pretty weak. It is not that these eight slams don't count. But they are worth less.

Consider next physical advantages. Djokovic isn't 10 feet tall but he is extremely fast and flexible. He is, as they say, "the rubber man". This is an immense physical advantage. It allows him to extend points and grind his opponents down. His abilities as a returner and defender, and indeed a strategist who runs his opponents around, are part of his greatness. But his physical advantages, at the same time, reduce the greatness of his achievements.

You might say Djokovic has a winning head-to-head record against Federer. But this is irrelevant, since they peaked at different times. Federer was in his prime from 2004 to 2009. Djokovic peaked from 2011 to 2016.

You might say the greatest of all time is determined by a hypothetical, namely who would have beaten whom at their peaks. But people's tennis games match up differently. It could be that Federer at his peak would beat Djokovic at his peak, who in turn would beat Nadal at his peak, and yet also be true that Nadal would beat Federer! Actually, it could be that Kyrgios at his peak would beat any of these players at their peaks, yet this would not make Kyrgios the greatest of all time.

I think that the greatest tennis player of all time, if we can make sense of this notion, is some function of who, at their peak, would consistently beat the other candidate greats at their peaks, on a variety of different surfaces. A huge factor here is going to be mentality. A common characteristic of "the big three" (Federer, Djokovic and Nadal) is their ability to play the important points well and to stay mentally tough. In the end, the greatest might come down just to this factor: mental toughness. It is unclear who is best in this regard.

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If I am right, and the greatest player of all time is some function of this, it is of course futile to try to work out who is the greatest. But it is still meaningful and fun to argue about it!

Also, we can still ask who is the greatest returner of all time, who is the greatest server, who is the most talented, who has the most beautiful all-round game, who has the best drop shot, and so on. These are all still very interesting, and much more manageable, questions.

If Carlos Alcaraz goes on to win 30 slams across eras when other candidate greats are playing as well, then we might be able to say, with plausibility, that Alcaraz is the greatest player of all time. But we don't have to say this about Djokovic just because he has notched up his 23rd slam.

- Ben Bramble is a philosophy lecturer at ANU and a former nationally ranked junior tennis player



‘If you are going to get a cat, why not get one that is very funny to look at?’
Elle Hunt’s Cornish rex Vlada. Photograph: Elle Hunt

[Why I quitCats](#)

**Dogs represented a love I could never
attain – so I gave up waiting, and
adopted a wonderful cat**

[Elle Hunt](#)



Sharing a home with Vlada, my Cornish rex, has taught me to live in the present rather than pining for an unattainable future

Mon 12 Jun 2023 03.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 12 Jun 2023 09.34 EDT

I have this theory. If you self-identify as a dog person, you have stereotypically cat characteristics: self-sufficient, transactional, fickle, aloof. People who prefer cats, meanwhile, are warm, friendly and open with their love. My thinking is that we gravitate to those qualities that we feel we don't possess. "I envy their insouciant air," a friend said recently, unprompted, of his love of cats. He just so happens to be the neediest man I know, with a labrador-like ability to see The One in every woman he meets.

Of course, if my pet theory is revealing about anyone, it's me. [Dogs](#) have been my first, longest and most straightforwardly enjoyable love. My first word was "woo-wah", meaning dog, as I made clear with enthusiastic gestures. About 30 years later, I still delight in pointing out every dog I see – much to the frustration of some. "Yes, yes, it's a dog!" a boyfriend once burst out, a few months before breaking up with me.

It was never going to work out: he was a cat person ([not that kind!](#)). Cats have only been of interest to me when there were no dogs around. Sometimes they're cute. Mostly, though, they're just cats: aloof and capricious, with fast-flying claws, acting all scandalised when you stop to say hello in the street.

What I have always loved about dogs is their free-flowing affection, their openness to new friends, their sincere appreciation of simple pleasures. Of course, it's a rosy view – some dogs (beagles mostly) are just bastards – but I see in them something to aspire to, not to own. When my parents finally conceded defeat to my decade-plus campaign, I was 14 years old. In some ways, Ruby the Hungarian vizsla proved to be a life coach as much as she was a companion; an ever-present reminder to go for walks, chat to strangers, assume the best in people, enjoy my life.

But since Ruby (who sadly died young), I have not been in a position to get a dog of my own. Fifteen years after moving out from my parents' house, I don't seem to be getting closer. I rent, I'm single, I travel for work and to visit family overseas – and, though I work from home now, who's to say about the next decade?



Elle Hunt with Vlada. Photograph: Elle Hunt

Over time, a dog emerged as not just a symbol of stability – pushed out of reach along with home ownership – but a prize to be earned, one day, when I was sufficiently “settled”. That is, until early this year, when, with a sudden, piercing clarity, I realised two things: first, that it would be at least 10 years before I would be able to get a dog. And then: I could get a cat. Cats’ only advantage over dogs, as I had always seen it, was that they were lower maintenance. I had at least put down enough roots that I had friends who would be happy to drop by and put some food down when I went away. And any pet was better than none.

Six weeks later, after a six-hour journey by car and train, I welcomed a very angry Vlada, a four-year-old rescue, into my flat. As a Cornish rex, Vlada is not quite hairless but has a very short, downy coat. My thinking was, if you are going to get a cat, why not get one that is very funny to look at? Plus, Cornish rexes were said to behave more like dogs. Nearly three months in, I have been quietly astonished by the impact this little cat – more a big rat, bless her – has had on my life.

A lot of it is the companionship. Vlada follows me between rooms. She head-butts me to get up when I’ve slept in, or shoves me off the laptop when I’m working late. When I have friends over, she goes from lap to lap, evenly apportioning her audience no matter how rowdy we get. Every night she sleeps next to me like a very bony Beanie Baby.

As a dog person, I could never have dreamed that a cat would have so much personality. But the biggest revelation has been the stability Vlada has brought me. Last year I was constantly travelling, not quite switched off on holiday but not quite focused on work. Now I go away less, but plan it better and enjoy it more.

I have also learned something about love. By dreaming of a dog, denying myself until some distant date, I had been investing in a future, unattainable vision of happiness over the one that’s possible now. I was perturbed to realise that I also had this tendency in relationships. It’s not that I have quit being a dog person, just as I haven’t given up on ever having a partner (though, compared to Vlada, they do both now seem shockingly slobbery). But, as someone who has been cautious about taking a leap in love, or

sought it from the wrong places, caring for Vlada reminds me that I am capable of it – and that it can come in very funny-looking packages.

Sure, a cat might not love you like a dog does, and neither is a replacement for people. But the sneering stereotypes of lonely “cat ladies” have it the wrong way around: better the love that’s present, and steady, and given, than the love that’s ambivalent, or imagined, or withheld.

- Elle Hunt is a freelance journalist

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Police commissioner Karen Webb, left, and police minister Yasmin Catley at a press conference after the bus crash in the NSW Hunter Valley on Monday afternoon. Photograph: Mike Bowers/The Guardian

[Hunter Valley bus crash](#)

Hunter Valley bus crash driver charged with 10 counts of dangerous driving occasioning death

A 58-year-old Hunter Valley man will face court in Cessnock on Tuesday after crash that left 10 dead after wedding at Wandin Estate

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[*Caitlin Cassidy*](#)

Mon 12 Jun 2023 04.05 EDTFirst published on Mon 12 Jun 2023 02.59 EDT

The driver in a horror bus crash that left 10 people dead and more than 20 injured has been charged with dangerous and negligent driving as harrowing details of the rescue come to light.

The bus, carrying 35 people to Singleton after a joyful wedding celebration at nearby Wandin Estate, crashed at a roundabout in the [Hunter Valley](#) about 11.30pm on Sunday evening.

The 58-year-old Maitland man was taken to hospital under police guard for mandatory testing and assessment and was later transferred to Cessnock police station.

He was charged with 10 counts of dangerous driving occasioning death, driving in a dangerous manner and negligent driving occasioning death. He was refused bail and will appear before Cessnock local court on Tuesday.

Two people were airlifted to Sydney following the crash, with one remaining in a critical condition. A further 23 were transported to hospitals across the region including John Hunter, Maitland and Calvary Mater in Newcastle.

Some have since been released.

The NSW police commissioner, Karen Webb, said the most complex part of the job ahead for police was accounting for the victims and passengers on the bus.

“You can imagine the scene that was confronting police when they attended and that many of those people were treated [and] some people were

transported to different locations and then re-diverted,” Webb told the media on Monday afternoon.

Wedding bus crash kills 10 in Australia's Hunter Valley region as driver arrested – video report

The driver was taken for mandatory testing to determine whether alcohol was a factor in the crash but the results had not been revealed by Monday evening. He received no serious injuries, police said.

The crime scene, at a roundabout on Wine Country Drive near Greta, was still being examined by specialist forensic police and officers on Monday evening, while police were also working to determine whether all passengers were wearing seatbelts.

Some of the wedding guests were understood to be locals.

“As you can imagine it was a fairly frantic scene,” acting assistant police commissioner Tracy Chapman said.

“A number of passengers were able to be extracted through the front windscreen of the bus and then [triaged] with [New South Wales](#) ambulance.”

The bus was righted after remaining on its side for several hours following the crash. The recovery involved a “delicate” operation where remaining bodies had to be removed.

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The NSW police minister, Yasmin Catley, said it was “unfathomable” to be fronting the media at the end of a joyful long weekend, when family and friends had come together to celebrate their loved ones.

The premier, Chris Minns, and federal member for the Hunter, Dan Repacholi, also visited the scene, where community members gathered throughout the day to lay flowers and pay respects on behalf of the tight-knit regional community.

“I can’t express deeply enough how saddened I feel for the families, for the community, for the first responders, for everybody involved,” Catley said.

“I mean, none of us want to be here during this, today ... what has occurred is unnecessary.”

Catley acknowledged the scene had been extremely confronting for first responders, confirming those involved would receive additional support following the immediate aftermath.

“There will be wrap-around services for you ... we will make sure that you get that,” she said.”

Investigations into the the crash continued throughout the day, while road closures and diversions were anticipated to continue into the evening.

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Man climbing the 123-storey Lotte World Tower in Seoul without a rope.
Photograph: Songpa Fire Station/Reuters

[South Korea](#)

Police arrest British man free-climbing South Korean skyscraper

Man identified locally as George King-Thompson, who was previously jailed after free-climbing London's Shard

[Caroline Davies](#) and agencies

Mon 12 Jun 2023 08.26 EDTFirst published on Mon 12 Jun 2023 00.37 EDT

A British man, previously jailed after free-climbing the Shard in London, has reportedly been arrested in [South Korea](#) after attempting to climb the country's tallest skyscraper without equipment, police said.

The man was scaling the 123-storey Lotte World Tower in southern Seoul early on Monday when staff spotted him, forcing him to stop his ascent as

he reached the 73rd floor.

Local media identified him as George King-Thompson, 24, from Oxford, known previously for carrying out dangerous stunts and publicising them on social media.

“Lotte staff had to go on a gondola lift to persuade him to stop when he was still climbing above the building’s 70th floor,” an official from the National Police Agency said. “He finally gave in and we arrested him at the scene for obstruction of official business. He is currently being questioned at a police station in Seoul’s Songpa district.”

The 555-metre (1,820ft) Lotte World Tower is the world’s sixth-tallest building.

He was said to be wearing just shorts, climbing shoes and carrying a small backpack.

In a pre-drafted press release before the climb, King had said he hoped to “evade Korean authorities and get on a flight out of the country, immediately after performing the stunt”, the Times reported.

The former personal trainer [made headlines when he was sentenced to six months in Pentonville prison](#) for scaling the Shard in July 2019, and was released after serving half of his sentence.

Since his release he has scaled the 36-storey Stratosphere tower in Stratford, east London, and was reportedly arrested in 2022 in Spain for base-jumping off Europe’s tallest rollercoaster.

The Seoul fire agency said more than 90 emergency, police and other personnel were dispatched to the Lotte World Tower on Monday morning after he was spotted scaling the building.

The Korean newspaper Chosun Ilbo said police had arrested him on charges of trespassing. He reportedly entered South Korea three days ago, and was said to have told police it was a long-held dream to climb the Lotte Tower.

[Alain Robert](#), widely known as the “French Spiderman”, was jailed in 2018 after climbing the same building without permission. He ascended to the 75th storey.

Agence France-Presse contributed to this report

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Participants arrive at the Generation Equality Forum organised by UN Women in Paris, France, June 2021. Photograph: Ludovic Marin/AFP/Getty Images

[Women's rights and gender equality.](#)

Nine out of 10 people are biased against women, says ‘alarming’ UN report

Researchers ‘shocked’ at lack of progress, and entrenched social norms that curtail women’s chances in politics, business and work

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[Kaamil Ahmed](#)

Mon 12 Jun 2023 05.35 EDTLast modified on Mon 12 Jun 2023 13.04 EDT

Bias against women is as entrenched as it was a decade ago and gender equality progress has gone into reverse, [according to a UN report](#).

Nine out of 10 people of all genders have a bias against women, found the [Gender](#) Social Norms Index, a figure unchanged from data collected more than a decade ago.

Published by the UN development programme on Monday, it found that half of people in 80 countries believe men make better political leaders, 40% believe men are better business executives and a quarter believe it is justified for men to beat their wives.

These figures, from data collected between 2017 and 2022, were largely unchanged from the [previous GSNI report](#), published in 2020, which used data from 2005 to 2014.

“My expectation was that we would see some progress, because nine out of every 10, I mean, how can it get any worse?” said Pedro Conceição, head of

UNDP's human development report office. "And it was also a period in which we saw, for example, the #MeToo movement and a lot of visibility to the very shocking ways in which these bias norms affect women.

"Unfortunately, doing this exercise has been an experience of shock after shock. The first time that we released it, I was shocked with the magnitude [of biases], and this time around I was shocked with the lack of progress."

The biases result in barriers for women in politics, business and work, as well as the stripping away of their rights and human rights violations, said the researchers. Despite women being more educated and skilled than ever before, there was a 39% salary gap with men, they added.

"This is truly alarming and explains why the world is completely off-track in achieving gender equality by 2030," said Anam Parvez, head of research at Oxfam GB. "In 2021, [one in five women were married before they turn 18](#), 1.7 billion women and girls [live on less than \\$5.50 a day](#), and women continue to take on three times as much unpaid care and domestic work as men around the world.

"At the current rate of progress it will take 186 years to close gaps in legal protections. It also explains why, while there has been some progress on enacting laws that advance women's rights, social norms continue to be deeply entrenched and pervasive."

Heidi Stöckl, a professor specialising in gender-based violence at Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich, said "a conscious effort and a strong commitment from all levels of society" were needed to overcome entrenched bias. But there are signs of progress, she said, with a surge in education rates in places such as Bangladesh and higher representation of women in politics and in the economy.

"We have experienced a serious backlash and rollback of women's rights, most notably [in Afghanistan](#) but also in the western world with the election of Donald Trump or in South Korea, where [an anti-feminist president](#) was elected recently," said Stöckl. "What makes me hopeful is that, in the

majority, the younger part of the population clearly resents this backlash and is striving for an equal society.”

The UN report calls for women’s economic contributions to society to be better recognised, including unpaid work, for laws and measures that ensure political participation to be enacted, and for more action to fight stereotypes.

“These views persist because of social and cultural norms that devalue women and reinforce men’s power, control and feelings of entitlement, as well as promoting beliefs that trivialise and normalise violence against women and even blame victims for their own abuse,” said Andrea Simon, director of the End Violence Against Women Coalition. “It is these attitudes that can drive violent acts and behaviours and we can only truly prevent this violence by shifting these attitudes.”

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Father of children who survived plane crash in Colombia says their mother told them to leave – video

[Colombia](#)

Colombian plane crash: mother told children to leave her so they could survive

Details of woman's final days emerge after four siblings rescued following almost six weeks in Amazon jungle

[Mat Youkee](#) in Bogotá, [Sam Jones](#) and agencies

Sun 11 Jun 2023 14.04 EDT Last modified on Mon 12 Jun 2023 12.07 EDT

The mother of the four young Colombian siblings who managed to survive for almost six weeks in the Amazon jungle clung to life for four days after their plane crashed before telling her children to leave her in the hope of improving their chances of being rescued.

Details of the woman's final days came as further information emerged about the children's astonishing feat of endurance.

The father of two of the children, Manuel Ranoque, told reporters on Sunday that his wife, Magdalena Mucutuy, had survived the crash but perished four days later.

“My daughter has told me that their mother was alive for four days,” said Ranoque.

“Before she died, she said to them: ‘Maybe you should go. You guys are going to see the kind of man your dad is, and he’s going to show you the same kind of great love that I have shown you.’”

The children – aged 13, nine, four and 11 months – were travelling with their mother from the Amazonian village of Araracuara to San José del Guaviare when their Cessna plane crashed after the pilot reported engine failure in the early hours of 1 May.

Colombia releases footage of children found alive in jungle after plane crash – video

A military sniffer dog found the siblings, who are members of the Huitoto Indigenous community, on Friday after they had spent more than a month in an area where snakes, mosquitoes and other animals abound.

The children's great-uncle, Fidencio Valencia, said the siblings had survived by eating *fariña*, or cassava flour, and by using their knowledge of the rainforest's fruits.

“When the plane crashed, they took *fariña* [from the wreckage], and with that they survived,” he told reporters outside the hospital, where they are expected to remain for a minimum of two weeks.

“After the *fariña* ran out, they began to eat seeds,” Valencia added. The children appear to owe their lives to the eldest sibling, Lesly, who kept them safe and nourished by using the knowledge of the rainforest her mother had passed on to her.

The timing of their ordeal was also in the children's favour. Astrid Cáceres, the head of the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare, said the youngsters had been able to eat fruit because “the jungle was in harvest”.

“They will tell their stories and you will hear them,” said Ranoque, after visiting the children at Bogotá's military hospital.

Valencia, who also visited the children in the Bogotá hospital where they are recuperating, said they were “shattered but in good hands and it's great they're alive”.

He added: “We were in the darkness, but now dawn has broken and I have seen the light.”

Damaris Mucutuy, an aunt of the children, told a radio station that “the children are fine” despite being dehydrated and having insect bites. She said they had also been offered mental health support.

A search team found the plane on 16 May in a thick patch of the rainforest and recovered the bodies of the three adults on board but the children were nowhere to be found.

Sensing they could be alive, Colombia’s army stepped up the hunt and flew 150 soldiers with dogs into the area, where mist and thick foliage greatly limited visibility. Dozens of Indigenous volunteers also joined the search.

Amazon plane crash: Colombian military rescue children found alive after 40 days – video

Soldiers in helicopters dropped boxes of food into the jungle, hoping that it would help sustain the children. Planes flying over the area fired flares to help search crews on the ground at night, and rescuers used speakers that blasted a message recorded by the siblings’ grandmother telling them to stay in one place.

As the search progressed, soldiers found small clues that led them to believe the children were still alive, including footprints, a baby bottle, nappies and pieces of fruit that looked as if humans had taken bites out of them.

Gen Pedro Sánchez, who was in charge of the rescue effort, said the children were found 5km (3 miles) away from the crash site in a small forest clearing. He said rescue teams had passed within 20 to 50 metres (66 to 165ft) of where the children were found on a couple of occasions but had missed them.

“The minor children were already very weak,” Sánchez said. “They were only strong enough to breathe or reach a small fruit to feed themselves or drink a drop of water in the jungle,” he said.

Some confusion remains as to why the children were not found earlier, given that search teams had passed so close to them. Their great-uncle said that fear had probably led them to hide from their rescuers.

“They were afraid out there, with the dogs barking,” said Valencia. “They hid among the trees ... they ran.”

The children may have been frightened of the uniformed search party because their father had previously been threatened by members of a dissident unit of the demobilised Colombian rebel group the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia.

According to Alicia Méndez, a journalist with El Tiempo, the children had also been scared when they heard their grandmother’s voice booming out of the loudspeakers.

“They heard the message and they were afraid, they hid in the bush so as not to be found,” [said Méndez](#). “Every time [the search team] was close, they hid. We don’t know what was going through their little heads.”

It has also emerged that a military rescue dog called Wilson played a key role in the discovery of the children. The siblings told officials that they had spent time with Wilson, a Belgian shepherd, but that the dog had later gone missing.

As well as discovering the baby’s bottle, Wilson is thought to have left tracks that led the search team to the children.

Cáceres confirmed that Lesly had said they were accompanied by “a dog who was lost, that didn’t know where to go and which accompanied us for a while”. It is believed, though not confirmed, that the dog was Wilson.

The Colombian military said the dog, who had received a year’s rescue training, could have become disoriented by the heavy rains and poor visibility and that his behaviour may have been affected by contact with wild animals such as jaguars and anaconda.

Soldiers had been close to rescuing Wilson on two occasions only for the dog to run away from them. The army’s official Twitter account confirmed that the search continues: “We are united to return our canine commando Wilson from the jungle. The operation isn’t over until we find him!”

Colombia's president, Gustavo Petro, who joyfully announced the discovery of the children on Friday, met them in hospital on Saturday.

"The jungle saved them," said Petro. "They are children of the jungle, and now they are also children of Colombia."

The Colombian singer Shakira also celebrated the children's rescue, [tweeting](#): "The suffering of Lesly, Soleiny, Tien and Cristin and the miracle of their lives have shaken us all and have given us the greatest example of unity and resilience."

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Vladimir Putin meets Kim Jong-un in 2019. North Korea has backed Russia in its war against Ukraine Photograph: KCNA/EPA

[North Korea](#)

Kim Jong-un ‘holds hands’ with Vladimir Putin as Russia-North Korea ties deepen

In a message to mark Russia’s national day, Kim pledged his regime’s ‘full support’ to Moscow

[Justin McCurry](#) in Tokyo

Sun 11 Jun 2023 23.33 EDT Last modified on Mon 12 Jun 2023 12.07 EDT

Kim Jong-un has vowed to “hold hands” with Vladimir Putin in a message that marked another sign of deepening ties between North Korea and [Russia](#).

In a message to Putin to mark Russia's national day on Monday, the North Korean ruler pledged his regime's "full support" for Moscow's invasion of [Ukraine](#), the official KCNA news agency said.

"Justice is sure to win, and the Russian people will continue to add glory to the history of victory," Kim said in an [English translation](#) of the message.

Pyongyang has been accused of [providing weapons to Russia](#), while it continues to develop its own arsenal of ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons despite years of sanctions imposed by the UN security council, of which Russia is a permanent member.

Russia appears to have turned to [North Korea](#) and other "rogue" nations in a desperate attempt to skirt sanctions and export controls to secure the weapons it needs to continue its 16-month war against Ukraine.

Kim, [who met Putin for the first time in 2019](#), called for "closer strategic cooperation" between Pyongyang and Moscow, adding that he would "firmly hold hands" with the Russian leader in their common aim to build "a powerful country", KCNA said.

[North Korea](#) has triggered international concern with its conspicuous attempts to move closer to the Kremlin, blaming the US and its allies for the war in Ukraine.

In March, the US said Moscow was sending a delegation to North Korea to offer food – amid reports of [food shortages](#) – in exchange for weapons, in violation of security council sanctions.

"As part of this proposed deal, [Russia](#) would receive over two dozen kinds of weapons and munitions from Pyongyang," White House national security council spokesperson John Kirby said at the time.

Putin has responded to Kim's overtures by in turn calling for closer ties. In an exchange of letters last August to mark liberation day – when the Koreans were liberated from Japanese colonial rule in 1945 – Putin said Russia and

North Korea would “continue to expand the comprehensive and constructive bilateral relations” to strengthen the security and stability of the Korean peninsula and north-east Asia.

In July 2022, North Korea recognised two Russian-backed breakaway “people’s republics” in eastern Ukraine as independent states, with officials raising the prospect of [North Korean workers](#) being sent to there to help in construction and other sectors. Only North Korea and Syria recognise the Russian annexations.

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Households face a £2,900 rise in the average remortgaging next year.
Photograph: Andy Rain/EPA

[Mortgages](#)

UK homeowners face huge rise in payments when fixed-rate mortgages expire

More than 2.4m deals are ending in 2024, raising fears of financial timebomb

- [What are the best options if you are looking for a mortgage?](#)

[Richard Partington](#) *Economics correspondent*

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Sat 17 Jun 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Sat 17 Jun 2023 19.59 EDT

More than a quarter of UK homeowners on a fixed-rate mortgage are heading for sharp increase in monthly payments before the next election, in a financial timebomb that will rock the [Conservatives](#) just as voters prepare to choose the next government.

With the [Bank of England](#) expected to increase its key interest rate next week for the 13th time, figures shared with the Guardian by UK Finance, the banking industry trade body, show more than 2.4m fixed-rate homeowner deals will expire between now and the end of 2024.

The prospect of millions of households facing a dramatic rise in borrowing costs comes after a week of renewed turbulence in financial markets as City traders bet the Bank rate would reach close to 6% before Christmas.

In convulsions last seen during the chaos of the ill-fated Liz Truss premiership, Britain's biggest lenders, including Nationwide, NatWest and HSBC, have scrambled to pull hundreds of cheaper deals in recent days, and raised the cost of new home loans to the [highest level since the 2008 financial crisis](#).

"The moron premium is back," said David Blanchflower, a former member of the Bank's rate-setting monetary policy committee. "It seems to me the government and the Bank are in very deep trouble. The reason is because inflation is higher in the UK, and the markets don't believe they are getting it down. They're completely and utterly lost."

"Obviously homeowners are going to get completely whacked. This is going to kill the mortgage market off, hit homeowners like crazy, and they'll blame the government."

Sounding the alarm over the worsening mortgage crunch, economists at the Resolution Foundation thinktank warned total annual home loan payments were on course to rise by £15.8bn by 2026 – delivering a £2,900 blow for the average household remortgaging next year.

Up to 60% of this mortgage timebomb was yet to hit consumers because millions of households were still on fixed-rate deals struck before the Bank

of England started raising interest rates from a record low of 0.1% in December 2021.

Almost all of the financial blow will land before the next election, which must be held by 28 January 2025, with households expected to face as much as £15bn in additional payments in time for Christmas next year.

“This will deliver a rolling living standards hit to millions of households in the run-in to the next general election,” the thinktank said, warning that the average two-year fixed mortgage was now expected to hit 6.25% later this year, and would fall back to only about 4.5% in 2027.

[A graphic showing cumulative number of UK fixed-rate mortgage deals coming to an end over time](#)

According to the figures from UK Finance, about 800,000 fixed mortgages will expire before the end of this year, with a further 1.6m coming to an end in 2024. The figures do not include variable rate and tracker mortgages, which will already have risen sharply, or buy-to-let mortgages.

In total, up to 4.4 million homeowners are expected to exit fixed deals between the start of the Bank’s rate-hiking cycle and the end of 2024.

Less than a third of UK households own their home with a mortgage, with the majority buying a fixed-rate deal. However, renters are also being squeezed, as landlords pass on higher costs by pushing up rents at some of the fastest rates on record.

With the government under growing pressure over the cost of living crisis, politicians called for urgent action to support the poorest households dealing with the surge in borrowing costs.

Ed Davey, the leader of the Liberal Democrats, has called for a £3bn emergency mortgage protection fund to support those at risk of losing their homes because they cannot keep up with payments.

“If we don’t give that sort of help to those people, you’d see a spiral down and it will hit the whole economy,” he told the BBC. “My worry is that

we're going to see lots of other families losing their homes, and we could be in a spiral of repossessions.”

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Industry figures show mortgage repossessions soared by 50% in the first quarter compared with the final three months of 2022, though they remain substantially lower than in previous years.

This week Jeremy Hunt, the chancellor, insisted the Bank of England [must see through its policy of raising interest rates to bring down inflation](#), despite the pressure on households. The Treasury is understood to be wary that any intervention could undermine Threadneedle Street's efforts to tackle inflation.

[A graphic showing agreed mortgage loans by month](#)

Labour is, however, seeking to capitalise by directly linking the turmoil in mortgage markets to the government's handling of the economy. “Every day now, the Tory mortgage penalty is hitting more and more households across Britain,” said Rachel Reeves, the shadow chancellor.

“Our country has huge potential. We could be focused on building jobs and industries of the future – but instead, the Tories crashed our economy and

left working people paying the price and our economy badly weakened.”

Observers warned the weight of pressure on the government to act could become too difficult to ignore as the Conservatives, trailing in the polls, prepare to enter a tough election battle.

“If we were a bit further away from the election cycle, it’d be easier for the government to stay the course and let monetary policy do its work. Which is what the Treasury wants,” said Alfie Stirling, the chief economist at the Joseph Rowntree Foundation poverty charity.

“But I think No 10 will look at what’s shaping up to become a tough election, and I think it’ll be increasingly difficult for the government not to do something.”

A UK Finance spokesperson said: “Around 800,000 mortgage customers are scheduled to come off their fixed-rate deals later this year, and will likely face higher monthly payments.

“If you’re struggling with your finances, you should speak to your lender as early as possible – don’t put it off. Lenders have a range of tailored options available and will work with you to find the best one for your individual circumstances.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2023/jun/17/uk-homeowners-face-huge-rise-in-payments-when-fixed-rate-mortgages-expire>



Borrowers have been warned to brace for further pain, with the Bank of England expected to raise rates for the 13th successive time next week.
Photograph: Yui Mok/PA

[Mortgage rates](#)

[Explainer](#)

What are the best options if you are looking for a mortgage?

With interest rates predicted to rise again and cost of fixed-rate deals on the up, here's what you need to know

- [UK homeowners face huge rise in payments when fixed-rate mortgages expire](#)

[Rupert Jones](#)

Sat 17 Jun 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Sat 17 Jun 2023 20.00 EDT

As if things were not tough enough already, those looking for a new mortgage deal are now being squeezed on all sides.

Some experts are predicting the Bank of England will raise interest rates five more times, on top of the 12 since December 2021 that have taken [the central bank's key base rate to 4.5%](#) – the highest since 2008.

At the same time, the cost of new fixed-rate mortgages – popular with those keen to protect themselves from rising interest rates – is rising. This week, the former [Bank of England](#) governor Mark Carney predicted interest rates would remain high “for the foreseeable future”.

Here, we consider some of the options for those seeking a mortgage.

So what's the latest on interest rates and mortgage costs?

UK banks and building societies have been pushing up the cost of their fixed-rate mortgage deals after data published last month revealed [higher than expected annual inflation of 8.7%](#), leading markets to bet that the Bank of England would raise interest rates above 5% by the end of the year.

However, the money markets are now predicting interest rates could be near 5.75% by the end of December, and Laith Khalaf at the investment platform AJ Bell said “a few hawkish comments from the Bank of England, or some more ugly inflation data, could easily tip those expectations up to 6%”.

With the base rate currently at 4.5%, Khalaf said the markets were now firmly pricing in an interest rate rise next week, and then four further hikes. That is bad news for the roughly 2.2 million people on a variable-rate mortgage. About half of those are either on a base-rate tracker or discounted-rate deal. The other half pay their lender's standard variable rate (SVR).

Meanwhile, the average rate on a new two-year fixed-rate deal was 5.98% on Friday, according to [Moneyfacts](#). The typical rate on a new five-year fix

is 5.62%.

The typical new two-year fixed rate has been on a rollercoaster ride: in May last year it was just over 3%, and then 4.74% on 23 September, the day of the mini-budget, but in the weeks that followed it soared above 6% before falling. But last month's inflation data has propelled the average rate up again.

Based on a £200,000 mortgage, someone taking out a typical two-year fix right now will pay close to £4,000 a year more than someone who signed up for an average two-year fix in May last year.

My fixed-rate mortgage is due to end soon and I'll need to remortgage – what do I do?



Fixed-rate deals remain a good option for those looking for stability.
Photograph: Ian Nolan/Getty/Image Source

Official data indicates about 1.3 million people have a fixed-rate mortgage deal that will expire between the start of next month and the end of June 2024.

If your deal is not ending for another year or so, your options are more limited, but for many others there are things you can do now.

Remortgage offers are typically valid for up to six months, so if your deal is ending in, say, five months, you can reserve a deal now and wait to see how things pan out. If the cost of new deals has come down, you are not committed to that mortgage offer. But if they have risen, you have at least locked in at a lower rate, even though it may not feel like a great result.

If your deal is ending shortly, perhaps in the next few weeks, these are tough times. You are probably looking at a big hike in payments. Deals are coming and going at breakneck speed, and the advice you may get today could be different next week.

Nicholas Mendes, a mortgage technical manager at the broker John Charcol, said: “For people looking for stability, fixed rates are still the best option.”

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What other advice is there?



Those with spare savings cash could consider using some of it to reduce what they owe. Photograph: Michael Heath/Alamy

Talk to your broker or lender well ahead of time to see what advice they can offer. Some people will be able to extend the length of their mortgage term, which will reduce the monthly payments. Doing this means it will take them longer to pay off the loan, so they will pay more interest. However, some will see this as a price worth paying.

Meanwhile, in some cases the lender may agree to move part of someone's mortgage over to interest-only, so they clear just the interest that accrues on that part, thereby cutting monthly repayments.

Those fortunate enough to have some spare savings cash may want to consider using some of it to reduce what they owe. However, there are sometimes restrictions on overpaying. Others who are able to may want to put as much into savings as possible now, so they are ready for the higher bills that are probably inevitable.

If you are really concerned, you can ask your mortgage lender for a payment holiday. They may say no, but if they do offer you a break, it would typically be for about six to 12 months. But you should probably treat that as a last resort.

I'm on a base-rate tracker deal – what do I do?

A tracker directly follows the base rate, so your payments will – if the predictions are correct – almost certainly be going up over the coming months.

Much of the above advice will apply to these people, too. If you are concerned, speak to your lender to see what help they can offer, and maybe consult a broker.

You could look at moving to a fixed-rate deal. That may not be a tempting proposition but at least you will know that your monthly payments are fixed and will not go up for the period of the deal, which makes it easier to budget.

I'm on my lender's standard variable rate. Should I get off it?

The short answer for most people sitting on their lender's SVR is yes. Borrowers typically go on to the SVR when a deal ends.

SVRs can change at the lender's discretion but most people will probably experience an increase in their monthly costs after the next interest rate rise.

The average SVR is 7.52%, according to Moneyfacts, and some lenders charge a fair bit more: Virgin Money's SVR is 8.74% from 1 July. So, even with everything that has been happening, some people could save several hundred pounds a month by switching to a fixed-rate deal.

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Australia players sing the national anthem to a backdrop of fire.
Photograph: Ryan Pierse/Getty Images

[Ashes 2023](#)

Ashes diary: story of summer begins in baking, boozy Brum

Signed anthems, few maidens, plenty of fire and lots of beer on the menu as series gets under way in bright sunshine



[Simon Burnton](#) at Edgbaston

[@Simon_Burnton](#)

Fri 16 Jun 2023 16.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 16 Jun 2023 17.15 EDT

Sign of the times

Laura Wright, last seen by England fans faultlessly executing the nation's first major public rendition of God Save the King at last year's Test against South Africa at the Oval, was back on anthem duties, only this time she was not only singing them but signing them, with backing signals from the Knotty Ash Signing Choir and the Liverpool Signing Choir. For the first time the entire build-up to an England Test was signed, with the toss and captains' interviews accompanied on the big screens (this is being seen as a pilot and will be repeated on the first day of the women's Test at Trent Bridge, while two members of the England team who brought home the Deaf Ashes last year have pre-recorded toss results to use across the summer). The interpretation of the loud cheer that followed England winning the toss and choosing to bat thus became the day's first, but certainly not the last, double fist-pump.

Urn your keep

The players enjoyed quite the entry – fireworks, walls of fire, the whole works – as they emerged for the anthems. Just before their arrival Sir Alastair Cook deposited the Ashes urn atop a plinth for the players to file past, a plinth adorned with the four words “we are England cricket”. This is the ECB’s catchphrase, trademarked in 2016 for applications including deodorants, baby food, shoe horns, commemorative goods made of cane, cork, reed, horn, bone, ivory or shell, for “leather picture frames incorporating a clock face” and, importantly, display stands such as the plinth upon which the urn had been placed. The ECB literally is England cricket, so the catchphrase might not be particularly imaginative but it does tend to apply to most situations they need a catchphrase for. But the Ashes have not been won by the English since 2015, and all too infrequently have a close association with England cricket. As any cricketing historian would tell you, if it were possible to ask the urn’s contents they wouldn’t so much say “we are England cricket” as “we are in affectionate remembrance of England cricket, which died at the Oval on 29 August 1882”.

Join the dots

It is a cricketing cliché that maidens bring wickets, and it seems that the rarer maidens are the more potent their power becomes: it took Australia 37 overs to bowl one with Josh Hazlewood, at 2.25pm, lodging the first of the day, match and series. At the time Harry Brook and Joe Root both looked well set, on 32 and 36 respectively, and the score was 174 for three. Ten minutes later it was 176 for five: there was a wicket in each of the next two overs, with Brook succumbing in freakish fashion to the post-maiden curse at 2.27pm and Ben Stokes following eight minutes later.

Drink in the atmosphere

The Ashes started under a beautiful, blue Birmingham sky and cricket can be thirsty work, so nobody can criticise the players for staying hydrated. Still, the Australian wicketkeeper Alex Carey might have broken some kind of record by beckoning a drink-bearing colleague onto the field after just six deliveries. Still, in a way he was just getting into the spirit – by then many of those in attendance were not just getting into the spirit but the beer,

wine and occasional bucket of Pimm's as well. Australia's bowling line-up of (in order of appearance) Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood, Scott Boland, Nathan Lyon and Cameron Green offer a great variety of deliveries, but it is nothing compared with the different ways of dispensing alcohol offered around Edgbaston.

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In one part of the ground there is, within a matter of metres, various standard staffed bars, a self-service ebar (where your pint is pumped out by a machine) and a click and collect bar, as well as both a self-service bar and a pour your own bar, which are not the same thing. By midday queues snaked so far from some of these outlets that behind the Hollies Stand (inevitably) there was a queue just to join a queue. Behind the Press Box Stand, so called presumably because it is almost exactly as far as you can get from the press box, there is a craft beer bar and, a few paces away, a craft beer and gin bar, which together look the first two shots in an alcoholic arms race. If you wanted really fast service, though, there was one low-demand bar. As it happens, it was also the low alcohol bar.

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Make sure the perfect holiday is on the cards by planning your spending well in advance. Photograph: Erik Isakson/Getty Images/Tetra images RF

[Saving money](#)

Holiday spending: what to sort out now to keep costs down

Accessing money abroad can rack up a number of unexpected bills, so plan now to save later

- [Roaming charges: how to avoid the dreaded phone bills](#)
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[Miles Brignall](#) and [Rupert Jones](#)

Sat 17 Jun 2023 03.00 EDTLast modified on Sat 17 Jun 2023 20.07 EDT

Millions of people are counting down the days until they head off abroad this summer. But when you are doing pre-holiday admin, don't forget about

the things that will help keep costs down, and make for a smoother trip.

Pick the wrong plastic, for example, and you will end up spending more than you need to.

So if your holiday is still a few weeks away, now is the time to consider applying for a fee-free payment card or account.

Also check what the deal is regarding how much you will have to pay for mobile phone data, calls and texts, as there may be steps you can take to cut those costs.

Meanwhile, you may want to invest in a bag specifically designed to fit in the overhead locker on a plane. [We have rounded up some of the best.](#)

Pack the right card

British consumers who use their debit cards to pay for everything contactlessly have been warned that they need to either ditch the habit while abroad or switch to a fee-free payment card. If they don't, they could easily rack up £50-plus in bank charges.

For years, Guardian Money has been warning about the perils of using the wrong credit and debit cards while abroad; however, the boom in contactless, and the fact that millions of us now pay this way without thinking twice, means it has never been more pertinent.

“Customers could make considerable savings just by packing the right card,” says the website TotallyMoney, which commissioned research on the best and worst cards for spending abroad this summer.

For example, how many TSB debit card users are aware they will pay a £1 charge plus 2.99% of the price paid every time they use their debit card outside Europe? Make a £50 purchase and £52.49 will be deducted from your bank balance (it is £51.49 within Europe).

That's because TSB is one of the banks that applies a foreign currency purchase fee (in TSB's case, £1) on each transaction outside Europe, in addition to the conversion fee when you buy something in anything other than sterling, so if you make lots of small purchases you could face a hefty bill.



With more people making contactless payments, using the right credit or debit card abroad is important. Photograph: ljubaphoto/Getty Images

TSB also has two separate charges for using cash machines abroad – a 2.99% fee and a 1.5% fee, with a £2 minimum on the latter – although the second of those fees doesn't apply in Europe.

TSB points out that it also offers the Spend & Save Plus account, with no fees on debit card transactions worldwide. There is a £3-a-month charge but as long you make 20 transactions a month, there is £5-a-month cashback.

While TSB was at or near the bottom in TotallyMoney's tables, it is by no means alone. If you hold a debit card linked to a basic, non-fee-paying account with any of the big names on the high street, you will typically pay a 2.75% to 2.99% overseas usage fee, adding £2.75 to £2.99 to every £100 purchase, and often higher fees to take cash from ATMs.

Stopping on the way to the beach to buy a drink and a bite to eat for £5 could end up costing you an extra £1.15 in fees

TotallyMoney's Alastair Douglas

Use a basic HSBC debit card to make a £250 foreign cash withdrawal, and you will pay £11.88 (there's a currency conversion fee of 2.75%, plus cash fee of 2% where the minimum is £1.75 and the maximum £5), according to TotallyMoney, which commissioned MoneyComms to crunch the numbers.

However, with a bit of forward planning and a decent credit rating, it is possible to slash these charges to zero, or virtually zero. Alastair Douglas, who runs TotallyMoney, says consumers may need to readjust their spending habits while abroad.

“Stopping on the way to the beach to buy a drink and a bite to eat for £5 could end up costing you an extra £1.15 in fees. While it might not seem much at first, lots of these small transactions can quickly add up,” he adds.

If you plan to take your existing plastic, at least check the overseas charges that apply before you set off, so you know what the deal is and can adapt your behaviour if necessary.

Switch your bank account?

If you are fed up with your bank and looking for an excuse to switch, fee-free foreign spending could be the spur, particularly if you are abroad a lot.

Current accounts from Chase, Starling, Nationwide (FlexPlus) and HSBC (Global Money) all offer fee-free purchases and free ATM withdrawals abroad.

For example, Chase – the US bank JP Morgan's UK banking brand – says: “We don't charge fees when you use your card abroad, and we'll apply the current Mastercard exchange rate to any purchases you make in the local currency.”

Chase offers the added bonus of 1% cashback on debit card spending at home and abroad for the first year.



Chase says: ‘We don’t charge fees when you use your card abroad.’
Photograph: Chase/Reuters

Nationwide’s FlexPlus account costs £13 a month but, in addition to no fees for using your debit card abroad, you get various other benefits, including worldwide travel insurance and European breakdown cover.

HSBC’s Global Money account is available to its current account customers. You can apply “in minutes” via the HSBC app.

Try a fee-free credit card

If switching bank accounts is a step too far, the simpler option is to apply for a credit card that lets you spend or withdraw cash abroad with no fees.

Two really stand out. The first is the Halifax Clarity card. The application is all online and you should get your card within seven working days. New customers are also being offered £20 cashback.

The only slight downside is that users pay interest on ATM withdrawals, with £100 working out at about £2.30 interest over 30 days, according to the research.

The other is Barclaycard Rewards, which is completely fee-free for purchases and ATM withdrawals, provided users pay their statement in full by the due date. There is also 0.25% cashback on spending.

The currency con

When using your card, Douglas warns that you should watch out for dynamic currency conversion at shops, restaurants and, increasingly, ATMs. When the payment terminal arrives, users can choose to pay in pounds or the local currency. DCC can add as much as 14% to the bill. The advice is to pay or withdraw in the local currency.

Prepaid cards – watch out

These can sometimes be useful for people on a tight budget or who do not want to carry lots of cash. They let you load money on in pounds and spend in another currency.

In some cases, these fees can put a dent in, or ultimately even wipe out, your balance

The consumer body Which? says those designed for spending abroad are usually cheaper than spending on your everyday debit or credit card. But it adds that “almost all prepaid cards currently on the market come with a variety of fees and charges”.

In some cases, these fees can put a dent in, or ultimately even wipe out, your balance.

We would recommend you closely examine the T&Cs before you sign up to make sure the card works for you.

Other options

The Currensea card is a relatively recent entrant that offers an alternative by linking up to your existing bank account – allowing people to spend directly from their current account when abroad, with “no hidden fees”.

TotallyMoney says this means people won’t need to worry about preloading it with currency before they set off, “and the FX fees are a fraction of those charged by most UK debit and credit cards”.

There are three price plans, including one called Essential with no annual fee.

A good deal on currency

If you are one of those people who likes to arrive with a bundle of local cash, the [Travel Money Max](#) site – run by Martin Lewis’s MoneySavingExpert.com – will tell you the absolute best deals.

Simply type in which currency you want, how much, when you want it and whether you want home delivery or collection from a bureau, and the site will give you various options and show you what you would get after all charges.



Rolled-up euro banknotes. Photograph: malerapaso/Getty Images

When we looked this week, some of the supermarkets and retailers – such as John Lewis, Marks & Spencer, Sainsbury’s, Tesco and Asda – were looking pretty competitive.

What you should really avoid doing is buying currency at the airport.

“Don’t change cash at the airport – rates are hideous,” MoneySavingExpert says.

Choose ATMs carefully

Last, don’t forget to shop around while using foreign ATMs. While we have got used to them being free to use in the UK, in many other countries, particularly outside Europe, they charge – and at wildly different rates.

A Google search will often show the cheapest or free options.



Check the options for your phone deal before going on holiday. Photograph: TongRo Images/Alamy

[Mobile phones](#)

Roaming charges: how to avoid the dreaded phone bills

Some UK users may find their network is imposing charges for using a mobile elsewhere in Europe

- [Holiday spending: what to sort out now to keep costs down](#)
- [Holiday car hire: prices fall but you can still drive better bargain](#)
- [The best luggage for travelling light with no airline fees](#)



[Miles Brignall](#)

Sat 17 Jun 2023 03.00 EDTLast modified on Sat 17 Jun 2023 20.09 EDT

You've bought the flights, found the sun cream and worked out which credit card to use. Just don't forget to check whether you are one of the unlucky ones who will be hit with mobile roaming charges.

Despite promising not to reintroduce roaming charges in the run-up to [Brexit](#), some, but not all, of the UK networks are imposing some hefty charges for using a UK mobile elsewhere in Europe. However, with a bit of planning, it is possible to avoid them altogether.

EE, Vodafone, Three, Sky and Talkmobile are among those that have reintroduced [them](#).

EE, the [UK's second-biggest provider](#), is charging contract customers £2.29 a day, or £15 a month, to use existing data and calls plans as if they were at home. It is £2.50 a day for pay-as-you-go (PAYG) customers or £10 for seven days, plus the standard charges they pay at home.

Three and Sky charge a flat £2 a day, adding £28 to a two-week trip.

UK [Vodafone](#) contract customers travelling elsewhere in Europe pay £2.25 a day, £10 for eight days or £15 for 15, depending on what they sign up to. Its PAYG customers pay £7 for eight days, plus the standard charges.

If you are locked into a deal, check the website before you go to see what you will pay and what options are open to you. Or, if you can, consider taking your business elsewhere.

O2, [Virgin Media](#), Giffgaff and a host of other small providers are all to be praised after they (so far) resisted the temptation to impose European roaming fees. The popular Tesco Mobile announced it was bringing back European roaming charges, but not for 2023, meaning its customers are OK for this year at least.



Have you checked whether you will be hit by roaming charges on holiday?
Photograph: imageBROKER/Alamy

In 2017, mobile networks in EU countries were [banned from charging customers extra to use their phones](#) in other member countries, with the right to make calls, send texts and, most importantly, use data allowances anywhere in Europe – as if at home – one of the most popular pieces of European legislation in the UK.

However, the [Brexit](#) deal did not include continued protection against roaming charges, and we are in a position where a family going away together this summer may find that two members enjoy free calls and data while away but the other two are paying perhaps £2.29 a day.

It is worth noting that post-Brexit changes only apply to roaming in [Europe](#). British mobile holders heading to non-EU countries have always faced the charges, and continue to do so.

The costs can really rack up. For example, Sky Mobile customers heading to the Maldives or Seychelles could be forking out a whopping £8.64 every minute for calls to local or UK mobiles – which is £130 for a 15-minute phone call.

The [Uswitch mobiles](#) expert Catherine Hiley says roaming bills can really add up.

“Anyone travelling abroad from the UK should be wary of potential shock costs, even if they think roaming is included in their tariff. There used to be a £45 worldwide data roaming cap, which meant your data usage was automatically capped at this amount to prevent shock bills. However, this is no longer in UK law.”



Phone costs can rack up. Photograph: Apeloga AB/Alamy

So, what can you do to avoid the dreaded bills? If you are free to switch provider, move to a firm that doesn't impose them.

Giffgaff is offering customers [25GB of 5G data for £10 a month](#), including unlimited UK calls and texts, and inclusive EU roaming up to 5GB of data a month, which should be enough for most. These are 18-month sim-only contracts.

Tesco Mobile is offering [12GB of data and unlimited minutes and texts for £11 a month](#) on a shorter 12-month contract, with inclusive EU roaming for all of 2023.

If that is too much hassle or you are venturing farther afield, there is nothing to stop you buying a local sim card and putting that in your phone, as long as your handset is not locked.

Another increasingly popular option is to use an e-sim. [Airalto](#) has e-sims for more than 200 countries, all via its app. It can reportedly be a bit fiddly to set up but the savings are worth it.

It will sell a traveller to Turkey 5GB of data for about £9.50, which lasts for up to 30 days. As a comparison, Vodafone typically charges its UK customers £6.85 a day to use their phones as if at home in non-EU countries.

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Cabin Max Anode 30L luggage. Photograph: CabinMax.com

[Consumer affairs](#)

Cut down to size: the best luggage for travelling light with no airline fees

The lowdown on bags and cases to fit into overhead lockers or under seats on planes

- [Holiday spending: what to sort out now to keep costs down](#)
- [Roaming charges: how to avoid the dreaded phone bills](#)
- [Holiday car hire: prices fall but you can still drive better bargain](#)



[Jess Clark](#)

Sat 17 Jun 2023 03.00 EDTLast modified on Sat 17 Jun 2023 20.13 EDT

If you are flying and aim to travel (relatively) light, buying a bag or suitcase designed as carry-on luggage, which can be put into overhead lockers, is a bit of a no-brainer.

Aerolite sells a whole range and its website lets you shop by airline and maximum cabin-size allowance. For example, it sells a £49.99 expandable case (55 x 40 x 20cm), suitable for Ryanair priority boarding and Tui flights.

Ryanair priority customers can bring on a small bag up to 40 x 20 x 25cm and a carry-on suitcase up to 55 x 40 x 20cm.

The Aerolite case can also be expanded to 55 x 40 x 23cm, bringing it up to the maximum size for more carriers.

Cabin Max allows you to shop by airline to select the biggest bag you can take. Its Anode 30L (£46.95) is 45 x 36 x 20cm, the exact spec to take free on easyJet flights.

Its Metz 20L Hybrid (£39.95) can be taken free on Ryanair flights, and is also compatible with other big airlines. Its hybrid design means it can be used as a trolley bag or backpack and weighs 1.3kg and measures 40 x 20 x 25cm.

Eastpak's Travelpack (£95) can be carried as a holdall or a backpack and has a built-in laptop sleeve. It is cabin size for many airlines at 51 x 33 x 23cm.

EasyJet allows customers to select seats that come with a free large cabin bag, or to pay separately for the extra case. The Travelpack would qualify.



IT Luggage's Bewitching underseat bag. Photograph: IT luggage

Priority customers with airlines such as Wizz Air could also bring the bag on board but it does not fit the free luggage requirement for non-priority passengers.

The Atlanta cabin case is £99 at John Lewis, and at 54.5 x 37 x 19.5cm, it would be fine for Jet2, British Airways and Virgin Atlantic, among others, and priority bookings on Wizz Air and Ryanair.

Antler's Brixham cabin case, at £170, is its lightest option, weighing 1.9kg. At 55 x 35 x 20cm, it can be taken on Jet2, BA, Tui and Virgin Atlantic flights. It is also fine for Ryanair, Wizz Air and easyJet priority travellers.

The Lykke cabin bag from IT Luggage (£50) is 55 x 35.5 x 22cm, with an extra 5cm expansion space. It weighs 2.31kg and is suitable hand luggage on Jet2, Virgin Atlantic and BA flights. Passengers who pay extra on easyJet and Wizz Air could also bring it on board.

IT Luggage also does a smaller range suitable for taking on some other airlines for free. Its Bewitching underseat bag – £45 – is 45 x 33 x 20cm, free on easyJet.

DK Luggage's hard shell case £36 is 55 x 38 x 20cm. This meets the size restrictions for Jet2, BA, Virgin Atlantic and Tui. Ryanair and Wizz Air priority customers could use it as hand luggage, or for those who pay for a larger bag allowance with easyJet.

Before you buy a bag, double-check whether the maximum measurements include wheels and handles or not, as you could be caught out by this.

Airlines also have maximum weight specifications, so weigh your bags before heading to the airport to avoid being hit with extra charges.

Prices correct at time of writing.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2023/jun/17/cut-down-to-size-the-best-luggage-for-travelling-light-with-no-airline-charges>



Car hire prices are coming down but are typically way above what travellers were paying pre-pandemic. Photograph: Adriana Stampfl/Alamy

[Motoring](#)

Holiday car hire: prices are falling but you can still drive a better bargain

What to do if you have yet to book a vehicle for your summer getaway

- [Holiday spending: what to sort out now to keep costs down](#)
- [Roaming charges: how to avoid the dreaded phone bills](#)
- [The best luggage for travelling light with no airline fees](#)



[Miles Brignall](#)

Sat 17 Jun 2023 03.00 EDTLast modified on Sat 17 Jun 2023 20.11 EDT

If you are yet to book your car hire for your holiday, there is a little bit of good news: prices have finally started falling from their summer 2022 highs, although they are still typically way above what travellers were paying pre-pandemic.

The big vehicle sell-off that happened early on during Covid, and the subsequent time it took operators to scale up their fleets, sent car hire prices rocketing last year as travellers returning in numbers chased too few cars.

This summer, prices are starting to come down, although they are still between 20% and 100% higher than 2019's figures, depending on the destination, according to [iCarhireinsurance.com](https://www.icarhireinsurance.com).

If you are yet to book a car for this summer, here's what you need to do.

The first port of call should be one of the third-party or broker websites that are almost always cheaper than going direct to Hertz, etc.

Guardian Money recommends [Zest Car Rental](#) and [Auto Europe](#), while [Ryanair's](#) car hire is also worth a look.



Car hire prices rocketed during the summer of 2022. Photograph: asiandelight/Getty Images/iStockphoto

Avoid the cheapest two-door car – instead, go for a four-door. It will only add a few pounds but you will get a better-value car. We would always pay a little bit more to hire from a better-rated supplier.

Factor in the driver's age, how many people will be driving and whether you want unlimited mileage. Opt for a full-to-full fuel deal – it's much easier, and you won't be landed with an unexpected refill charge at the end, assuming you return it with a full tank.

The next bit of advice is to always collect the car from the terminal rather than off-airport. The latter is usually cheaper but it can take hours. If your flight is late at night, check the hire firm will still be open when you arrive.

The firm will authorise the car hire excess, so you must have sufficient credit available

Once you have made the booking, head to a site such as [ReduceMyExcess](#) to buy the super collision damage waiver cover. This site offers annual cover from £45.06 and single trip cover from £2.57 a day. You have to buy it before the hire commences but it will always be cheaper than buying cover from the car hire firm on arrival – plus you typically get better insurance, with tyres and windows, etc included.

Then, when you pick up the car, ignore the sales patter and explain that you will pay for any damage you cause. The firm will authorise the car hire excess, typically about £1,200, on your credit card, so you must have sufficient credit available. Note, it has got to be a credit card, not a debit or prepaid card, and in the name of the hirer.

Once you have the keys examine every panel, remembering to look under the bumpers, and check the spare wheel. Put down every possible scratch and blemish on the vehicle condition report that is part of the agreement, and get it signed before you drive off. When you return the car, get it checked and signed off as damage-free, and take a few photos of the vehicle, including one of the mileage.

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2023.06.17 - Opinion

- To save their own skins, Trump and Johnson are destroying something precious: our faith in the law
- Forget culture wars: the Covid inquiry is a stark reminder of what government is really about
- Are Tory MPs as deluded as Boris Johnson? It's a tough act to follow, but they're doing their best
- Cartoon Nicola Jennings on a long knight with bawling Boris Johnson



‘In the responses of Boris Johnson and Donald Trump to the copious evidence set out against them, each man resorted to the same familiar claims.’ Johnson and Trump in Biarritz, France, August 2019. Photograph: Stefan Rousseau/PA

[Opinion Boris Johnson](#)

To save their own skins, Trump and Johnson are destroying something precious: our faith in the law

[Jonathan Freedland](#)



Both men sing from the Berlusconi songsheet, denouncing charges against them as partisan attacks while we pay the price

Fri 16 Jun 2023 12.04 EDTLast modified on Fri 16 Jun 2023 12.49 EDT

The three tenors of showman populism, Donald Trump, Boris Johnson and Silvio Berlusconi, reached the top through a combination of telegenic clownishness, “I alone can fix it” braggadocio and a shared strain of narcissistic nationalism – and now one faces the [judgment of the courts](#), another has fled the [judgment of his peers](#), while the third contemplates the [judgment of the heavens](#).

In the week Berlusconi met his maker – doubtless with a wide, permatanned smile and an inquiry as to where one might find the most winsome angels, only to be directed towards the downward escalator – Trump and Johnson respectively contemplated a charge sheet and a verdict of the earthly variety. Both are stunning documents.

Over [106 damning pages](#), Johnson was found unambiguously guilty by the Commons privileges committee of lying serially and seriously to parliament. There are plenty of jaw-droppers in the committee’s report,

including confirmation that the breaking of Covid regulations in Johnson's Downing Street was not an occasional deviation from the rules imposed on the rest of the country from that very building, but rather a way of life. We learn that "wine-time Fridays continued throughout", that "birthday parties, leaving parties and end of week gatherings all continued as normal", that while the rest of the country was locked down – keeping sick and dying children [apart from their parents](#) in their final days – No 10 was an "island oasis of normality".

Despicable though such rule-breaking was, it's the lying to parliament that matters most. Not for nothing is that considered among the highest of political high crimes and misdemeanours: parliament cannot hold ministers to account if those same ministers can lie with impunity. It is only the knowledge that they will pay a stiff, possibly career-ending penalty for dishonesty that compels them to confess awkward truths – the uncomfortable facts that, if they remained hidden, would make parliamentary scrutiny, and indeed any kind of decision-making, impossible. So of course Johnson had to be suspended from the Commons, and for long enough to trigger a recall byelection – though this supposedly fearless champion of the Great British people has run away rather than face them at the ballot box.

The [44-page indictment of Trump](#) is no less shocking. Again, it's not so much the original offence – holding on to highly sensitive classified documents, many containing military secrets, after leaving the White House – but rather the subsequent dishonesty. The US justice department sets out how, rather than hand back the papers as required, Trump had aides hide them from investigators and even from his own lawyers, stashing them in various rooms in his Florida resort including a ballroom, bathroom and a shower, storing them so sloppily they spilled on to the floor, and then urging an attorney to "pluck" out and conceal the most incriminating ones.

Meanwhile, the shade of Berlusconi will be hoping for celestial clemency for a past that [saw him accused of](#) bribery, money-laundering, tax evasion, Mafia connections, multiple corruption charges and paying for sex with a minor nicknamed Ruby the Heart Stealer.

Naturally, there are differences among the trio – Johnson is the only one to be outside the Vladimir Putin fanclub, and to have neither made nor squandered a fortune in business – but the similarities are more striking. Whether it be the promiscuity, the photo-op buffoonery, the personal shamelessness or the stoking of toxic national chauvinism, these three men were usually singing variations of the same aria. A key refrain was offered by the two who still live this week.

You could hear it in the responses of Johnson and Trump to the copious evidence set out against them, each man resorting to the same familiar claims, even the same vocabulary. Naturally, neither took a trace of personal responsibility. Despite the facts, the dates, even the photographs that anyone could see with their own eyes – brimming boxes of documents for one, a raised champagne glass for the other – both simply asserted they had done nothing wrong, that it was those who had investigated them who should be in the dock: [“thugs, misfits and Marxists”](#), according to Trump, a [“kangaroo court”](#) according to Johnson. Each man claimed a bogus victimhood, casting himself as the target of a cruel, politically motivated [“witch-hunt”](#).

You can see why both reach for that argument so swiftly, just as Berlusconi did floridly and often. It neutralises what should be a terminal political event, namely a conviction by a court (or its parliamentary equivalent). If that conviction can be recast as a partisan attack, then the guilty politician is transformed from lying crook to martyred tribune of his people. “They’re not coming after me, they’re coming after you,” Trump told supporters after his court appearance on Tuesday. “I just happened to be standing in their way.” In the same way, Johnson insists the privileges committee – which includes two diehard Brexiters – punished him not because he lied, but “to take revenge for Brexit and ultimately to reverse the 2016 referendum result. My removal is the necessary first step.”

Both men hope that the ploy will do for them what it did for Berlusconi, reframing past crimes as wholly forgivable acts wickedly exploited by the leftist/elite enemy, thereby paving the way for a glorious comeback. It might even work for Trump; Johnson’s polling is much bleaker. While a [majority of Republicans](#) continue to believe Trump had the 2020 election stolen from him, a [Savanta poll](#) shows that a narrow majority of

Conservative voters accept the committee's verdict that Johnson deliberately misled parliament. Put that difference down to the contrasting media landscapes of the two countries: the continued existence of the BBC means Britain's political tribes do not yet exist within wholly separate, sealed-off infospheres.

But the damage is great all the same. For both Trump and Johnson are, like Berlusconi in his pomp, tearing away at something precious. It might sound hyperbolic, yet it is not only democracy but civilisation itself that rests on our acceptance of the rule of law. In some ways, it requires a suspension of disbelief: assisted by the rituals, costume and ceremonies of the courtroom, we construct "the law" as somehow above the mere whim or bias of this or that individual. We accept it instead as a system that transcends us and to which we are all subject. It is the only way we can get along, the only way we can live ordered lives. The alternative is brutal violence and competition: the law of the jungle.

When Trump brands every federal investigator a personal agent of Joe Biden, every judge a partisan hack doing the bidding of the politicians who appointed them, he takes a knife to that conception of the law – one that is necessary for society to function. Johnson has similarly slashed away at public trust in parliament – the same Johnson who seven years ago this week urged Britons to commit an act of national self-harm in the name of a sacred parliamentary sovereignty that was, he claimed, spuriously, imperilled by Brussels.

They do it so casually, trashing the institutions on which we all depend, destroying the trust without which society cannot exist. They do it to get themselves through a news cycle, to keep alive the hope that, once more, they might wear the crown that they tarnished so badly. For them, it's just a tactic, a move from a playbook. But for us, the consequences are lasting. Even out of office, these men have taken a collective reservoir of trust built up over many centuries – and filled it with poison.

- Jonathan Freedland is a Guardian columnist

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

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Prof David Heymann speaking to Kate Blackwell KC at the the UK Covid-19 inquiry in London, 15 June 2023. Photograph: UK Covid-19 Inquiry

[OpinionCovid inquiry.](#)

Forget culture wars: the Covid inquiry is a stark reminder of what government is really about

[Zoe Williams](#)



Ministers may prefer cheap rhetoric to the reality of hard decisions – but these hearings show the cost of the choices they make

Sat 17 Jun 2023 03.00 EDTLast modified on Sat 17 Jun 2023 12.56 EDT

Was the Johnson government unprepared for Covid because it was [distracted by Brexit](#)? Was the virus itself [caused by a lab leak](#)? Did lockdowns [do more harm than good](#)? Are face masks a conspiracy? If the 2020s are indivisible from the pandemic, Covid offers endlessly fertile territory for the decade's culture wars. They look irrational written down – what does remoaning have to do with face masks? – yet somehow we understand the faultlines, and how they connect, at a gut level.

Yet the [public inquiry](#) into the government's handling of Covid, which opened on Tuesday in a neutral-looking building near Paddington, west London, with only the most sober-minded spectators still attending by Thursday – and without even a desultory anti-vax protest outside to liven anything up – kept insisting on one inconvenient, unarguable point. Governing isn't about binary arguments in primary colours. The discourse may drown out reality but it can't make it go away, and there bad decisions still cost lives and good ones still need homework.

This is the resilience and preparedness module of the [Covid inquiry](#), tracking back to 2018, when Public Health England called attention to a “gap in strategy focusing on infectious diseases”; to 2016, when Exercise Alice wargamed what would happen had Middle East respiratory syndrome (Mers) taken on pandemic dimensions; to 2002, when the strategy void was first identified. The most neutral, factual language – “new, continuous cough”, “asymptomatic transmission”, “replication rate” – grabs you by the throat and drags you straight back to the shadowy, almost hallucinogenic state of March 2020, when every aspect of normal life, from a sneeze to a stranger, became freighted and ominous.

We pored over country comparisons back then, looking for clues about how to react, how seriously to take the disease, what the future might look like two weeks hence. But it seems that, certainly at the level of government, we weren’t looking at the right countries, and we didn’t start looking soon enough. [Prof David Heymann](#) talked about why the mortality rates in certain Asian countries – Japan, Korea, Singapore – were lower than those in Europe. Those countries learned more from, variously, the Sars outbreak 20 years ago and Mers in 2015, and had better surge capacity in hospitals, and superior contact tracing, in both directions – that is, who the infected patient might have transmitted to, and who they had likely been infected by. This enabled “precision lockdowns”, which are “good basic epidemiology”, Heymann said.

Kate Blackwell KC drew the inquiry’s attention to that table-top exercise in 2016, which specifically recommended that someone draw up a briefing paper on South Korea’s policy post-Mers and whether it had any lessons for the UK. Did Heymann know whether that had ever happened? He did not, unfortunately. We can work on the assumption that if it did, nobody read it; our contact tracing got demonstrably worse when Covid hit – previously, it was conducted at a local level, which is a high-trust environment. When it was centralised during the pandemic, that trust was watered down.

Probably the starkest evidence, from a political perspective, came from [Prof Sir Michael Marmot](#): he was pressed on the state of healthcare immediately before Covid hit, and how much impact hospital capacity and staff shortages had on it. Most of the health differences we see are not

attributable to healthcare, but to the underlying health of the population. “It’s hard to overstate how important this is: we used, as a country, to expect health to improve year on year. That’s what the history of the 20th century led us to expect,” he told the inquiry. That improvement slowed dramatically, in 2010, more in the UK than in any other country except Iceland and the United States. Furthermore, health inequalities got bigger; people in the most deprived decile saw a decline in life expectancy, in every region except London.

Neither Covid nor life after it, including the hundreds of thousands missing from the workforce, are comprehensible without looking squarely at what austerity has done to society. Even if the Conservatives hadn’t kept the NHS on a shoestring, even if we hadn’t had [half the ICU capacity of Italy and France](#), the decisive factor would still have been this simple thing that we knew all along: the belt-tightening that Cameron sold as blitz spirit, and his successors have continued, was callous. People became ill and died as a result of it.

But even if the Covid inquiry has a galvanising effect, and reminds us of the value of compassion and competence in politics, that is not its purpose. [David Alexander](#), professor of risk and disaster reduction at University College London, told the inquiry: “The bottom line is: do you think the British government within the limits of its competency keeps the public safe? My answer to that is no, or not sufficiently.” This painstaking exercise, [which will take years](#), is not designed to pin the blame squarely on one administration, one prime minister. It’s not there to justify lockdowns or regret that Brexit eclipsed everything else. It exists for the one thing we don’t want to think about: the next pandemic.

- Zoe Williams is a Guardian columnist
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‘The parliamentary Conservative party in the majority showed appalling judgment on Johnson, despite mountains of indications it would turn out badly.’ Photograph: Matt Dunham/AP

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

Are Tory MPs as deluded as Boris Johnson? It’s a tough act to follow, but they’re doing their best

[Marina Hyde](#)



Why accept responsibility for enabling their old boss when they could carry on his grand tradition of denial and avoidance?

Fri 16 Jun 2023 09.13 EDTLast modified on Fri 16 Jun 2023 16.30 EDT

Carrie Johnson recently confirmed she was [expecting her third child](#), and I wish her stamina. At one point I also had three children under the age of three-and-a-half, and can confirm it's quite a handful. However, at least I was not also married to a toddler at the time.

The Johnson household will soon effectively contain four babies of various sizes, with the 58-year-old one currently going through what nanny might call "a difficult stage". He will be 59 on Monday, the very day parliament [debates and votes](#) on the damning privileges committee report that found he misled it. Unfortunately, the ex-prime ministerial nappy has already been filled, and the pram screamingly emptied of all toys. Or as Johnson put it to an aide last summer, hours before the resignation of 57 (FIFTY SEVEN) ministers finally forced him to quit: ["dignity is a grossly overrated commodity"](#). Takes an overrated commodity to know one, I guess.

From [ambushed-by-cake](#), then, to ambushed-by-snakes – why do these annual misfortunes dog Boris Johnson? At least, as predicted, [other career options are already available](#). Courtesy of the Daily Mail, Johnson has just accepted the position of “newspaper columnist”, an extremely silly job, which in large part involves implying you’d do it better if only they’d give you a turn running the country. As far as Boris Johnson is concerned, surely we have tested the central premise of that one to destruction.

Anyway: back to the destruction. The Conservative party is at war with itself, public servants have been subject to a [campaign of intimidation](#) at the highest level, and the inquiry into the government’s error-prone and at times calamitous [handling of Covid](#) is just beginning. Cut to black, and the screen caption: “Four years earlier”.

Four years earlier, it is summertime, and a man called Rishi Sunak is himself writing a newspaper column, which [appears in the Times](#) beneath the headline “The Tories are in deep peril. Only Boris Johnson can save us”. And it’s certainly all there – the notion that Johnson has “instant credibility”, is “one of life’s optimists” and has “policies underpinned by values”. To the country’s problems, Mr Sunak writes, “there really is only one logical answer: Boris Johnson.”

Flash forward 18 months from then, and Johnson’s government is rolling out a [hardhitting new advertising campaign](#). A very ill-looking woman in an oxygen mask is staring despairingly into the camera. “Look her in the eyes,” reads the caption, “and tell her you never bend the rules.”

Now skip forward again to Thursday, which Johnson spent howling about his [“expulsion on trumped-up charges”](#). The only thing that is Trumped-up is him. All populists secretly hate their people, and Johnson was the same. But he also came to secretly fear them, which is why he didn’t have the balls to face them at the ballot box during any recall byelection. And why, a few turns of the wheel ago, he pulled out of running formally in the contest to replace Liz Truss, having initially thought he’d found the only thing [worth returning from](#) one of his many ligger holidays for.

Via these strategies of avoidance and denial, Johnson persuades himself that he is actually adored by the country. In fact, last summer, he was [booed by](#)

[crowds](#) on the steps of St Paul's as he arrived for the late queen's platinum jubilee service, just as he had been booed by [crowds at the cricket](#), and would soon be booed by crowds on Whitehall [clamouring for his departure](#) from Downing Street.

It's not that his implosion could have been predicted; it's that it was. That's the thing with fatal flaws – you know at the start how it's going to end. For all Johnson's splashy manoeuvrings, the focus now must be on the Tory MPs who should have known this. Right up to this present moment, Johnson didn't just lie – he lied about the lies he had told, and he lied about the lies that he had not yet told, but had every intention of telling. Having [explicitly denigrated](#) the terms “witch hunt” and “kangaroo court” to the committee, these were precisely the phrases he deployed when he didn't like the way it was going.

Johnson can dish it out, but never take it. He himself ended the careers of those who didn't suck up to him, without a second of remorse. He expelled [21 Conservative MPs](#) for the crime of opposing him on a no-deal Brexit, including two former chancellors and his hero Winston Churchill's grandson. Those who refused to return to his heel were barred from standing in the next election – not for lying to parliament, but for telling it the truth about the danger of crashing out of the EU without a deal. This week, his supporters [threatened to deselect](#) MPs who voted for the report on Monday.

Yet having banked their aggression, Johnson has now called them off, telling them [not to vote against](#) the report after all. Sorry, but that sort of get-out shouldn't do. Tory MPs need to stop running and face up to what their party enabled, and at least make some profoundly belated attempt to acknowledge that and do the right thing. The parliamentary Conservative party in the majority showed appalling judgment on Johnson, despite mountains of indications it would turn out badly. It failed to understand not simply the vital flaws in Johnson's criminally overhyped “[oven-ready deal](#)”, but human character itself. People don't change – they just become more exaggerated versions of themselves in one way or another, and anyone who couldn't see that Boris Johnson would end up behaving like Boris Johnson to the vast detriment of the country and its democratic institutions is too

stupid and naive to be in politics. Monday is the time for Conservative MPs to turn up and find some backbone and self-respect – and if they still can't, to accept that they, too, are in the wrong job.

- Marina Hyde is a Guardian columnist

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Nicola Jennings on a long knight with bawling Boris Johnson – cartoon

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The reunion of two brothers, one of many heart-breaking scenes that have played out in Kalamata. Photograph: Stelios Misinas/Reuters

[Greece](#)

‘I want answers’: hope gives way to fury in Greece as hunt for survivors

ends

As families mourn, questions have mounted over inconsistencies in the coastguard's account of events

[*Helena Smith*](#) in Kalamata

Sat 17 Jun 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Sat 17 Jun 2023 17.32 EDT

At a little after 8am on Friday, Fadi, a Palestinian, freshly arrived from Amsterdam, joined the throng of aid workers, activists and journalists gathered around a warehouse in Kalamata's port.

The 29-year-old was on a mission. "I thought I had spotted my little brother Mohammed among pictures of the [shipwreck's] survivors," said the Syrian-born chef, who has lived in the Dutch city for the past decade. "I knew he had gone to Libya to board the boat, so, praying to Allah he was still alive, I decided to get on a flight."

Within hours of arriving in this port town, Fadi's wish would come true in an electrifying moment caught on camera. "He had a photograph of his brother and wanted to talk," said Themis Kanellopoulos, a Greek MEGA TV reporter who was interviewing him at the time. "As the camera was rolling, as he was relating the terrible circumstances that had brought him here, he saw Mohammed through the metal fence near the warehouse where the survivors were being kept. The euphoria of witnessing the two of them come together, right at that moment, was just incredible."

Tearful Greece shipwreck survivor reunites with brother through metal fence – video

The reunion of the two brothers is among many heartbreaking scenes that have played out in Kalamata since a fishing trawler, bound for Italy with perhaps as many as 750 people on board, capsized off the southern Peloponnese, a disaster of such magnitude that its effects are being felt well beyond the confines of [Greece](#).

The tragedy, among the worst in living memory in the Mediterranean, has officially left 78 dead, all men bar one. But as hopes of finding survivors evaporated on Friday, the third and final day of an extensive search and rescue operation, Greek officials had become ever more resigned to the death toll being closer to 500. Hopes of recovering the vessel, which sank in some of the deepest waters in the Mediterranean, have been ruled out altogether.

Mohammed, who grew up in war-torn Aleppo with his brother, is among the 104 passengers who, having paid more than \$4,000 (£3,100) each for the doomed journey, made it out alive. “He wanted to live the dream,” said Fadi, who travelled to [Europe](#) – via Greece – as part of an earlier wave of asylum seekers 10 years ago. “They all wanted to. I can’t believe that I found him. I am so happy.”

For relief workers, who have pieced together the trajectory of a tragedy that many believe could have been averted – if migrants denied safe passageways weren’t forced to rely on people smugglers using increasingly dangerous routes to reach the west – it is a miracle that any survived at all.

On a vessel that was visibly overloaded, hundreds of women and children, according to migrant testimony given to the Greek coastguard, were “locked” below deck in the boat’s hold. Piloted by its Egyptian crew – nine of whom were arrested on people-smuggling charges late Thursday – the ship is believed to have sailed the high seas for three days before it sank.



Survivors in Kalamata described shocking scenes of survival against the odds. Photograph: Byron Smith/Getty Images

“The accounts of what happened have been shocking,” said Areti Glezou at the psychosocial support group, Thalpos, which has spent much of the past week helping survivors at Kalamata’s general hospital. “Survivors told of how they began to drink from the sea and even their own urine when they ran out of water and food. One man described how he swam through waters filled with the bodies of dead kids as the ship went down. I don’t think I will ever forget that.”

The fishing trawler had been spotted initially by the EU border agency, Frontex, more than 12 hours before its engine failed, and the Greek coastguard was communicating with its captain before it capsized late on Tuesday. By late afternoon, coastguard officials claim, the vessel was observed sailing on a “steady course”.

“They refused our offer of help, saying, ‘We go to Italy,’” said Greece’s acting civil protection minister, Vangelis Tournas, in the post as part of a caretaker government until general elections later this month. “The ship was in international waters. Had we done anything more, it would have been considered intervention.”

But questions have mounted as inconsistencies in the coastguard's version of events have surfaced. On Friday, for the first time, Greek officials admitted that a rope had been thrown to the stricken vessel late at night, fuelling speculation that the trawler may have been tugged before it suddenly listed and sank.

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Shock has gradually turned to anger, with protesters taking to the streets across Greece to deplore the authorities' handling of the incident, and European policies that have "turned the Mediterranean into a watery cemetery".

"I lost 45 relatives on that boat, a whole village, including my brother Yousaf," railed Mohammed Yunis, a Pakistani taxi driver who has lived for more than four decades in the UK.

"I want answers," he said, standing outside the Greek coastguard's harbourside headquarters with other relatives who had travelled to Kalamata. "The authorities here are fucking lying. They knew the ship was there. They knew it was in trouble. They did nothing to save it. They wanted the people on board to die."

Adding to a sense among some that the truth is yet to emerge are questions over why no video footage taken from a coastguard vessel has been released.

“In all incidents like this a video is taken. The big question is where is this video?” said Christos Spirtzis, an MP with the leftwing Syriza party contesting general elections next week.

The head of the 350-strong Lawyers Association in Kalamata told the Observer that it was only a matter of time before an inquiry would be opened into the way Greek authorities dealt with the stricken vessel.

“At the critical moment did the coastguard do the right thing?” asked Kostas Margelis, the association’s president. “There are a lot of questions that clearly need to be answered.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jun/17/greece-shipwreck-survivors-anger-fury-coast-guard-questions>



A rescued person is transferred to an ambulance after the boat capsized in the Mediterranean. Photograph: Yannis Kolesidis/EPA

[Greece](#)

Greek coastguard denies claims refugee boat capsized after tow rope attached

UN calls for urgent action to prevent further tragedies as police believe up to 500 people remain missing

[Jon Henley](#) and [Helena Smith](#) in Kalamata

Fri 16 Jun 2023 13.05 EDTFirst published on Fri 16 Jun 2023 11.45 EDT

Greek authorities have rejected claims that [a fishing boat that sank in the Mediterranean this week](#) with the loss of potentially hundreds of lives capsized after the coastguard attempted to tow it, as the UN called for urgent action to prevent further tragedies.

Authorities have confirmed 78 deaths and said 104 survivors – mostly from Syria, Egypt and Pakistan – had been brought ashore, but police believe as

many as 500 are missing. Witnesses have reported that up to 100 children were in the ship's hold.

Officials denied reports that the heavily overcrowded boat could have flipped because a rope was attached to it by coastguards, and rejected criticism for not acting earlier after it emerged that a coastguard vessel escorted the boat – which set sail from Tobruk in Libya on 10 June – for hours.

[Map](#)

After initially saying a coastguard vessel had kept its distance, a government spokesperson said on Friday that a rope was used. Ilias Siakantaris said the coastguard had “used a rope to steady themselves, to approach, to see if they wanted any help”, but insisted there was no attempt to tow the boat or tie the coastguard vessel to it.

“They refused it, they said, ‘No help, we go to Italy’ and continued on their way,” Siakarantis told Greek television. A coastguard spokesperson, Nikos Alexiou, said: “We chose to mind the vessel from a distance and that is why we reacted so fast.”

Late on Thursday, video footage showed a survivor telling Greece's former prime minister, Alexis Tsipras, that the coastguard had thrown a rope to people on the boat. “Because they didn't know how to pull the rope, the vessel started tilting right and left,” a translator told Tsipras. “The coastguard boat was going too fast, but the vessel was already tilting to the left, and that's how it sank.”

Greek authorities have also said rescuers could not intervene sooner because the people on the boat repeatedly refused assistance – but legal experts and aid groups said that was no excuse.

A helicopter, a frigate and three smaller vessels continued to search 50 miles (80km) from the southern town of Pylos, where the boat, reportedly carrying between 400 and 750 people, sank on Wednesday in some of the Mediterranean's deepest waters.

Most of the survivors were moved to shelters in Malakasa near Athens on Friday from a warehouse at the southern port of Kalamata. No more people had been found alive since Wednesday, but officials indicated that the round-the-clock search would continue.

The Greek coastguard has said it was notified of the boat's presence late on Tuesday morning and observed from a helicopter that it was still "sailing on a steady course" at 6pm. A little later, someone on the boat was reached by satellite phone.

That person said the passengers needed food and water, but wanted to continue to Italy. "It was a fishing boat packed with people, who refused our assistance because they wanted to go to Italy," Alexiou said.

Authorities monitored the vessel for about 15 hours before it sank. Merchant ships also observed it and delivered supplies until the early hours of Wednesday morning, when the satellite phone user reported a problem with the engine.

About 40 minutes later, according to a coastguard statement, the boat began to rock violently and sank. Experts believe it may have run out of fuel or had engine trouble and that passengers moving inside caused it to list and capsize.

Evangelos Tournas, Greece's caretaker minister for civil protection, defended the coastguard's actions, saying it could not act in international waters without a request for assistance and suggesting it could have been dangerous to do so.

"An intervention by the coastguard could have placed an overloaded vessel in danger, which could capsize as a result," Tournas said. However, the operation has created political controversy and sparked protests in Athens that turned violent on Thursday.

Alarm Phone, a refugee support group that had been in communication with the vessel, said people onboard had pleaded for help on at least two

occasions and that it had alerted the Greek authorities and aid agencies hours before the disaster.

“The Greek government had specific responsibilities toward every passenger on the vessel, which was clearly in distress,” said Adriana Tidona of Amnesty International. “This is a tragedy of unimaginable proportions, the more so because it was entirely preventable.”

Timeline

Conflicting accounts of boat sinking

Show

Exactly what happened in the hours before the boat sank off the coast of Greece is unclear. A migrant charity says a person they were in contact with on the boat said it was in distress, but Greek authorities say passengers repeatedly refused offers of help. All times GMT.

10 June 2023

Vessel left Tobruk in Libya early in the morning, Greek sources tell Reuters

13 June 2023

0800

Greek coastguard alerted to the presence of the vessel 47 nautical miles (87 km) south-west of country

13 June 2023

1217

Advocacy group Alarm Phone says it received its first call from the boat to say it was in distress. Greek authorities had also established contact with the vessel

13 June 2023

1330 - 1800

Greek authorities who were in repeated communication with the boat say people on the vessel told them they wanted to sail to Italy and wanted no assistance from Greece

13 June 2023

1500

Food and water supplied by commercial vessel

13 June 2023

1520

Alarm Phone says passengers told it the boat was not moving

13 June 2023

1630

Greek coastguard says observation from helicopter showed boat was sailing 'on steady course'

13 June 2023

2100

Greek coastguard says it threw rope to crew

13 June 2023

2240

Engine failure reported

13 June 2023

2300

Boat overturned and sank

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.

Prof Erik Røsæg of the University of Oslo's Institute of Private Law said maritime law would have required Greek authorities to attempt a rescue if the boat was unsafe, irrespective of whether those onboard had requested it or not.

Greek authorities "had a duty to start rescue procedures" given the condition of the trawler, Røsæg told Associated Press, adding that a captain's refusal of assistance could be overruled if deemed unreasonable – which, he said, this appeared to be.



The boat carrying migrants before it sank off the coast of Greece.
Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Tsipras, who was prime minister from 2015 to 2019 at the peak of Europe's migration crisis and is now a leftwing opposition leader, said Europe's immigration policies had "turned the Mediterranean into watery graves".

Under its recent conservative government, Greece has taken a far harder stance on migration, building walled camps and increasing border controls.

Athens has also faced [allegations](#) in recent years that it deliberately pushes people back to Turkey, illegally preventing them from claiming asylum in Greece, something the government has strenuously denied.

[Migration graphic](#)

The UN agencies for refugees and migrants on Friday called for a thorough investigation and “urgent and decisive action to prevent further deaths at sea”.

They said states had an obligation to unite to address the dangerous gaps in search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean, noting that a “duty to rescue people in distress at sea without delay is a fundamental rule of international maritime law”.

In particular, they rejected efforts to criminalise those who try to help in such situations, reiterating that “search and rescue at sea is a legal and humanitarian imperative” and should always be carried out in a way aimed at preventing loss of life.

Federico Soda, the head of the International Organisation for Migration’s emergency department, said the tragedy once again showed that the approach to migrant crossings in the Mediterranean needed to change.

“It is clear that the current approach to the Mediterranean is unworkable,” he said in the statement. “Year after year, it continues to be the most dangerous migration route in the world, with the highest fatality rate.”

[Migration graphic](#)

Greece is governed by a caretaker administration pending an election on 25 June. Thousands of protesters rallied in Athens and the northern city of Thessaloniki on Thursday night demanding that migration policies be eased.

Authorities were holding nine of the survivors, all men of Egyptian descent, on allegations of people smuggling and participating in a criminal enterprise.

Arrested on Thursday night, they are suspected of masterminding the voyage to Italy from Libya, after first setting out from Egypt with the fishing trawler. There were conflicting reports about whether the ship’s

captain was among those arrested; some local media reported that he had died when the vessel went down.

Associated Press and Reuters contributed to this report

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jun/16/greek-coastguard-denies-claims-prevented-boat-disaster>

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Heather Mack arrives in court in Bali in 2015. She served seven years of a 10-year sentence in Indonesia for being an accessory to Wiese-Mack's murder. Photograph: Firdia Lisnawati/AP

[Indonesia](#)

Heather Mack: US woman pleads guilty over mother's suitcase murder

Mack pleads guilty in Chicago to conspiring to kill Sheila von Wiese-Mack in Bali in 2014 to gain access to \$1.5m trust fund

Associated Press in Chicago

Fri 16 Jun 2023 19.56 EDTLast modified on Sat 17 Jun 2023 13.04 EDT

An American woman accused of helping to kill her mother and stuffing her body in a suitcase during a luxury vacation to Bali nine years ago changed her plea to guilty in Chicago federal court on Friday. Her lawyer said later she hoped to avoid a sentence of life behind bars by doing so.

Heather Mack pleaded guilty to one count of conspiring to kill Sheila von Wiese-Mack to get access to a \$1.5m trust fund. Mack, then 18 and pregnant, covered her mom's mouth in a hotel room while her then boyfriend Tommy Schaefer bludgeoned her with a fruit bowl, prosecutors say.

The change-of-plea hearing is the latest chapter in a story that has garnered international attention in part because of photographs of the suitcase, which seemed too small to hold an adult woman's body.

Mack, now 27, appeared calm as she stood in orange jail garb and orange slippers, occasionally brushing her hair from her eyes as she answered the judge's questions – saying she knew she was giving up her right to remain silent at the hearing.

After Mack paused before saying she understood the plea agreement hammered out with prosecutors in preceding weeks, US district judge Matthew Kennelly noted the hesitation and asked again if she was sure she fully understood it.

“Yes, your honor,” she responded.

Two other charges against Mack would be dropped at the end of the sentencing process. Schaefer was convicted of murder and remains in [Indonesia](#), where he is serving an 18-year sentence. He is charged in the same US indictment.

After the hearing, relatives of Wiese-Mack issued a statement saying they were “very relieved that the mastermind of Sheila's murder admitted her guilt today”.

“We will continue to be our sister Sheila's voice throughout the sentencing process to ensure that real justice is served,” they said.

The plea agreement calls for a sentence of no more than 28 years, though Kennelly told Mack he has not yet decided whether to accept that sentencing cap. If he rejects it, Mack could withdraw her plea, and either

hold fresh plea discussions or go to trial. The judge set a 18 December sentencing date.

A key issue that was not decided in talks between prosecutors and the defense prior to Friday's hearing was whether the years Mack spent in prison in Indonesia for a 2015 conviction of being an accessory to Wiese-Mack's murder would be subtracted from whatever US sentence is imposed by Kennelly.

Mack, who lived with her mother in suburban Chicago's Oak Park, served seven years of her 10-year Indonesian sentence. She was deported in 2021 and US agents arrested her immediately after her plane landed at Chicago's O'Hare international airport.

Mack's lawyer, Michael Leonard, told reporters after the hearing that his client's decision to plead guilty was motivated in part by wanting to avoid a sentence of life in prison – something that would be off the table under the plea deal, if the judge formally approves it.

In arguing for leniency at sentencing, Leonard said he would present evidence that Mack has matured and that she was “a fantastic mother” to her and Schaefer's daughter, who she gave birth to in Indonesia after her arrest.

“She is certainly not the person she was,” Leonard said. “She has grown as a human.”

Her then six-year-old daughter was with her when Mack was arrested at the Chicago airport. The girl was later placed with a relative after a custody fight.

Leonard said Mack was able to spend time with her daughter while serving her sentence in Indonesia and that her child was now her top priority.

“The most important thing for her is reunification with her daughter,” he said.

In successfully arguing against bond for Mack in 2021, prosecutors said she and Schaefer had planned the killing for months. They also said they had video evidence that showed both Mack and Schaefer trying to get the suitcase with Wiese-Mack's body inside it into an Indonesian taxicab.

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A fence surrounds the state prison in Florence, Arizona, where Barry Jones had been in custody on death row. Photograph: AP

[Arizona](#)

Arizona man freed after nearly three decades on death row

Barry Jones pleads guilty to lesser charge in deal to overturn his conviction for murder of four-year-old girl in 1994

[Ramon Antonio Vargas](#)

Sat 17 Jun 2023 02.00 EDTLast modified on Sat 17 Jun 2023 12.57 EDT

An [Arizona](#) man who spent nearly three decades on death row before the reversal of his conviction over the death of a four-year-old girl has been freed from prison.

Barry Jones's release, ordered on Thursday, came after a Tuscon-area state court judge approved a deal between prosecutors and him which involved his pleading guilty to a lesser murder charge. According to prosecutors, a

medical review of the case failed to conclude that Jones caused the girl's fatal injury, and his pleading guilty to second-degree murder involves his failure to adequately seek emergency care for the victim.

He was sentenced to 25 years that he had already spent imprisoned, setting the stage for his release.

Jones's attorney, Cary Sandman, told the Associated Press that the plea recognized how his client – now aged 64 – had spent much of his life on death row “despite compelling evidence that he was innocent of charges that he fatally assaulted” Rachel Gray.

Nonetheless, as pointed out in a statement from [the Innocence Project](#), Jones's ordered release had no effect on the US supreme court's refusal last year to give him the chance to prove that his constitutional right to competent legal representation was compromised when a previous defense lawyer failed to investigate medical, forensic and witness testimony which undermined the charges against him.

“With this decision ... [the supreme court](#) left thousands of people in the nightmarish position of having no court to hear their credible claims of innocence,” the criminal justice reform non-profit organization's statement said.

Jones in May 1994 drove Rachel and her mother – his girlfriend at the time – to a hospital whose staff soon pronounced the child dead. Investigators determined Rachel had died from a small bowel laceration which resulted from blunt abdominal trauma.

Authorities accused Jones of beating and raping the girl, leading to his being arrested, convicted and sentenced to execution. Prosecutors relied on junk science to argue that there was compelling evidence showing Rachel's injuries occurred a day before she died while in the sole care of Jones, and his trial lawyer did not challenge or even investigate that contention.

Jones appealed his conviction. Experts ultimately found evidence that Rachel's deadly injury had actually occurred before the second-to-last day

of her life while she was not in Jones's care.

A 2017 ruling from federal judge Timothy Burgess then concluded that Jones's prosecution amounted to "a rush to judgment".

The judge ordered that Jones either be released or retried, and an appeals court upheld that decision. Yet the US supreme court reversed that ruling last year, with Justice Clarence Thomas writing that the federal legal system is generally prohibited from considering new evidence of what is known as evidence of ineffective assistance of counsel.

Jones remained one of more than 110 death row prisoners in [Arizona](#) until his legal team and prosecutors struck the plea deal leading to his release. Essentially, in exchange for gaining his immediate release, Jones agreed to concede that he "failed to seek or contributed to the failure to seek medical care for Rachel Gray", Arizona state court judge Kyle Bryson wrote in a ruling he handed down on Thursday.

The local top prosecutor, Laura Conover, said Jones's deal balanced "the rule of the law and ... holding someone accountable for the death of an innocent four-year-old child".

"Mr Jones has been held more than accountable," Conover said in a statement released to [reporters](#).

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Nottingham: suspect believed to have killed man and used van to drive at people, police say, after three die in attack – as it happened

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What we know about the Nottingham attacks so far – video report

[UK news](#)

Man arrested after three people killed in Nottingham

Police say 31-year-old held on suspicion of murder after deaths in city centre on Tuesday morning

- [Three people dead and three in hospital after Nottingham ‘major incident’ – latest updates](#)

[Vikram Dodd](#), [Jessica Murray](#), [Helen Pidd](#) and [Jamie Grierson](#)

Tue 13 Jun 2023 12.07 EDTFirst published on Tue 13 Jun 2023 04.46 EDT

Police were trying to establish the facts behind an early morning rampage across Nottingham, with stabbings and vehicle attacks leaving three people – including two students – dead and another three injured.

Counter-terrorism police were helping the investigation, which involved armed police raiding addresses hours after the attacks.

A 31-year-old man was arrested next to a white van linked to the attacks, and was being held in custody on suspicion of murder.

The attacks happened between 4am and 5.30am over about a mile. Police said they were not looking for anyone else and the prime minister was briefed about the developments.

Two people were found dead in the street at about 4am in Ilkeston Road and are believed by police to have been stabbed.

Nottingham university said they were their students and added: “It is with great sadness that we confirm the sudden and unexpected death of two of our students following a major incident in Nottingham city centre overnight.”

A third man was found dead in Magdala Road, Nottinghamshire police said. Another three people are in hospital after someone tried to run them over in a van in Milton Street, near to Nottingham’s Theatre Royal, in what police believe was a connected incident.

One man was in critical condition with two others having suffered minor injuries, police said.

Counter-terrorism police are assisting the investigation as detectives tried to understand what triggered the horrifying events. Regular police were still leading the investigation and keeping an open mind as to the motive or motives.

[A map of Nottingham city centre showing the locations of the incidents under investigation](#)

Police are trying to locate any phones or computers the suspect used, and examining their contents, in order to understand what happened and why.

The sequence of the attacks remains unclear.

Police believe the first two people they found at about 4am were stabbed. A witness said they saw a young man and woman being attacked with a knife on Ilkeston Road, at about 4am.

The man, who did not give his name, told the BBC he had heard “awful, bloodcurdling screams” and saw a man “dressed all in black with a hood and rucksack grappling with some people”.

He told the broadcaster: “She was screaming: ‘Help!’ I just wish I’d shouted something out of the window to unnerve the assailant. I saw him stab the lad first and then the woman. The lad collapsed in the middle of the road.

“The girl stumbled towards a house and didn’t move. The next minute she had disappeared down the side of a house, and that’s where they found her. I’d say it all happened within five or six minutes.”

At some point a van is thought to have been obtained by the suspect – believed not to be his – which was used to drive into three people now being treated in hospital. A mile from the scene of the attack, a white van was visible with dents to the bonnet and damage to its window.

David Mellen, leader of the local council, told BBC Radio Nottingham that those struck by the van were “waiting at a bus stop early in the morning”.

Lynn Haggitt, a witness, told Channel 4 News she saw a van hitting two people in Nottingham. “At half past five I saw a van pull up at the side of me,” she said. “It was white, all white. There was a police car behind it coming up slowly, no flashing lights. The man in the driver’s seat looked in his mirror and saw the police car behind him.”

She said the white van then drove up to “the corner of the street and went into two people”.

“The lady ended up on the kerb, and then he backed up the white van and he went, speeded up Parliament Street with the police cars following him,” she added.

Petra Gyuricska and her husband, Miklos Toldi, said they were among the first to discover the body of a man on Magdala Road at 5.30am. They were heading to Gyuricska’s workplace when they saw the man lying on his side outside Magdala tennis club. She said: “I was just leaving for work ... my husband gave me a lift, and then we were leaving and we saw the body lying ... on the floor, and then we saw the blood and I just told my husband to stop.

“I tried to call 999 but I couldn’t get connection. Someone else came as well – [in] another car – and he called.”

Gyuricska said she believed the man was dead by the time they found him. She said: “We stayed ... first a police car came, and then another two police

cars came, and then an ambulance came. The police, they started CPR but it was too late. I mean, you could just see.”

'I wish I'd never seen it': witnesses describe van hitting people in Nottingham – video

Dimitrious Lawani, a witness to the arrest, said two officers were pulling a man and believed a Taser was also being pointed by other officers, and said he heard shouts of: “Get down, get out, stop fighting.”

The university’s students’ union said it would cancel Tuesday night’s graduation ball. In a statement, it said: “We stand in solidarity with all our students and the wider city, and our thoughts are with the families and friends of those harmed, alongside those directly and indirectly affected by the unfolding of these terrible events.

“In light of this, we have made the decision to cancel Grad Ball this evening.

“Attendees will be contacted in due course, but in the meantime we are continuing to work with the university and relevant authorities to understand the situation.”

Nottingham suspect believed to have killed man and stolen his van, say police – video

Nottinghamshire’s chief constable, Kate Meynell, said: “This is a tragic series of events which has led to the lives of three innocent people being taken and left another member of the public in a critical condition in hospital.

“My thoughts are with all the families affected by this shocking incident, and we will be working extremely hard to understand exactly what has happened.

“We are at the early stages of the investigation and need to determine the motives behind these attacks ...

“We are keeping an open mind as we investigate the circumstances surrounding these incidents and are working alongside counter-terrorism policing to establish the facts”

Rishi Sunak, the prime minister, said: “ I am being kept updated on developments. The police must be given the time to undertake their work. My thoughts are with those injured, and the family and loved ones of those who have lost their lives.”

Nottingham’s three Labour MPs, Nadia Whittome, Lilian Greenwood and Alex Norris, said they were “shaken” by the events in the city.

Emmanuel Macron has said France “shares the grief” with Britain after Tuesday’s attack in Nottingham and “stands by their side”.

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Armed police officers on Ilkeston Road in Nottingham. Photograph: Fabio De Paola/The Guardian

[UK news](#)

Tell us: have you been affected by the situation in Nottingham?

We'd like to hear from people who have been affected by the situation in Nottingham city centre

[Guardian community team](#)

Tue 13 Jun 2023 05.40 EDTLast modified on Wed 14 Jun 2023 10.33 EDT

[Three people have been killed in Nottingham city centre](#) on Tuesday morning and a 31-year-old man has been arrested on suspicion of murder, Nottinghamshire police have said.

If you have been affected by this story or want to share news tips or information directly with our journalists then please get in touch.

You can remain anonymous, if you prefer, and we will contact you before publishing, so please leave contact details.

If you have any information on this mornings incident or are concerned about a family member or friend please call this dedicated line - 0800 0961011

— Nottinghamshire Police (@nottspolice) [June 13, 2023](#)

Share your experience

We want to hear from people in Nottingham who have been affected by the situation. You can get in touch by messaging us or filling in the form below.

Please share your story if you are 18 or over, anonymously if you wish. For more information please see our [terms of service](#) and [privacy policy](#).

Your responses, which can be anonymous, are secure as the form is encrypted and only the Guardian has access to your contributions. We will only use the data you provide us for the purpose of the feature and we will delete any personal data when we no longer require it for this purpose. For true anonymity please use our [SecureDrop](#) service instead.

Name

Where do you live?

Tell us a bit about yourself (e.g. age and what you do for a living) Optional

How have you been affected?

Please include as much detail as possible

If you are happy to, you can upload a photo of yourself here Optional

Choose file

Can we publish your response?

Yes, entirely

Yes, but contact me first

Yes, but please keep me anonymous

No, this is information only

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2023.06.13 - Spotlight

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- [Indiepop veterans Heavenly We saw the world of grownups and we didn’t like that very much](#)
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Tessa Sanderson: how the first Black British woman to win an Olympic title fought her way to the top

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Left to right: Jean Adamson, Aldrick Adamson, Dr Saleyha Ashan, Stuart Tuckwood, and Ursula Derry and Martina Ferguson. Composite: Graeme Robertson, Ali Smith, Martin Godwin

Coronavirus

‘What the hell went wrong?’: bereaved hope for answers as Covid inquiry begins

Four people who lost loved ones recall the chaos of the response – and share why they think Britain was so unprepared



[Robert Booth](#) *Social affairs correspondent*

Tue 13 Jun 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 13 Jun 2023 11.55 EDT

When the UK Covid-19 public inquiry begins in earnest on Tuesday, it will be three years and two months since Jean Adamson watched through a window as her father sang a hymn as he succumbed to the virus in his Essex care home. It was Easter Sunday 2020.

Locked out, supposedly to prevent infection, and blocked from holding Aldrick, a 93-year-old who had arrived in Britain from Barbados as part of the 1950s Windrush generation, Jean thought the song was him “wanting to say, I’m on my way”.

The next day, as the first wave peaked, Aldrick was one of 1,232 people who died with Covid in the UK. Now, as at least three years of evidence-gathering begins, the death toll stands at more than 227,000.

In the coming six weeks current and former cabinet ministers including Matt Hancock, Jeremy Hunt, George Osborne and the former prime minister David Cameron will swear to tell the truth from the witness box as the inquiry asks: was Britain properly prepared and if not, why not?

The people who most want answers are the bereaved.

Adamson recalled the “chaos and confusion” when the virus got into her father’s care home.

“They weren’t getting any of the testing at the time – the tests were being diverted to the NHS or PPE supplies,” said Adamson, a nurse, NHS manager and adviser on regulation. The problem seemed structural.



Jean Adamson and father Aldrick, who died of Covid in April 2020.

The manager told her: “You know Jane, we’re very much the poor relation [to the NHS].”

The care home struggled for staff as people were discharged into it from hospital and more agency workers were used.

“They were ill-prepared,” she said. “The infection control practices were inadequate.”

The pandemic “really sharpened the focus” on how social care had been treated less well by the government for years, she said. By the end of 2020, 15 residents at Aldrick’s home were dead from Covid.

Like Adamson, many of the bereaved have a dual perspective on the UK's preparedness as they also work in health and social care. Several wanted to give evidence but have not been summoned, so they must watch on.



News stories about the inquiry are ‘re-triggering’, says Dr Saleyha Ahsan. Photograph: Ali Smith/The Guardian

For Dr Saleyha Ahsan – who worked in intensive care during the pandemic and lost her 81-year-old father, Ahsan-ul-Haq Chaudry, to the virus – a key witness is Hunt, now chancellor.

His decision as health secretary to impose a new contract on junior doctors in 2016 dealt a “devastating blow to the morale and to the workforce”, she said.

“The contract has made life that much harder for doctors,” she said. “Even before the pandemic started, you had a workforce that was already demoralised, already exhausted. The impact that has had on recruitment and retention is devastating. Someone needs to join the dots on that.”

The inquiry is freighted with emotion for many. Bereavement for Ahsan has been “different, because it’s been really associated with the search for the truth of what the hell went wrong”. News stories about the inquiry are “re-

triggering” and she says that every time she hears the latest twist in the dispute over Boris Johnson’s WhatsApp messages “I’m back in the room with my dad” as he died.

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She wanted to testify on the UK’s preparedness based on her pre-pandemic experience in the army medical corps and as an NHS doctor, but has not been called. PPE training for nuclear, chemical and biological attacks was routine in the army but there was nothing similar in the NHS for a pandemic or epidemic. Neither were medics aware of the findings of government pandemic planning exercises. The NHS was “wholly unprepared”, she said.

“We’d had bird flu and we’d had Ebola,” she said. “Surely someone somewhere should have sat there and thought: ‘this is inching closer, we’ve now got to get this into our training,’ but no one did.”

Stuart Tuckwood, a former nurse who went back to help in intensive care in a major hospital in southern England when the pandemic hit, will also follow the inquiry closely. Those months struggling with the sickest patients are an “extremely traumatising time to look back on”, he said.

“I remember one long night in intensive care when I was working with support from the military in a room with three or four extremely sick people with only myself, a volunteer doctor who hadn’t worked in a hospital for a long time, a nurse who had recently arrived from another country who was only just getting used to the NHS and a children’s nurse who had been redeployed,” he said.

“All these issues were there in the run-up to Covid,” he said. “It wasn’t a surprise that we were in such a terrible situation. We had problems with staffing levels and burnout and losing people for years in the run-up to Covid and the government just wasn’t listening.”

Tuckwood, who now works for the Unison trade union, described “taping up the gowns to the gloves, putting on masks, visors, goggles, doing our best to protect ourselves”. They didn’t want to waste potentially scarce PPE by continually changing it so “we were dehydrating ourselves ... to try and get through as long as we could”.



Ursula Derry, left, and her daughter Martina Ferguson.

Martina Ferguson will be flying over from Northern Ireland to be in the inquiry room on Tuesday. Twice daily, for eight years, she visited her mother, Ursula Derry, in a Portadown care home. Then came the

“unimaginable heartbreak” of lockdown. Continuing the visits at her window was “traumatic”.

“Emotions were deeply disturbed,” she said.

Aghast at the injustice of separation she quickly started lobbying politicians, Northern Ireland’s human rights commissioner and even Johnson, but to no avail.

“Why did we get this wrong, so badly wrong?” she said. “I think there have been lots of failures. Why did we not lock down the borders sooner? What about the track and trace – we spent a huge amount of money and that didn’t work. I think there are failures around the public purse.

“I am representing my mummy every step of the way in this public inquiry and I want to find out: was my mummy treated fairly?” she said. “I don’t believe she was.”

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Undated photo of Heavenly in their heyday. L-R: Peter Momtchiloff, Amelia Fletcher, Rob Pursey, Mathew Fletcher, Cathy Rogers. Photograph: Alison Wonderland

[Indie](#)

[Interview](#)

Indiepop veterans Heavenly: ‘We saw the world of grownups and we didn’t like that very much’

[Michael Hann](#)

Alongside jobs in economics and TV production, Amelia Fletcher and Rob Pursey are British indie royalty. They recall the insults and misogyny they faced in the UK – and the embrace of the US



[@michaelahann](#)

Tue 13 Jun 2023 05.17 EDT Last modified on Wed 14 Jun 2023 07.11 EDT

Amelia Fletcher and Rob Pursey met a little under 40 years ago, when they were both students at Oxford. Fletcher (later awarded the CBE for her services to the economy) and her friend Elizabeth Price (a future Turner prize-winning artist) turned up at Pursey’s room (he later became a TV producer) to see whether he wanted to join the band the pair of them had just formed, inspired by girl groups, the Buzzcocks, the Pastels and the bands on Postcard Records.

“We didn’t actually check whether you could play bass,” Fletcher says. “I had a cover of a Microdisney album on my wall,” Pursey says. “And I think that was probably enough to qualify me to join.”

Their group was called Talulah Gosh, and they were leading lights of the mid-80s indiepop scene, helping to inspire likeminded souls not just in Britain, but in the US, too – notably in Olympia, Washington, where [the people who had coalesced around K Records](#) pursued a similar aesthetic: childlike, rejecting the conspicuous ills of adulthood, dedicated to DIY.

Thirty-seven years since the first Talulah Gosh single, Fletcher and Pursey still make music together, and it’s still indiepop, though these days they are married with kids. After Talulah Gosh, there was Heavenly, then Marine Research, then Tender Trap, and for the last nine years the Catenary Wires. They’ve also been members together of another band, Sportique. They’re indiepop royalty.

Last month, Heavenly played their first shows for 27 years, to tie in with reissues of their albums. A pair of gigs at the Bush Hall in London sold out in minutes and the band looked truly astonished at the outpouring of love from the crowd. “I didn’t expect to look out and see everyone pretty much in tears,” Fletcher says. “The amazing love in the room for the band, which I knew was partly love for people thinking back on their own lives – it was quite moving.”

In Britain, indiepop became something to mock very quickly. No sooner had NME started championing it – notably with the C86 compilation tape – then others started laughing: oooh, look at these idiots pretending to be kids! Look at the kiddy drawings on their record sleeves! Look at them in their silly anoraks! And they can’t even play or sing! Losers!

Yet much of the motivation for that came from the same impulse that created straight edge in the US hardcore punk scene – a deliberate rejection of the evils of adulthood. “It was: we’ve seen the world of grownups and we don’t like that very much, so we’ll stay where we are, thanks,” Fletcher says.

Purseley continues: “Indiepop, not always deliberately, but sometimes, quotes childhood, because it’s taking you back to a time – children aren’t racist, they’re not misogynistic, they haven’t acquired any of these hideous traits. And I think there was maybe a naive idealism attached to it, and people don’t mind being reminded of that part of themselves, which is still uncynical and untainted.”

American fans, though, saw the punk rock behind it all. “While the bands were accused of being bedwetting, or twee, or whatever, by an increasingly misogynistic British music press, over in America, it was totally different,” Pursey says. “You were hanging out with straight edge people, the people associated with K Records, which obviously in that world later spawned the riot grrrl scene. We were part of a different scene over there, even though we were the same band.”

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Rob Pursey and Amelia Fletcher as their recent project the Catenary Wires.
Photograph: Alison Withers/Alison Wonderland

Quite how differently they were perceived in the US was proved when Marine Research – their band after Heavenly – were invited to open a UK show by their friends Fugazi. “I could see the British audience thinking, ‘What on earth are they doing?’” Pursey says. “They were really shocked. In America it didn’t seem strange at all, because we were all coming from the same place.”

Indiepop has always thrived away from the sunlight. After its flirtation with the mainstream – a bunch of those groups on the C86 cassette got major label deals – it retreated to the underground, a closed world to which the mainstream music press paid little or no attention. Calvin Johnson, of Beat Happening and K Records, called the scene the International Pop Underground – a network of bands, labels and fanzines that was mutually supportive, and governed by a shared DIY impulse.

“To be honest, we probably started Talulah Gosh to firm up our place in that scene,” Fletcher says. “We never cared about anything bigger than that – we just wanted people within our little scene to think we deserved to be part of it.”

At first, Fletcher's songwriting was apolitical – she wrote and sang pop songs about love – but that changed in Heavenly. “I didn't think I was a feminist. And I didn't really write about that in my songs. Then one summer, when we were in Olympia, it happened to be when riot grrrl was taking off, and we knew the people that began it. There was just this most amazing buzz of people being willing to talk about all of these things that I'd known but hadn't quite ever talked about in this way. And it was very exciting. But I didn't really want to be a shouty riot grrrl band because that wasn't really my favourite type of music. I thought I could have similar themes but do it in a more poppy way.”

The result was some extraordinary songs, notably *Hearts and Crosses*, a chilling account of a rape, set to music that sounds like a beach party: “Then one romantic day he took her hand and led her away / He pushed her down, removed her clothes, and put his body closer than close / He held her mouth when she tried to scream / It was all so different from in her dream,” Fletcher sang, before a woozy, disorienting organ solo that sounded like it should have accompanied the waltzers at the fairground.

Heavenly's temporary return took so long because of the circumstances of their ending: Fletcher's younger brother Matthew, their drummer, killed himself. “After Matthew died, I really struggled to remember who I was, because I saw myself as someone who sang in Heavenly and as my brother's sister, and both of those suddenly weren't there any more,” Fletcher says. One reason it took 27 years for the band to play again is that it took them that long to understand that maybe Matthew wouldn't have resented them playing those songs under that name.

These days, the couple – married for 12 years, with two kids – live by the Kent coast. Fletcher, having been chief economist at the Office of Fair Trading, is these days professor of competition policy at the University of East Anglia. (Their bands have always been wildly overqualified: Talulah Gosh and Heavenly guitarist Peter Momtchiloff became one of the most influential people in philosophy as a commissioning editor at Oxford University Press; Heavenly keyboard player Cathy Rogers devised, produced and presented *Scrapyard Challenge* on Channel 4). But music,

they say, is still the most important thing to them both, though not in any expectation of middle-aged superstardom.

“If we weren’t doing it, we’d probably lose contact with an awful lot of people we’d rather not lose contact with,” Pursey says. Fletcher laughs. “I’m afraid the world has to suffer the fact that I need to do this.”

Le Jardin de Heavenly and Heavenly Vs Satan are both available now on Skep Wax Records. The Decline and Fall of Heavenly and Operation Heavenly will be reissued next year.

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‘Drag is just a form of entertainment. It’s older than God’ ... Graham Norton, who is now presenting his second series of Queen of the Universe. Photograph: Ellius Grace/New York Times/Redux/eyevine

[Graham Norton](#)

[Interview](#)

‘Maybe I’m a prude now!’: Graham Norton on drag, dreams, death and desire

[Zoe Williams](#)

The genial face of chatshow TV is back with Queen of the Universe. He discusses the joy of Eurovision, his late start as a novelist – and his even later marriage



[@zoesgwilliams](#)

Tue 13 Jun 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Wed 14 Jun 2023 07.31 EDT

The second series of Queen of the Universe, the drag queen singing competition hosted by [Graham Norton](#), has something unspoken about it: it is like a show about something else, camouflaged as classic, competition-format reality TV. The contestants are all so nice to one another, so supportive; Norton is so nice; the judges are all so nice. Take the niceness of Bake Off and multiply it by a thousand, and you are still nowhere close to how much the contestants are rooting for one another, even though they would all clearly appreciate the \$250,000 prize for themselves.

I ask Norton if he ever wishes that there was a bit more grit in the oyster? “Every now and again, there’s a little bit of grit in the oyster and it makes for great telly,” he says, adding: “It makes me so uncomfortable.” But then, to be real for a second: “I think the grit in the oyster is often the world around the drag performers. There’s so much grit out there; let’s just be nice shiny oysters in here. We had one contestant from India ... well, a lot of them are trying to perform in countries where there really isn’t a safe space for them to do it. In season one, I hadn’t thought that through, stupidly. It broke my heart when they came around the corner into the studio with the audience cheering, the lights ... It must have been like a waking dream – that they landed in this place, a huge mainstream television show with seemingly a limitless budget.”

I am talking to him remotely, but Norton lights up a Zoom call. He has a lovely, relaxed, sunny disposition; he turned 60 in April and looks as if he has the regrets of a man half his age, or maybe no regrets at all. But he has drifted into choppy waters with *Queen of the Universe*: since it launched in December 2021, the world has changed. In the US, states are passing laws against drag in what – taken together with the [Roe v Wade](#) catastrophe and [book bans](#) in school libraries – is probably the most alarming slide into authoritarianism since the McCarthy era. In the UK, a drag culture older than panto [has been recast](#) by anti-transgender extremists as some kind of entry-level child-grooming.



‘There’s so much grit out there; let’s just be nice shiny oysters in here’ ... Graham Norton on season 2 of Queen of the Universe. Photograph: Joel Palmer/Paramount+

A cultural form that has always been about fun, flamboyance and play is under sustained attack, yet we are having a conversation that, to my mind, is so avoidant as to be almost wilful.

“The success of Drag Race has made drag much more popular,” Norton says, “but it’s also raised the bar so ridiculously. Back in the day, when I worked in restaurants, we’d go to gay bars and there would be a drag act at the end of the night, and I’m pretty sure most of them had just one dress, one wig. They wandered out, did a few jokes, maybe sang a song, messed with the audience. And we were *delighted*. That was good enough. Now, they need to have costume reveals, they need to do [death drops](#). That comes from that American tradition – that thing of serving looks. UK drag is so firmly based in comedy, right?”

Right, yes, and also there’s quite a lot going on at the moment that is neither funny nor a look? You wouldn’t have to live in India to feel under threat as a drag queen in 2023: you could live in Tennessee.

“It must be terrifying,” he concedes. “You’re so vulnerable anyway, because you’re so obvious. Which one’s the drag queen? There are no dressing rooms in bars or anything – they have to get ready at home. And then they either walk to the bar or get an Uber; in New York that’s fine, but there must be places now where that’s not such a comfortable thing to do.”

But as much as I try to drag Norton under, he keeps bobbing back to the surface, suggesting that the anti-drag movement has a positive side. “It’s so ridiculous that I think that bit of the right wing have sort of overestimated how thick people are. I think people are gonna go: ‘Oh, wait a minute. So everything you say is bullshit?’ Because clearly we are not facing a threat from drag queens. It’s just a form of entertainment. It’s older than God.”

Norton doesn’t like to be dragged into politics, and yet that doesn’t stop us all trying; asked last year at a literary festival about JK Rowling and cancel culture, he counselled against asking “a bloke on the telly”, instead suggesting: “Talk to trans people, talk to the parents of trans kids.” He got a torrent of abuse for that and [had to leave Twitter](#), but it was a good distillation of his stance, not so much about LGBTQ+ matters, but about his place in the conversation and, indeed, the world. He is showbiz. He is not here to start a fight; he is here to have a laugh. “Your job is to entertain people and to either make people forget other awfulness or to make them believe that things aren’t as awful as they thought they were,” he says. “Maybe that’s where my positivity comes from. Or maybe I’m in this world because I have that view. I don’t know.”



‘I was always much happier as a compere; I was never comfortable being the turn’ ... Norton performing standup at the Theatre Royal in Brighton in 2003. Photograph: Andrew Hasson/Alamy

Norton was born in Clondalkin, now a suburb of Dublin, although his family moved a lot. He had lived in 13 different houses by the time he left home, not just because his dad was a sales rep for Guinness, but also because his parents really liked moving. “I was a very effeminate little boy,” he says. “I was kind of aware of it. I knew that was my job, not to get bullied. Because it was so obvious. I remember my parents sending this little fey thing – I wore my sister’s clothes, I still wet the bed – off to primary school, aged four. They must have thought, ‘What’s going to come back? Some blood on a stick? This is all that remains.’”

He speaks highly of his parents – his mother is still alive, at 91 – and their subtlety and tact, the way they never tried to stop him being who he was, out and about in the street in girls’ clothes (“I quite literally grew out of it”). “I think they knew that if they tried to stop me, it would become a thing,” he says. “These were Irish parents in the 60s. In a small town in Ireland, I think that was kind of radical that they didn’t fight any of it. They let me fly my freak flag.”

If his enduring memories of his family are of love and acceptance, he still felt stifled by sleepy, small-town life, and only began to feel any affection for the place much later. “When my father was ill and dying, and when he died, that was when I started to appreciate lots of Irish qualities that I hadn’t appreciated, or I’d dismissed and actively disliked when I was growing up. That sense of community, that idea of people being involved in other people’s lives, I hated all of that. As an adult in that situation, I just found it so beautiful. I thought it was gorgeous.”

He went to University College Cork, dropped out after two years, and fetched up in London, working in restaurants from 1984, later going to the Central School of Speech and Drama. “I was talking to a friend last night; we met when we worked in restaurants. She claims that I said in 1985 that my dream was to be a chatshow host. I don’t remember saying that.”

So you manifested your destiny, and then forgot, I say.

“And that’s why my book about manifesting hasn’t done well.”

It was while he was at Central that he was the victim of a horrifically violent mugging. He has described this as a turning point, giving him the sense of perspective and of life’s inherent absurdity that drove his work as a standup. By 1992, he was at the Edinburgh festival, with a controversial routine in which he sent up Mother Teresa. This is sometimes referred to as a drag act, but seriously, there wasn’t much more to his outfit than a tea towel, which I guess underlines his point that drag used not to have *standards*.



Norton (centre) shares a car with the actor Barbara Windsor during London Pride in 1997. Photograph: Steve Eason/Getty Images

The way he remembers it, all his wildest dreams were realised the first time he could pay his rent just by doing standup. “That was it, for child-me; that was as far as he was going to go.” Back then, on the standup circuit, he says: “I was the gay one: Julian Clary had left the circuit by then, he was a telly star. So there were three of us: me, Bert Tyler-Moore – he writes *The Windsors* now – and Scott Capurro, who had come over from America. And I think that was it. There were a few lesbians, Rhona Cameron and Donna McPhail. And that was our thing.”

He reckons he wasn’t any good. “I was always much happier as a compere; I was never comfortable being the turn. Some comperes aren’t good, and the acts hate you because it’s hard to follow someone who has just gone on and died. No one thought I was a good comic; no one thought my act was any good. But I did get some respect as a compere.”

I saw him then as a turn, and he was really funny. I remember his gaydar being way off: he thought an obviously straight guy in the audience was definitely gay, and two gay guys were Millwall supporters (they had skinheads and a staffie). In fact, I thought that was his thing: the gay comedian with no gaydar.

I don't tell him all that. I just tell him I disagree: I thought he was really funny. "I guess I got bored. I remember, I'd be on stage, and I would feel the word 'gay' in my mouth. I'd think, Oh God, I'm gonna say 'gay' again. I guess if you only saw me once, it probably wasn't that bad. But I was doing it every night."

This became, via all those comedy waypoints of the olden days – the Edinburgh festival, Radio 4's Loose Ends, etc – a show of his own on Channel 4, So Graham Norton, from 1998. He had wanted something Wednesday-evening-ish, chatshowy. Instead, they gave him the Eurotrash spot on a Friday night, for "people who have either been sat at home having a drink or come home after work drinks. That's when the show became as out there and rude as it was, because we felt that was our remit. It was a very sexually frank show. It wasn't uncomfortable – I loved Eurotrash, it was never awkward for me. But because we came in strong, came in like a wrecking ball, we ran out of road quite soon. Because, you know, there are limits. Unless we were going to have people full-on shagging on the carpet, we had to get out of it."

If he sees one of those shows now, on a Facebook memory or whatnot, he can't watch it. "I find them so hard. I guess maybe I'm a prude now. I just think: 'How was that ever on television?' But it was!"

It was groundbreaking for two reasons – first, obviously, Norton's jokes. "The innuendoes were the same: it was just [Round the Horne](#). But being openly gay turns them into something different."

Also, the audience were completely filthy as well, and that wasn't about inclusivity and LGBTQ+ – it was like a geyser of suppressed everything exploding. "It became mainstream, and mainstream telly changed. I think there was a time when mainstream telly was like you were visiting your granny: you couldn't swear, you couldn't do this or that. And we were very aware that, actually, that's not who people are."

So it is a paradox that material he was happy about at a time when it was genuinely eye-popping, he now finds unwatchable even while the mainstream has changed to accommodate it. But I get it; you are so hungry when you are young that you will say anything.

So Graham Norton ended in 2002, and by this time his career at the BBC and full ascension into *The Face* *Welcome in Every Home* had begun: Norton was the face of *Comic Relief*, of *Strictly Dance Fever*, of *How Do You Solve a Problem Like Maria?* and its surprising number of spin-offs. If everyone liked it, nobody could be offended by it, but it wasn't boring: this is a devilishly hard formula to pull off, and Norton, with his risqué reputation but fundamentally warm, amiable bearing, is one of few people who could front it. The *Graham Norton Show* started in 2007 and is still running.

If this 21st-century incarnation – legit, prime-time chatshow host – is what he wanted all along, he didn't originally want to host *Eurovision*, and turned it down at first. "I didn't need to do it, and I didn't want to not do the commentary. And then I just thought: 'What if I'm up in my little rabbit hutch, looking down at another presenter doing it?', so I did say 'yes', and I'm so glad I did. It's the gig of a lifetime."

Norton is writing a fifth novel. "My books are quite quiet," he says. "They're not exciting. One of the things I like about that bit of my life is I didn't start it till I was 50. I loved waking up at 52 being a debut something. It was a good reminder that there's more road than we think. I have just turned 60; my mum is 91. That's 30 years. It's a long time to coast. Starting the writing just reminded me, you're not dead yet."

Oh, and one more thing to embark on at a relatively late age: last year, he married Jonathan McLeod, a film-maker. "I had a joke in my speech: the vows are much more manageable. 'Till death do us part' seems more achievable at our age. If you get married at 23, that's a big ask. We only have to put up with each other for a couple of decades. And then I'll be out of here." About death, like life, he's always looking for the upside.

Season two of Queen of the Universe is available to stream now on [Paramount+](#)

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‘The woman still, the court heard, has nightmares in which she sees her dead child’s face.’ Photograph: Microgen Images/Science Photo Library/Getty Images/Science Photo Library RF

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A mother jailed for procuring her own miscarriage. Is that what we want in 21st-century Britain?

[Gaby Hinsliff](#)



The use of archaic abortion legislation in this case shows that reproductive rights hang by a slender thread

Tue 13 Jun 2023 02.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 13 Jun 2023 02.24 EDT

How should society treat a woman who desperately doesn't want to have a child?

For she was evidently desperate, the 44-year-old mother of three children – one of whom has additional needs – [jailed on Monday](#) for the 19th-century crime of procuring her own miscarriage. [The court heard](#) that she must have known for months that she was expecting; that having moved back in during lockdown with her estranged ex while pregnant with another man's child, she'd furtively Googled both how to conceal a pregnancy and how to end one, agonising over the decision for weeks.

In the end she obtained abortion drugs from the British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS) under a lockdown measure allowing for remote consultations without attending a clinic, intended solely for women less than 10 weeks pregnant. Police were called after she delivered a stillborn daughter aged between 32 and 34 weeks – well beyond the 24-week limit

for an abortion, except in cases of severe foetal abnormality or serious risk to the mother, and old enough to be viable. She still, the court heard, has nightmares in which she sees her dead child's face.

Mr Justice Pepperall noted that all this happened in the “first and most intense stage of lockdown”, a time when many parents of young children felt close to snapping; that she remains racked with guilt. But still, he concluded, she knew full well she was over the legal limit and she lied. Had she pleaded guilty from the start, she might have got a suspended sentence, but instead she got 28 months.

It's a distressing end to a distressing case for which prison simply doesn't feel like the answer. Her three children, the court heard, rely on her. What earthly purpose is served by separating them from their mother when she poses no conceivable threat to the general public? The law is the law, of course, but in this case it seems a particularly heartless ass.

What makes all this disturbing for many women, meanwhile, is that it exposes the surprisingly slender thread from which our reproductive rights hang. You might think abortion was decriminalised in [England, Scotland and Wales](#) back in 1967, but you'd be wrong: essentially David Steel's landmark bill merely created a defence to something that's still a crime (under the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act in England and Wales and under common law in Scotland; the exception, ironically, is [Northern Ireland](#), once the most draconian of all, but which recently decriminalised abortion up to 12 weeks if a doctor certifies the duration of pregnancy). And this isn't the only case in which those ancient laws have been invoked.

In 2021, a [15-year-old girl](#) faced a year-long criminal investigation over an unexplained stillbirth, which ended only after a coroner ruled her loss was due to natural causes. In 2016, a 21-year-old [Northern Irish woman](#) received a suspended sentence after being reported to police by her housemates for buying abortion drugs online. Last year in Oxford, the prosecution withdrew its [case against a woman](#) whose baby had survived her taking a dose of the stomach ulcer drug misoprostol, which is also used as an abortifacient: she said she'd previously been prescribed it by a doctor in Portugal and had taken it accidentally, mistaking it for anti-thrush tablets.

BPAS points out that it's vulnerable women – such as migrants unsure of their rights on the NHS, or women terrified of their abusive partners knowing they've ended a pregnancy – who may be more likely to fall foul of the law. Some doctors, meanwhile, fear that involving the courts may dissuade women who miscarry (for whatever reason) from seeking medical help, with the [Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists](#) arguing that prosecution is not in the broader public interest.

Britain [is not the US](#), as we must periodically remind ourselves: we lack the religious fervour animating America's culture wars and so abortion never became a partisan political issue here. It's outdated law, not politicians trying to recreate Gilead, driving these prosecutions. That said, only parliament can tackle what the Labour MP Stella Creasy calls this “hangover from another era” by finally decriminalising abortion.

That doesn't mean unleashing a free-for-all, but regulating abortion like any other medical procedure with complex ethical implications, letting parliament set the legal framework under which doctors can operate. Yes, there's a risk of reopening old battles about the content of that framework, which may be why previous governments have steered clear. But tragic cases such as this one suggest doing nothing can be the crueller choice.

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

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Nearly made a dog's dinner of that article. Photograph: Zontica/Getty Images/iStockphoto

[OpinionDiets and dieting](#)

The nutritionist made a lot of sense – until her perplexing advice about raw chicken

[Zoe Williams](#)



I thought I'd found the perfect dietary expert for my interview. There was just one factor I hadn't taken into account

Tue 13 Jun 2023 02.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 13 Jun 2023 06.02 EDT

I will never lose interest in experts, but sometimes, understandably, experts lose interest in talking to the press. I saw someone on Twitter once, describing the experience of dealing with journalists: “Dear X, sorry it’s taken me seven months to reply. I can’t do anything with your project, unfortunately, but could I interview you about this other thing – *must be within the next 20 minutes?*” You can see how that would be annoying.

Anyway, I was looking for a nutritionist, and it had to be within the next 20 minutes, and all the ones I knew were ghosting me, and the one my colleague knew turned out to be an expert in body-fat measuring, which is not the same, and I was data-scraping my neighbourhood WhatsApp group when I spoke to a young TV fixer. She’s bound to know someone, I thought – TV people know everyone. And she did.

The topic was salt – why do we need it, how much do we need, why do we crave more than we need? – and there were a couple of alarm bells that I

failed to heed. She talked a lot about electrolytes and processed foods, and immune systems and bio-availability. It all made a lot of sense, but there was an emphasis on raw meats that I found surprising. Fads come and go, and often sound unlikely – if you can remember Beyoncé doing a maple-syrup detox, you’ll swallow anything – but I definitely didn’t get the memo that we were now avoiding processed foods by eating raw chicken. Finally, something got through: bones are fine – you’re not going to overdose on salt by eating bones.

“Wait, are we talking about dogs?”

“I also do cats – all pets.”

“So you’re a *pet* nutritionist?”

As soon as the words came out of my mouth, I realised: I’d asked the youngling if she had a number for “a pet nutritionist”. I meant “a nutritionist who’s your favourite, who always takes your calls”. It’s possible that this meaning has completely fallen out of usage. Young people are great, though, aren’t they? If she could produce an actual pet nutritionist, imagine how many human nutritionists she must know.

Zoe Williams is a Guardian columnist

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‘Plastic consumption is due to nearly double by 2050.’ Photograph: Westend61/Getty Images

[OpinionClimate crisis](#)

Whisper it, but the boom in plastic production could be about to come to a juddering halt

[Geoffrey Lean](#)



A plastics treaty is on the cards – and it could join the rescue of the ozone layer as a landmark success in environmental diplomacy

Tue 13 Jun 2023 05.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 13 Jun 2023 05.19 EDT

Plastic production has soared some 30-fold since it came into widespread use in the 1960s. We now [churn out](#) about 430m tonnes a year, easily outweighing the combined mass of all 8 billion people alive. Left unabated, it continues to accelerate: plastic consumption is due to [nearly double](#) by 2050.

Now there is a chance that this huge growth will stop, even go into reverse. This month in Paris, the world's governments agreed to draft a new treaty to control plastics. The UN says it could [cut production](#) by a massive 80% by 2040.

Such a treaty – scheduled for agreement next year – cannot come soon enough.

The amount of plastic dumped in the oceans is due to more than double by 2040. Producing single-use plastic alone emits more greenhouse gases than

the whole UK. And microplastics have been found in [human blood](#), [lungs](#), livers, kidneys and spleens – and have [crossed the placenta](#). No one knows the full effects on the planet – or the impact of the 3,200 potentially harmful chemicals in plastics on our health.

Governments finally began to call a halt in March last year, resolving to “end plastic pollution” at a meeting of the [United Nations](#) Environment Programme (UNEP) and calling for a series of negotiating meetings on a possible treaty. The recent meeting in Paris was the second such “plastic summit”. Three more are scheduled before the end of next year.

Whisper it, but – with hard work, determination and a lot of good luck – the plastics treaty might join the Montreal protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer as a landmark success in environmental diplomacy.

It has several important advantages. It is backed by immense public concern – uniting a whole range of issues from litter to the oceans, human health to climate breakdown – which can be translated into political pressure. And no new technology is needed: UNEP says the 80% reduction can be achieved using proven practices.

These include simply eliminating much unnecessary single-use plastic packaging, ensuring reuse, and replacing many instances of plastic use with more sustainable biodegradable materials. [Governments could also](#) discourage the production of new plastics by taxing it and removing industry subsidies.

Crucially, like the negotiations over ozone, it has some strong business support. A 100-strong Business Coalition for a Global [Plastics](#) Treaty – which includes giant users of plastics such as Unilever and Coca-Cola – is pressing for tough regulatory measures.

And, as in recent successful UN agreements, an alliance of governments committed to change is leading the charge. This High Ambition Coalition includes all G7 countries except Italy and the US. Importantly, Japan – which had opposed a strong treaty – recently switched sides to join it.

UNEP also has a good record of cementing treaties. It has brokered a host of pacts, covering issues from wildlife to toxic wastes, and the historic Montreal protocol.

That protocol – the first treaty to be ratified by every country on Earth – has phased out the use of nearly 100 substances that attack the planet's protective ozone. As a byproduct, it has done more to slow climate breakdown than any other international agreement, since many of those substances also heat the atmosphere.

None of this means it will be easy. When I was reporting the story, I was told that agreeing the Montreal protocol was so dicey that the text could not immediately be translated from English into the other five official UN languages for fear of upsetting its delicate verbal compromises.

Weighty, determined opposition to radical measures comes from a powerful minority of plastic-producing countries [including China, India and the US](#). And companies that have obstructed action on global heating are mobilising. Ninety-nine per cent of plastics are made with fossil fuels and the industry is [determined](#) to expand their production to offset what it is losing to clean sources of energy.

There are three main sources of contention. The majority of countries want binding global rules, while their opponents insist on voluntary ones. Most countries want to limit plastics production and ban dangerous substances, while the manufacturers focus on recycling what is produced.

And the majority want decisions to be made by vote, while many of those opposed want to keep a veto by demanding consensus. This issue held up substantive talks in Paris for two days, and is still unresolved. And beyond all this lies the ever-thorny question of who will pay for the change.

All in all, some kind of treaty is likely to emerge. How strong and effective it is will depend on how these issues are settled.

- Geoffrey Lean is a specialist environment correspondent and author

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The chief medical officer for England, Chris Witty, left, prime minister Boris Johnson and chief scientific adviser, Patrick Vallance, on 9 March 2020. Photograph: Alberto Pizzoli/AFP/Getty Images

[OpinionCoronavirus](#)

Don't blame scientists for what went wrong with Covid – ministers were the ones calling the shots

[Devi Sridhar](#)



As the long-awaited UK inquiry kicks off, it's the people in power who should be under the spotlight, not the experts who did their best to advise them

Tue 13 Jun 2023 03.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 13 Jun 2023 11.55 EDT

As the Covid inquiry kicks off oral hearings today, we will once again debate what exactly happened in 2020 and 2021, and who is ultimately responsible for the decisions made. The government has already started to close in on scientists and point the finger at them for the poor response in the early stages of the pandemic. The prime minister, Rishi Sunak, has said it was a [mistake to “empower scientists”](#) and the BMJ pointed to the former health secretary Matt Hancock [making “science the fall guy”](#) in the blame game over what went wrong.

But it's vital that the inquiry separates out what were scientific questions, that independent advisers and academics could provide data and input on, and what were leadership decisions. Policy measures such as closing gyms or schools or play parks, or the introduction of mandatory face coverings, were conveyed as “scientific” decisions, but they weren't. Scientists could

present the probable risks and benefits of certain policy options, but the final decision didn't lie with them.

For example, when considering whether to close gyms, a scientific question would be: "What is the risk of transmission within a gym setting? How many would become severely ill and need hospitalisation, and how many would die?" That type of analysis, as well as guidance on measures to reduce transmission in that setting, could be given, along with an assessment of how certain we were about the knowledge. This is what Covid-19 advisory group members were tasked with.

For scientists, the challenge was filling in the puzzle pieces about Sars-CoV-2, from how transmissible it was, and risks of transmission in various settings, to the hospitalisation rate and burden on healthcare services. And, of course, modelling possible future scenarios. Certainly, we can evaluate how well they performed these tasks, and whether their data and predictions were reasonable given the situation.

In terms of the response itself, public health scientists, including myself, had our own ideas for what the best approach would be (including learning from other countries that had had earlier waves of Covid-19) and these were presented to ministers in the form of briefings and papers – just as with any other area of policy, from defence to the economy. The pandemic brought a new immediacy to scientific advice, but it didn't fundamentally change the job of elected politicians, which was to balance these multiple streams of advice, and decide what the next stage of the response would be.

How the UK government sidestepped the data on coronavirus – video explainer

Another political decision was over whether face masks should be mandatory for children in primary schools. Again public health scientists can answer, "What's the risk of transmission within a primary school classroom?" and "How effective are face coverings if used appropriately at reducing transmission?" But this was balanced against the advice from child psychologists who provided evidence on the impact of face coverings on emotional and speech development, especially for young children with

special needs, and with input from headteachers on the practical challenges of implementing mandates.

Ministers then had to decide whether to introduce these, and if the benefits outweighed the costs.

What's particularly surprising is when government ministers such as Sunak, when he was chancellor, chose not to take any scientific advice at all in policy decisions, such as in the launch of "Eat Out to Help Out". In this scheme, the public were encouraged and actively subsidised to spend money in one of the riskiest settings for transmission: indoor hospitality. They were led to believe it was safe, even though scientists could clearly predict this would lead to onwards transmission and would probably undo the progress made in bringing case incidence down going into autumn.

If scientific advice had been considered more thoroughly, then other approaches with similar economic benefits might have been used, such as expanded outdoor dining, takeaways and deliveries, and local vouchers and support schemes.

The [Covid inquiry](#) starting point should be that government has a responsibility to ensure that its citizens are "safe enough" from risks that it can manage. We expect the water from our taps to be clean and not give us cholera, the food in shops not to poison us, and our roads to have speed limits and traffic rules to prevent accidents. This came to the forefront in the Covid-19 response: governments were expected to protect their populations and parse the question of "how safe is safe enough".

There was no perfect path through the pandemic as various countries struggled with waves of hospitalisations and high death tolls. Government ministers had to make rapid decisions, and countries that did better in terms of health and economic measures (such as Denmark, Norway, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand) seriously considered the trade-offs, and made judgments with strong and competent leadership. There was no way that life could continue as it did before Sars-CoV-2 – some action had to be taken.

Scientists did their best to rapidly collect data about a new pathogen, analyse it and provide factual advice to governments on the risks that Covid-19 posed to human health, healthcare services and economic stability. They also could suggest various public health solutions to the challenge, but what leaders decided to do with that advice in terms of policy was 100% political.

Scientific advice can provide data on the risks and benefits of closing schools or gyms or of “doing nothing”, but no scientist ever had the executive power to make policy decisions. This was the responsibility of elected officials. And knowing my academic colleagues, none of us would have wanted that power either.

- Prof Devi Sridhar is chair of global public health at the University of Edinburgh

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2023.06.13 - Around the world

- [Donald Trump Ex-president finds no new lawyers in time for Mar-a-Lago documents arraignment](#)
- ['We're ready' Miami police prepared for Trump arraignment](#)
- [Republicans Donald Trump boosted by support from voters ahead of arraignment](#)
- ['I know he's capable' California's Gavin Newsom backs Joe Biden on Fox News](#)



Donald Trump with his valet and co-defendant, Walt Nauta. Photograph: Alex Brandon/AP

[Donald Trump](#)

Trump finds no new lawyers for court appearance in Mar-a-Lago case

Exclusive: Trump is expected to be represented by existing lawyers Todd Blanche and Chris Kise

- [US politics – live updates](#)

[Hugo Lowell](#) in Doral, Miami
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Tue 13 Jun 2023 10.47 EDTFirst published on Tue 13 Jun 2023 05.00 EDT

Donald Trump is expected to be represented at his first court appearance to face federal criminal charges for [retaining national security materials and](#)

[obstruction of justice](#) by two of his existing lawyers, despite trying to recruit a local Florida lawyer willing to join his legal defense team.

The lawyers making an appearance with Trump on Tuesday will be the top former federal prosecutor Todd Blanche and the former [Florida](#) solicitor general Chris Kise, according to people familiar with the matter. Trump's co-defendant, his valet Walt Nauta, will be represented by Stanley Woodward.

Trump and his legal team spent the afternoon before his arraignment interviewing potential lawyers but the interviews did not result in any joining the team in time for Trump's initial court appearance scheduled for 3pm ET on Tuesday after several attorneys declined to take him as a client.

Trump has also seemingly been unable to find a specialist national security lawyer, eligible to possess a security clearance, to help him navigate the Espionage Act charges.

The last-minute scramble to find a veteran trial lawyer was a familiar process for Trump, who has had difficulty hiring and keeping lawyers to defend him in the numerous federal and state criminal cases that have dogged him through his presidency and after he left the White House.

After interviewing a slate of potential lawyers at his Trump Doral resort, the former president settled on having Kise appearing as the local counsel admitted to the southern district of Florida as a one-off, with Blanche being sponsored by him to appear pro hac vice, one of the people said.

Blanche and Kise had dinner with Trump and other advisers on Monday at the BLT Prime restaurant at the Doral.

Among the Florida lawyers who turned down Trump was Howard Srebnick, who had expressed an interest in representing the former president at trial as early as last week in part due to the high fees involved, but ultimately was not allowed to after conferring with his law partners, the person said.

The other prominent lawyer who declined to work with Trump was David Markus, who recently defended the Florida Democratic gubernatorial candidate Andrew Gillum against charges that he lied to the FBI and funnelled campaign contributions into his personal accounts, the person said.

Trump and his team have interviewed the corruption attorney Benedict Kuehne, who was indicted in 2008 for money laundering before the charges were dropped, the person said. But he has his own baggage as he faces disbarment for contempt of court in a recent civil suit he lost.

The other interviews are understood to have been with William Barzee, as well as Bruce Zimet, the former chief assistant US attorney in Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach.



Donald Trump arrives in Miami a day before his scheduled arraignment on a 37-count federal indictment involving classified documents. Photograph: Kyle Mazza/Anadolu Agency via Getty Images

Part of the problem of recruiting new lawyers has been Trump's reputation for being a notoriously difficult client who has a record of declining legal advice and seeking to have his lawyers act as attack dogs or political aides rather than attorneys bound by ethics rules, people close to the process said.

The other concern for the top lawyers in Florida being contacted by Trump's advisers has been the perceived reputational damage that could come from defending the former president, the people said, not just because of his politics but also [because of the strength of the indictment](#), which could potentially lead to years in prison.

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By using Trump's own taped admissions about retaining national defense information and the witness accounts of his employees, the indictment gave compelling evidence of Trump's efforts to hoard the country's most sensitive secrets and obstruct the government's attempts to get them back.

Trump is said to still be searching for a lawyer in the mold of Roy Cohn, the ruthless New York fixer who defended and mentored him before he was later disbarred – and the fear of potentially being asked to take similar actions has been a persistent issue.

That fear has loomed large for numerous lawyers Trump's advisers have contacted, the people said, in particular after Trump might have made Evan Corcoran, another former lawyer who withdrew from his defense in the [Mar-a-Lago](#) documents investigation, into a witness against him.

According to the indictment, after Trump was issued a subpoena last year seeking the return of any classified documents, Trump took steps to remove boxes of documents from a storage room that Corcoran intended to search through in order to find materials responsive to the subpoena.

The steps Trump took to have those boxes removed from the storage room, [an episode now at the heart of the obstruction charge](#), caused Corcoran to certify a false certification to the justice department confirming that no further documents were at the property, the indictment said.

As Trump's search for new lawyers in Florida continues, Blanche is expected to take the lead role in the Mar-a-Lago documents case in addition to leading the team defending Trump against state charges in New York for paying hush money to an adult film star in 2016.

Though Kise is expected to appear alongside Blanche in federal district court in Miami, he has primarily handled civil litigation for Trump since he came off the documents case last October and is not expected to be on the trial team proper, a person familiar with the matter said.

The scramble to find Florida lawyers came after Jim Trusty and John Rowley, the two remaining Trump lawyers after the earlier resignation of Tim Parlatore and the recusal of Corcoran, became the latest casualties of a legal team undermined by turmoil and infighting, the [Guardian previously reported](#).

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Miami police prepared for Trump arraignment – video

[Miami](#)

‘We’re ready’: Miami police prepared for Trump arraignment

Police chief says department taking Trump court appearance ‘extremely seriously’ and that it can handle crowds of up to 50,000

[Edward Helmore](#) and agencies

Mon 12 Jun 2023 16.14 EDTLast modified on Tue 13 Jun 2023 11.46 EDT

As court officials set up barricades and police tape around the Miami courthouse where Donald Trump is due [to be arraigned](#) on Tuesday afternoon, police officials sought to assure local residents they would safely handle any protests.

“Make no mistake about it, we’re taking this event extremely seriously, and there’s a potential for things to take a turn for the worse,” said the city’s police chief, Manuel Morales, adding “but that’s not the [Miami](#) way.

“We’re bringing enough resources to handle crowds, anywhere from 5,000 to 50,000,” he added. “We don’t expect any issues. We’re ready. Ready for it to be over and done.”

Miami’s mayor, Francis Suarez, also said he was confident the city’s police will be able to handle the crowds and any protests if they occur as Trump is due to be booked and brought before a judge on [federal criminal charges](#).

“I have full faith and confidence our police will have the right action plan and resources in place,” Suarez said during the news conference. “We are prepared for what will happen tomorrow.”

Public reaction to Trump's scheduled arraignment at the Wilkie D Ferguson federal courthouse may be a window into the shifting political character of Miami and Trump's strong support among Latino Americans.

The Associated Press reported that Alex Otaola, a Cuban-born YouTube personality who is running for Miami-Dade county mayor, has rallied followers to show up in support of the former president.

“Those of us who believe that America's salvation only comes if [Donald Trump](#) is elected for a second term, we will gather on Tuesday,” Otaola said in a YouTube clip.

Trump left Bedminster, New Jersey, where he had played golf at his club there over the weekend, on Monday to fly into Miami airport and stay overnight at his Trump National Doral Miami golf club.

[According to CBS News](#), a motorcade protected by Miami-Dade police will escort Trump to the downtown courthouse where he will be handed over to the security of US marshals for his arraignment.

“In there you're going to have City of Miami, probably the chief himself, you're going to have Miami-Dade county, Secret Service, FBI, the marshals. They'll all be there to make sure there's a unified command,” the retired Miami police chief Jorge Colina told the outlet.



Donald Trump looks to the crowd after speaking during the North Carolina Republican party convention in Greensboro on Saturday. Photograph: George Walker IV/AP

[Donald Trump](#)

Donald Trump boosted by support from Republican voters ahead of arraignment

Poll shows 80% of likely GOP voters think ex-president should be eligible for re-election even if convicted but senators are less keen

- [US politics – live updates](#)

[Martin Pengelly](#) in New York

[@MartinPengelly](#)

Mon 12 Jun 2023 10.55 EDTLast modified on Mon 12 Jun 2023 11.16 EDT

Donald Trump [headed for Florida](#) on Monday ahead of his expected Tuesday arraignment on 37 federal counts related to his retention of classified records with resounding backing from Republican voters and growing opposition among senior GOP senators.

According to [a CBS News/YouGov poll](#), 80% of likely Republican voters think Trump should remain eligible for re-election to the presidency even if he is convicted.

However, an unnamed former Senate aide [told the Hill](#) that leaders including Mitch McConnell, the minority leader, and his deputy, John Thune, want Trump “to go away, so they wouldn’t be very upset if this is the thing that finally takes him out”.

Trump faces an array of charges over his retention of classified documents including national security information, under the Espionage Act and as laid out in the indictment dramatically unsealed on Friday.

Added to his state indictment in New York, over a hush money payment to the porn star Stormy Daniels, the first former president ever to face criminal charges now faces 71 counts.

Trump denies all wrongdoing, including in other cases involving election subversion, his business affairs and a \$5m fine levied in New York after he was found liable for sexual assault and defamation against the writer E Jean Carroll.

Trump pleaded not guilty in the New York hush money case and is expected to do so again in the federal classified records case in Florida on Tuesday. He is slated to speak at Trump National Golf Club Bedminster in New Jersey on Tuesday night following the hearing.

The former president, who will [turn 77](#) on Wednesday, is [reportedly](#) searching for new legal representation but on Sunday [the CBS News/YouGov poll](#) gave him some cheerful reading.

As well as 80% backing among likely Republican voters for running even if convicted, the same survey showed 76% [thought](#) the indictment was politically motivated and 61% said the case would not change their view of Trump either way.

Charges in the classified records case [carry sentences](#) of up to 20 years and fines of \$250,000.

Jack Smith, the special counsel who brought the charges and who continues to investigate Trump's election subversion, [told reporters](#) on Friday he would seek "a speedy trial ... consistent with the public interest and the rights of the accused".

Trump responded with anger and defiance. Smith has also become a target for the former president's competitors in the Republican primary he [dominates](#).

From Trump's closest challenger, Ron DeSantis, to his former vice-president, Mike Pence, major and minor candidates have criticised the special counsel and claimed Trump is being treated unfairly.

So have Trump allies in Congress, notably including the South Carolina senator Lindsey Graham, who [spilled into anger](#) during an interview with ABC on Sunday.

"I think [Donald Trump](#) is stronger today politically than he was before," Graham said. "We'll have an election, and we'll have a trial, but I promise you this: most Americans believe, most Republicans believe, that the law is used as a weapon against Donald Trump."

Graham also said that though he was "not justifying [Trump's] behaviour", he would "not change my support for Donald Trump".

Republicans in a House caucus dominated by the far right have flocked to Trump's defence but senior senators have long taken a more distant approach.

Responding to the indictment, the Utah senator Mitt Romney, a former presidential nominee, said: “Mr Trump brought these charges upon himself by not only taking classified documents, but by refusing to simply return them when given numerous opportunities to do so.”

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Gavin Newsom has been painted as a radical liberal by Hannity in several recent segments. Photograph: John G Mabanglo/EPA

[California](#)

‘I know he’s capable’: California’s Gavin Newsom backs Joe Biden on Fox News

Governor spoke with host Sean Hannity about the state’s housing crisis and criticized Ron DeSantis while praising the president

[Maanvi Singh](#) and [Dani Anguiano](#)

Mon 12 Jun 2023 23.07 EDTFirst published on Mon 12 Jun 2023 10.00 EDT

California’s Gavin Newsom sat down with Fox News’s [Sean Hannity](#) for a wide-ranging interview on Monday night that fueled speculation about his presidential aspirations – even as Newsom again said he had no plans to run for the presidency in 2024.

The Democratic governor's decision to appear on Hannity confounded many of his supporters, but Newsom, who routinely spars with Republicans on social media, took the opportunity to defend his state's record and its policies, with a senior adviser telling Politico that he viewed the interview as "going into the lion's den".

The interview opened with Newsom and Hannity arguing over immigration, Joe Biden and the economy. The [Fox News](#) host repeatedly insisted the president is not up to the job and described Newsom, long viewed as a presidential hopeful, as articulate and more energetic.

"I'm rooting for our president, and I have great confidence in his leadership," Newsom said before again defending Biden's record. "I know he's capable. I see results ... real results."

The [California](#) governor said he would not enter the Democratic primary and would continue to support Biden.

Hannity, who has run several recent segments painting Newsom as a radical liberal who wants to "bring California's failures to the rest of the country", also questioned Newsom about population decline in the state, and California's homelessness crisis.

"The state has not made progress in the two decades as it relates to homelessness," Newsom said. "Housing costs are too high. Our regulatory thickets are too problematic."

"The difference between me and other politicians is: I own this. I take responsibility for this. I love this state," Newsom said, describing his administration's efforts to reduce homelessness by putting more money toward tackling the issue and suing cities that have blocked efforts to expand housing.

Hannity said the back and forth were the product of a "friendly discussion" and praised Newsom for taking part in the interview.

"I appreciate your passion for your state. I appreciate the fact that you fight for the things you believe in," he said. "It's just I don't agree with your

views.”

Newsom has been touring red states and running billboard ads promoting abortion rights in Texas, Mississippi and other Republican-led states. Hannity, a longtime ally of Donald Trump who recently moderated a deferential town hall with the former president, contacted Newsom, according to Politico.

Newsom and Hannity have reportedly known each other for years, though the governor has not appeared on Fox since 2010. Although the Democratic governor often criticises the conservative network for its flagrant promotion of election conspiracy theories and fearmongering about crime in liberal states like California, he has also shown a zeal for sparring with rightwing figures.

Last week, he doubled down on his feud with the Florida governor and 2024 Republican candidate Ron DeSantis by threatening criminal charges after flights chartered by the state sent Latin American migrants to California. Newsom addressed the incident in his interview with Hannity, telling him that Florida officials lied to the people seeking asylum who were transported to California and told them there would be jobs waiting for them.

“I talked to every single one of them. They were lied to. They were misled,” he said. “What kind of faith tradition allows this?”

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after newsletter promotion

The governor also said he would gladly debate DeSantis, who he said would lose in 2024. “Trump is going to clean his clock,” Newsom said.

Newsom has insisted he has “sub-zero” interest in running for president while placing himself at the forefront of political conversations in recent months.

He touted a quixotic plan to push for a constitutional amendment regulating guns, placing age limits, background check requirements and other restrictions on gun ownerships.

With the country bitterly divided over gun rights, such an amendment is highly unlikely to ever pass – two-thirds of the House and Senate, or two-thirds of all states would have to agree to a constitutional convention to make it happen. Newsom is proposing the latter route, which has never happened before. Legal experts also warn it would set a dangerous norm.

He announced the gun rights plan on NBC’s Today Show, saying that the proposal was crafted in response to the federal court rolling back several gun safety laws.

It is conspicuous, the Sacramento Bee’s editorial board wrote in response to Fox promoting an interview with the governor, that the governor has not made time for interviews with local outlets. “Good luck on Hannity, Governor Newsom,” they wrote. “We’ll be watching, and we’ll also be watching for you to be a little more present in California media, since you’re not running for president.”

The second part of the interview, in which Newsom and Hannity will discuss, among other issues, the Chinese spy balloon, will air later this week, Hannity said.

The Associated Press contributed to this report

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Boris Johnson has told allies to stay away from the vote in the hope of depriving the moment of drama. Photograph: Daniel Leal/AFP/Getty Images

[Boris Johnson](#)

Boris Johnson tells allies not to vote against Partygate report

Former PM in fresh controversy as he is accused of ‘clear breach’ of rules by taking up new job as Mail columnist

[Kiran Stacey](#), [Rowena Mason](#) and [Ben Quinn](#)

Fri 16 Jun 2023 13.03 EDTFirst published on Fri 16 Jun 2023 04.05 EDT

Boris Johnson called off his parliamentary supporters threatening to vote against the finding that he misled parliament, as he appeared to run out of road in his battle over the Partygate scandal.

The former prime minister asked his allies not to oppose a motion in the House of Commons on Monday endorsing the findings of the privileges

committee, which found he [deliberately misled parliament](#) and was part of a campaign to intimidate MPs investigating him.

Johnson has lashed out at the committee as a “kangaroo court” and strongly rejected its findings. But he told his small band of allies in parliament that there was no point in voting against the report, because it would have no practical consequences.

The former prime minister is said to be focusing now on his life outside parliament, with a new column for the Daily Mail detailing his decision to take a weight loss drug while he was a cabinet minister in an effort to counteract “40 years of moral failure, 40 years of weakness in the face of temptation”.

However, he was soon caught in a new controversy over his failure to seek prior approval for the role from the watchdog on post-government appointments. The Advisory Committee on Business Appointments said Johnson committed a “clear breach” of rules on former ministers taking up new jobs by telling an appointments body only half an hour before the public announcement.

Instead of using his new column to attack his rival, Rishi Sunak, Johnson detailed his decision to take Ozempic, a weight loss drug, while a cabinet minister. He said it helped him initially before making him sick, and then made the case that it may “not be enough” to rely on people’s willpower to tackle the obesity crisis, saying there was nothing morally wrong with using weight loss drugs.

Johnson has released furious statements about the findings of the privileges committee and last week attacked Sunak’s failings in No 10, so his decision to use his new platform for a less political subject is likely to be a relief to Downing Street.

The debate over the privileges committee report is now likely to be a heated but largely symbolic. If no MPs oppose the motion, then it may go through without a vote, meaning his supporters in parliament will not be counted. Some Conservative MPs had been expected to back the motion on the

report, with others planning to be strategically absent and a handful saying they would try to vote it down.

The report, which was published on Thursday, found Johnson lied to the Commons when he told MPs he believed he had not broken lockdown rules by attending parties in Downing Street during the pandemic.

The committee said that had Johnson still been an MP, it [would have recommended he be given a 90-day suspension](#). Johnson stood down before the report was published however, leaving members instead to vote on the recommendation that he not be granted a former member's pass.

The Tory former cabinet minister Damian Green said on Friday morning that he intended to vote for the report, calling it "very clearcut".

"I think it's important that parliament respects its own systems," he told BBC Radio 4's Today programme. "We set up this committee asking them to do this very serious report. They've come up with what is clearly a very damning set of conclusions. If parliament runs away from that then it calls into question whether we should carry on having this kind of self-regulation."

Johnson's allies concede that they expect parliament to approve the report, with opposition parties united in favour of it and mass abstentions expected on the Tory benches.

But several of those closest to the former prime minister had been promising to target any Conservative MP who does turn up to vote in favour.

One Johnson backer [told the Guardian](#) on Thursday: "They just don't realise the extent of anger they have created, and that will be manifested." Nadine Dorries, who has promised to resign from her Mid Bedfordshire seat in protest at not being given a peerage but has not yet done so, has warned that "deselections will follow" for Tory MPs who vote for the report.

Downing Street has still not said whether Rishi Sunak will attend Monday's vote, with the government declining to put pressure on MPs. The Telegraph [reported on Friday](#) the prime minister planned to meet an unnamed foreign leader on that day, which might render him unable to vote.

Penny Mordaunt, the Commons leader, made it clear on Thursday the government would not put pressure on Tory MPs to vote one way or the other on Monday. She told the Commons she wanted MPs to “read the report ... make their own judgments about it, and take the task that is our privilege to do seriously and soberly”.

On Friday night, a report in the Times suggested that 25 notebooks from Johnson's time in office were being withheld from him by the government after a review by the security services found pages of highly sensitive material.

A source close to Johnson told the paper there was “no national security-sensitive material” in the notebooks – which remain at the centre of a legal battle between the government and the Covid public inquiry. The source described them as “daily jottings from unclassified meetings”.

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[Politics live with Andrew Sparrow](#)Politics

Boris Johnson: former PM committed ‘clear breach’ of rules with timing of Daily Mail role, says watchdog – as it happened

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Newspaper composite featuring headlines The Times, Mirror, The Guardian, i, The National, Metro, Daily Mail and The Yorkshire Post
Composite: The Times / Mirror / The Guardian / i / The National / Metro / Daily Mail / The Yorkshire Post

[What the papers say](#)[Newspapers](#)

‘End of the road for Johnson’: what the papers say as the privileges committee delivers its verdict

UK newspaper front pages are near universal in their condemnation of the former prime minister – with only a couple of exceptions

[Jonathan Yerushalmy](#)

Thu 15 Jun 2023 23.12 EDTLast modified on Thu 15 Jun 2023 23.22 EDT

A day after the House of Commons privileges committee [found that Boris Johnson deliberately misled parliament over Partygate](#), the UK newspaper

front pages offer a mostly damning verdict of the former prime minister's behaviour – with some notable exceptions.

The **Guardian** sums up “The verdict on Johnson”, saying he “Misled parliament”, “Undermined Democracy” and was “Complicit in abuse of MPs”.

The paper notes that the former PM would have been faced with a “90-day suspension had he not quit”.

Guardian front page, Friday 16 June 2023: The verdict on Johnson
pic.twitter.com/e9wOf2ugAe

— The Guardian (@guardian) [June 15, 2023](#)

The **Financial Times** reports “Johnson’s repeated lies to MPs condemned in searing report”.

On its front page, the paper quotes directly from the report saying “He [deliberately] misled the House on an issue of the greatest importance ... and did so repeatedly”.

Just published: front page of the Financial Times UK edition Friday June 16 <https://t.co/oADFTGoAu7> pic.twitter.com/zu32afpNmG

— Financial Times (@FinancialTimes) [June 15, 2023](#)

The **Times** describes it as the “End of the road for Johnson”. After holding parliament in contempt “five times”, the paper quotes allies of prime minister Rishi Sunak as saying that Boris Johnson’s “political career is over”.

Friday's Times: End of the road for Johnson [#TomorrowsPapersToday](#)
[#TheTimes](#) [#Times](#) pic.twitter.com/AwcHWTUg0

— Tomorrows Papers Today (@TmorrowsPapers) [June 15, 2023](#)

The **Metro** isn't as definitive, asking "Is proper whopper a career stopper?"

The paper notes that Johnson has described the findings as "deranged", "tripe" and "a lie".

Tomorrow's Paper Today □

IS PROPER WHOPPER A CAREER STOPPER?

□ Partygate report bashes Boris [#TomorrowsPapersToday](https://twitter.com/BiKSNJsd8o)
[pic.twitter.com/BiKSNJsd8o](https://twitter.com/BiKSNJsd8o)

— Metro (@MetroUK) [June 15, 2023](#)

The **Telegraph** – Johnson's former employer – notes that that he could become "the first former prime minister to be held in contempt of the Commons for misleading MPs".

For that to happen though, MPs first have to vote on whether to accept the findings of the report. The paper says that even Johnson's allies expect the vote to pass on Monday: "Just seven of the 352 Tory MPs yesterday publicly indicated they would vote against".

But, as the paper's headline notes, "Johnson allies vow to oust MPs who vote for his censure".

The front page of tomorrow's Daily Telegraph:

Johnson allies vow to oust MPs who vote for his censure [#TomorrowsPapersToday](https://twitter.com/4SLW1YN78H)

Sign up for the Front Page newsletter <https://t.co/x8AV4OoUh6>
[pic.twitter.com/4SLW1YN78H](https://t.co/x8AV4OoUh6)

— The Telegraph (@Telegraph) [June 15, 2023](#)

The **Mail** also leads on the so-called “Tory revolt over ‘vindictive’ bid to banish Boris”.

The paper says MPs and grassroots activists were “left furious” after the committee called for Johnson to be “permanently denied the Commons pass offered to all former MPs, effectively barring him from the parliamentary estate.”

Friday's Mail: Tory Revolt Over 'Vindictive' Bid To Banish Boris
[#TomorrowsPapersToday](#) [#DailyMail](#) [#Mail](#)
pic.twitter.com/o0NT8nwzTc

— Tomorrows Papers Today (@TmorrowsPapers) [June 15, 2023](#)

Under the headline “The most spiteful stitch-up in history of politics”, the **Express** offers up an editorial on its front page.

“Boris Johnson has been hounded from Parliament by a spiteful Westminster machine that loathes him”, it reads.

Friday's Express: The Most Spiteful Stitch-Up In History Of Politics
[#TomorrowsPapersToday](#) [#DailyExpress](#) [#Express](#)
pic.twitter.com/x3BPT7c62u

— Tomorrows Papers Today (@TmorrowsPapers) [June 15, 2023](#)

The **Mirror** appears to have pre-empted some of these attack lines: its front page reads “He’ll tell you it’s a witch-hunt... He’ll tell you it’s democracy betrayed... He’ll tell you he did nothing wrong... But just one word tells his story... Liar”.

Friday's front page: Judgement day for
Boris <https://t.co/k3j9kZuI7g> [#TomorrowsPapersToday](#)
pic.twitter.com/hfKasttU1v

— The Mirror (@DailyMirror) [June 15, 2023](#)

The **Yorkshire Post** goes for a simpler “Liar, Liar” on its front page, calling the report a “Historic triumph for Parliamentary democracy”.

Yorkshire Post: Liar, Liar [#TomorrowsPapersToday](#)
[pic.twitter.com/nnsiiMxUBU](https://www.pic.twitter.com/nnsiiMxUBU)

— George Mann 🦋 (@sgfmann) [June 15, 2023](#)

Scottish paper, **The National**, repeats the quotes the Scottish Tory leader on its front page as saying, “Boris is a truthful man”.

The paper says Douglas Ross’s words have “come back to haunt him as damning committee findings are published”.

Tomorrow's front page □ Douglas Ross's words come back to haunt him as damning committee findings are published
[pic.twitter.com/aJJZIMrQkF](https://www.pic.twitter.com/aJJZIMrQkF)

— The National (@ScotNational) [June 15, 2023](#)

Finally, splashing with a particularly forlorn-looking picture of the former prime minister, the **i** says “He lied and lied and lied”.

The paper quotes from the report, saying some of Johnson’s evidence was “so disingenuous” it showed “deliberate attempts to mislead”.

The **i**: He lied, and lied, and lied. [#TomorrowsPapersToday](#)
[pic.twitter.com/MELv7bKsK2](https://www.pic.twitter.com/MELv7bKsK2)

— George Mann 🦋 (@sgfmann) [June 15, 2023](#)

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Boris Johnson out running near his home in Brightwell-cum-Sotwell, Oxfordshire, on the day the report was released. Photograph: Toby Melville/Reuters

[Partygate](#)

[Explainer](#)

Partygate report: key findings of Commons privileges committee

How Boris Johnson was found to have misled MPs and why report recommended a 90-day suspension from parliament

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

[@peterwalker99](#)

Thu 15 Jun 2023 07.51 EDTFirst published on Thu 15 Jun 2023 05.23 EDT

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The House of Commons privileges committee has found that Boris Johnson [repeatedly misled MPs](#) when he told them he knew nothing about lockdown-breaking social gatherings in and around Downing Street. These are the main points of a highly damning and hugely detailed report.

Key findings on wrongdoing

Johnson was found to have committed five serious offences:

1. Deliberately misleading the Commons when he repeatedly said that either no Covid rules were broken, or that he had been assured none were broken.
2. Deliberately misleading the privileges committee when he reiterated the same argument.
3. Breaching confidence by leaking part of the report in advance in his letter last Friday when he announced his departure as an MP.
4. "Impugning" the committee, and thus parliamentary processes.

5. Complicity in a “campaign of abuse and attempted intimidation of the committee”.

The punishment

If Johnson had not resigned as an MP, the committee would have recommended a 90-day suspension from parliament – extremely long, and well beyond the threshold needed for his constituents to have sought a byelection.

The original recommendation was to have been a 20-day suspension, still greater than the 10-day minimum for a possible byelection. This was increased after Johnson’s letter resigning as an MP on Friday revealed parts of the findings and condemned the process as unfair and biased.

The committee has recommended that he should not be given a pass allowing him access to parliament as an ex-MP, a traditional privilege.

The punishment could have been greater

Minutes of the committee’s final pre-publication meeting on 13 June show that two MPs – Labour’s Yvonne Fovargue and Allan Dorans of the SNP – sought to amend the punishment so Johnson was expelled altogether from parliament. This was voted down. The last MP to be expelled was Labour’s Garry Allighan in 1947, after he sold information about private party meetings to journalists and then lied about it.

The key section

Sixty pages into the report is arguably the central section, summing up what Johnson did and why it matters:

The contempt was all the more serious because it was committed by the prime minister, the most senior member of the government. There is no precedent for a prime minister having been found to have deliberately misled the house.

He misled the house on an issue of the greatest importance to the house and to the public, and did so repeatedly. He declined our invitation to reconsider his assertions that what he said to the house was truthful. His defence to the allegation that he misled was an ex post facto justification and no more than an artifice. He misled the committee in the presentation of his evidence.



Boris Johnson during a news conference in January 2021. The committee said there is no precedent for a PM to have misled the house. Photograph: Justin Tallis/AP

Johnson could face a new contempt inquiry

During the writing of the report, details emerged of alleged lockdown-breaking parties at No 10 and at Chequers, the prime ministerial country retreat. The committee said they did not want to delay their findings, and so accepted Johnson's assurances that there was no wrongdoing.

They added that if "it subsequently emerges that Mr Johnson's explanations are not true, then he may have committed a further contempt".

Elsewhere, a footnote says that if WhatsApp messages handed by Johnson to the public inquiry into Covid contain relevant material, "this would be a

serious matter which the house might need to revisit”.

Reprimands for MPs who criticised the committee?

This was perhaps only a hint, but a strong one. Early in the report, the committee noted what it called “a sustained attempt, seemingly coordinated, to undermine the committee’s credibility and, more worryingly, that of those members serving on it”.

If such behaviour was not challenged, they argued, “it will be impossible for the house to establish such a committee to conduct sensitive and important inquiries in the future”.

The committee, it added, “will be making a special report separately to the House dealing with these matters”.

How Johnson misled MPs

The report said he did this by:

- Saying guidance was followed fully at No 10, and that this had been the case when he attended gatherings.
- Failing to tell the Commons about his own knowledge of gatherings where rules or guidance were broken.
- Saying he relied on assurances from officials and others that rules had not been broken. These “were not accurately represented by him to the house”, the report found, and were not properly authoritative, and should not have been given as proof of compliance.
- saying he could not answer questions before the issues had been investigated by Sue Gray, the senior civil servant who initially reported on the parties, when he already had personal knowledge he did not reveal.

- Purporting to correct the record, but instead continuing to mislead, and also misleading the committee with continued denials.
- Being “deliberately disingenuous when he tried to reinterpret his statements to the house to avoid their plain meaning”, for example making “unsustainable interpretations” of Covid rules to justify gatherings.



A politician holding the privileges committee report. Johnson was also found to have misled the committee. Photograph: Neil Hall/EPA

Findings on the social gatherings

The report examined the various events at the centre of the debate, and was largely damning about the idea they were within the rules. On the 20 May 2020 “bring your own booze” garden party, the committee concluded: “We do not consider that a social gathering held purely for the purpose of improving staff morale can be regarded as having been essential for work purposes.”

It dismissed the argument that leaving drinks were needed to boost work morale, saying “organisations across the UK were suffering severe staff morale pressures”.

On Johnson's brief birthday event in June 2020, for which he was given a fixed-penalty notice (FPN), the report cited the former PM's protestations of bafflement, adding: "We note that he had the right in law to decline to accept the FPN if he had wished to assert he had committed no offence, but that he chose not to do so."

The report noted that Johnson's sometimes brief attendance at events did not excuse him. With one crammed leaving event for a staffer, in November 2020, Johnson said he was there for about 10 minutes.

It added: "This would have afforded him opportunity to observe a large gathering of people in the relatively small space of the vestibule."

It said that when a press office Christmas drinks event took place in December 2020, even though Johnson did not attend, he was "unlikely to have been unaware" of it, as he walked past the press office to his personal flat.

Other evidence about the No 10 culture

In a supplement of additional material, released by the committee with the report, a Downing Street official who is not named gave damning evidence about what they saw as a culture of Covid rule-breaking.

The official said that "wine time Fridays" were "calendared weekly events in our Outlook diaries starting at 4pm, where press officers would gather on Fridays to have drinks". They went on:

During the pandemic, No 10, despite setting the rules to the country, was slow to enforce any rules in the building. The press office wine time Fridays continued throughout, social distancing was not enforced, and mask wearing was not enforced.

I was enquired to [name redacted] in March 2020 whether we should be wearing masks and was told that the scientific advice was that there was 'no point' and had 'very little effect on the spread of Covid'.

This was all part of a wider culture of not adhering to any rules. No 10 was like an island oasis of normality. Operational notes were sent out from the security team to be mindful of the cameras outside the door, not to go out in groups and to social distance. It was all a pantomime.

Birthday parties, leaving parties and end of week gatherings all continued as normal. Those responsible for the leadership of No 10 failed to keep it a safe space and should have set rules from the start that these gatherings should not continue.”

They added it was a year into the pandemic before No 10 set up one-way systems for people walking around it, and screens between desks.



Johnson in No 10 at a party for the departure of a special adviser. The committee dismissed an argument that leaving drinks were needed to boost work morale. Photograph: Getty Images

What Johnson said about the gatherings

The report listed a series of occasions in the Commons when Johnson said he personally knew of no rule-breaking, and had been assured none had taken place. Among these were prime minister’s questions on 1 and 8

December 2021, shortly after the Daily Mirror first reported claims about the parties.

At the 8 December session, the then prime minister said he had been “repeatedly assured since these allegations emerged that there was no party and that no Covid rules were broken”.

The report said that the inquiry asked to see the briefings Johnson received ahead of PMQs sessions, adding: “The briefing pack for 1 December 2021 contains no assurances. The Cabinet Office was unable to provide us with the pack for 8 December.”

It also concluded that Johnson again misled MPs when he “purported to correct the record” in May 2022, and was, additionally, “disingenuous with the committee in ways which amount to misleading”.

What the committee found on the assurances

A lengthy section of the report examines who did in fact assure Johnson that rules had been followed, finding that the only people who could be said “with certainty” to have done that were Jack Doyle and James Slack, both former Daily Mail journalists who worked as Johnson’s head of communications. Slack had previously held the civil service role of official spokesperson.

The report notes: “Both men were concerned chiefly with media-handling and both were, at different times, political appointees of Johnson in that role.”

This, as set out in the report, is another key pointer to the conclusion:

The impression the house would have taken, and we conclude, would have been intended to take from Mr Johnson’s repeated references to assurances was that those assurances had been overarching and comprehensive, and to be given great weight.

In fact, as we have seen, the only assurances that we can be certain were given to Mr Johnson were arrived at in haste based on a press

‘line to take’, were not subject to investigation before either session of PMQs, and did not emanate from senior permanent civil servants or government lawyers but from two media advisers and were based only on their personal recollections.



Boris Johnson’s evidence session to the committee was found to be ‘disingenuous ... in ways which amount to misleading’. Photograph: Dan Kitwood/Getty Images

Whether Johnson’s denials were credible

This is the crux of the report, and the committee’s findings were clear and extremely critical: they found it not credible that Johnson believed what he told MPs, “still less that he could continue to believe them to this day”.

It added: “Someone who is repeatedly reckless and continues to deny that which is patent is a person whose conduct is sufficient to demonstrate intent.”

This was, essentially, a judgment call, something Johnson and his allies see as a flaw with the process. But the report was hugely careful in its logic. The MPs wrote:

We think it highly unlikely on the balance of probabilities that Mr Johnson, in the light of his cumulative direct personal experience of these events, and his familiarity with the rules and guidance as their most prominent public promoter, could have genuinely believed at the time of his statements to the house that the rules or guidance were being complied with.

We think it just as unlikely he could have continued to believe this at the time of his evidence to our committee. We conclude that when he told the house and this committee that the rules and guidance were being complied with, his own knowledge was such that he deliberately misled the house and this committee.

How Johnson was in contempt of the committee

In three ways. First, his resignation letter as an MP on 9 June, a day after he was handed a précis of the report, revealed details of it. They wrote:

It is a contempt of the house to reveal the contents of this document. There are no other physical copies of the document in existence and the document is only made available for inspection under invigilated conditions.

Separately, he “impugned the committee, the integrity of its members, and the impartiality of its staff and advisers”, attacking not only their fairness, but alleging bias.

Finally, Johnson’s resignation letter attacked the committee as a “witch-hunt” and a “kangaroo court”. This happened, the report noted, even though Johnson had written to committee members after his evidence session before them in March to distance himself from such insults, adding: “I have the utmost respect for the integrity of the committee and all its members and the work that it is doing.”

The report said that the subsequent use of such terms in his resignation letter “leaves us in no doubt that he was insincere in his attempts to distance himself from the campaign of abuse and intimidation of committee members. This in our view constitutes a further significant contempt”.

Why Johnson's offence was seen as especially serious

The report laid out what it said was the extent of Johnson's culpability in misleading MPs, which it found was very serious. This was because of the former PM's "repeated and continuing denials of the facts", for example over the very obvious lack of social distancing at events.

It said Johnson was also to blame for "the frequency with which he closed his mind to those facts", and the way he tried to "rewrite the meaning of the rules and guidance to fit his own evidence", such as arguing that imperfect social distancing was better than cancelling an event.

The report also castigated Johnson's "after-the-event rationalisations", notably over the assurances he received from others. It added: "His view about his own fixed-penalty notice (that he was baffled as to why he received it) is instructive."



The national Covid memorial wall, facing the Houses of Parliament, across the river Thames. Photograph: Martin Godwin/The Guardian

Why the committee said this was important

The inquiry, they argued, “goes to the very heart of our democracy” given that people elect MPs to not just represent them but hold a government to account. It added: “Our democracy depends on MPs being able to trust that what ministers tell them in the [House of Commons](#) is the truth.”

The seven-strong committee said the key issue was failing to correct mistakes, as it was inevitable that ministers make mistakes “and inadvertently mislead”. They added: “When a minister makes an honest mistake and then corrects it, that is democracy working as it should.” What Johnson did, they emphasised, was very different.

How they reached their conclusions

The report stressed how fair and open the committee has sought to be with all evidence given on oath, with all documents submitted to the inquiry passed on to Johnson, with no redaction. Johnson knew the identities of all witnesses.

All evidence was first-hand, including emails, WhatsApp messages and photographs supplied by the government.

Johnson was also given warning of issues that arose from evidence submitted so he could provide his own written evidence in response, which he did. He was then shown the provisional conclusions of the report on 8 June.

The committee said: “There is no matter upon which the committee has reported that Mr Johnson has not had the opportunity to answer or comment upon.”

2023.06.16 - Spotlight

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Sigur Rós ... Jón Pór “Jónsi” Birgisson, Georg “Goggi” Hólm and Kjartan Sveinsson. Photograph: Tim Dunk

[Sigur Ros](#)

[Interview](#)

‘I felt violated. It was a dark period for all of us’: Sigur Rós on their nightmarish recent years

[Dorian Lynskey](#)

The band’s image as Iceland’s joyous musical elves was destroyed by allegations of tax evasion and sexual assault. Now a trio, they explain their search for beauty with their first album in a decade



Fri 16 Jun 2023 03.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 16 Jun 2023 08.03 EDT

Sigur Rós’s new album *Átta*, their first in a decade, is a tender and consoling piece of work that seems to extend a healing hand to the listener. Given the dramatic events in the band members’ lives during its long gestation, you suspect it serves a similar purpose for the Icelanders themselves. “It’s a comfort blanket for us maybe,” agrees frontman Jón Þór “Jónsi” Birgisson from his home in Silver Lake, Los Angeles. The period the album emerged from was, he says, “depressing and heavy and intense”.

In March 2018, the Icelandic government accused Sigur Rós of evading 151m króna (£840,000) of tax between 2010 and 2014. [The band blamed an](#)

[accounting error](#) and repaid the debt plus interest, but faced a second prosecution for the same offence in 2020, which froze their assets. They have all now been acquitted but Birgisson has been off the hook only since March. And that was not all. In September 2018, artist Meagan Boyd publicly accused drummer Orri Páll Dýrason of sexual assault five years earlier. Dýrason denied the allegations but [resigned a few days later](#), temporarily reducing Sigur Rós to a transatlantic duo of Birgisson and bassist Georg “Goggi” Hólm. Did it still feel like a band at all?

“It was strange,” says Hólm, sitting in the band’s Reykjavik headquarters with returning keyboardist Kjartan Sveinsson (who had left the band in 2013). Now in their late 40s, they look like mismatched detectives reuniting on a cold case in a Nordic noir show. “There were definitely points when me and Jónsi would go, well, I guess we’re a band but we’re not really doing anything.” Amid all of this, Birgisson split from Alex Somers, his partner of 16 years and frequent artistic collaborator. A band whose music inspired breathless celestial metaphors seemed to fall to earth with an ugly thud. “Our main purpose is the music but obviously there is this thing called life that happens around it and you have to deal with it,” says Hólm.

When Sigur Rós formed in 1994 as teenagers, Birgisson says, they made music because “it gives you a purpose to live and be happy”. As a non-anglophone post-rock band from a “tiny little island in the middle of nowhere”, they didn’t exactly dream of Madison Square Garden, but their second album, 1999’s *Ágætis byrjun*, was a word-of-mouth phenomenon whose cheerleaders included Radiohead, Coldplay, David Bowie and Cameron Crowe. In a genre with a forbiddingly studious reputation, Sigur Rós had an elemental grace and a direct line to one’s tear ducts. “If I don’t get goosebumps, then we have to work a bit more,” says Sveinsson. “Of course, you have to be careful not to go full Disney on it. You’re playing with emotions, but you don’t want to force-feed it. It’s not like foie gras.”



The original lineup of Sigur Rós in Iceland, 2009 ... (from left) Kjartan Sveinsson, Jón Pór Birgisson, Orri Páll Dýrason and Georg Hólm. Photograph: Mick Hutson/Redferns

What happened next is a familiar story: young band makes music for pleasure, then reluctantly becomes a travelling business. While their music remained uncompromising, the external pressures and strains mounted. According to Sveinsson, their darker 2002 album () – no titles, no lyrics – “really represents the state we were in at that time: this is so fucking heavy! Just keeping track of who you are is kind of tough.”

“You can easily lose yourself,” Hólm agrees. “You move around the world in this bubble called Sigur Rós. It is a bit of – excuse my French – a mindfuck, being in a band that young.” By the end of the 2000s, he says, “we all crashed a little bit. We just didn’t admit it to ourselves.”

Sveinsson had always been the most sceptical about “going into the industry and taking part in all that noise” and by 2012 the noise was too loud. “It was just too much. I was burned out and had to leave.” Did it feel like a temporary break? “No, it felt very final, actually.” His bandmates pressed on with the unusually crunchy and imposing *Kveikur* (2013). “Maybe it was some sort of retaliation,” says Hólm. “That album is quite aggressive and angry.”

“I call it the inferior album,” Sveinsson deadpans. “No, no, it’s great.”

The band appeared to be thriving, headlining arenas and appearing in *The Simpsons* and *Game of Thrones*, but sessions for a new album fizzled out in 2017, around the time Birgisson stealth-moved to LA for a change of scene. “Very sunny and bright compared to dark and depressing,” he says. Zoom-phobic and just out of bed, he angles his phone so that all I can see most of the time is a shrub festooned with Christmas lights. I feel like David Attenborough, scanning the undergrowth for a glimpse of the lesser spotted Jónsi.

Ironically, it was pesky admin that held Sigur Rós together when the music stopped. Sveinsson still needed to be consulted on reissue packages and approve sync requests. The working title for 2005’s explosively joyful single *Hoppípolla* was *The Hit Song* and that joke came to pass. It has supplied emotional uplift to everything from the BBC’s *Planet Earth* and the *Children of Men* trailer to the film *Eurovision Song Contest: The Story of Fire Saga*. What did the band make of the movie’s take on Iceland?

“To some extent, it’s quite accurate,” Sveinsson says, “but to other extents, it’s total bullshit.”

“The cliches are funny because there’s a hint of truth to every cliché,” Hólm says.

Watch the video for the new single, *Blóðberg*

The band’s relationship with Iceland is complicated. As the country’s most famous export after Björk, they were constantly asked about glaciers and elf magic. “Obviously us doing photoshoots all wearing the same hat, looking like elves, that didn’t help,” Hólm admits. “It did become slightly annoying, but there is this element of truth to it. The other day I was walking my dogs in the countryside and listening to the new record in my headphones and I thought, wow, this really does sound like what I’m looking at.”

The tax case put them at odds with their own country for the first time, to the extent that Hólm considered emigrating. How close did he come?

“I really did feel like I can’t live in this sort of society,” he says. “I felt violated, basically. It was a dark period of time for all of us. It was scarring, you know. But then you realise that things just happen and it doesn’t really matter where you are. I have come to the conclusion that I love living in Iceland.”

Trans and queer and gay rights have been trampled on so much recently. It feels like we’re going backwards

Jónsi

They blow hot and cold on the reasons for the second prosecution. One minute Hólm suggests equably that “it’s nobody’s fault really”, the next he wonders if the government was trying to make its most famous band “the poster boys of something”. Sveinsson suspects that Sigur Rós were “an easy target” compared to lawyered-up bankers and hedge-fund managers. Birgisson still sounds furious about “this fucking bullshit ... The unfairness of it all, and the aggression. There’s so much energy and time that goes into it that could be spent on beautiful things. You get angry thinking about it.”

Distance has enabled him to romanticise his homeland in lyrics that he describes as “a postcard to Iceland”. He’s thinking of leaving LA. “America is so crazy,” he says. “Trans and queer and gay rights have been trampled on so much recently. It’s scary to see. Around the world also, it feels like we’re going backwards.” Átta’s artwork, by the veteran Icelandic artist Rúrí, depicts a rainbow flag in flames. “We try to stay out of politics, just to make the music as neutral as possible, but we were talking about the state of the world we live in now: climate change and doomscrolling. You see all the psychopaths spending crazy amounts of money going to space when they could be saving our planet we are actually living on at the moment. It’s so unbelievably ridiculous!”

Átta (Icelandic for eight) began life in 2018 when Sveinsson visited Birgisson as a friend and they started tentatively making new music together. “It felt like nothing had happened,” Sveinsson says. “It was like, ‘Oh, you’re back! There you are!’” The band felt wiser, and more comfortable with their personality differences. “We’ve all matured,” he

says. “When we are together it’s the music. We don’t have to be best buds.” Hólm pulls a mock-offended face, then laughs.



Jónsi Birgisson on stage at the Glastonbury festival in 2016. Photograph: Rex/Shutterstock

Sigur Rós don’t talk much in the studio. The loss of a drummer and the return of the string arranger set the lush, contemplative tone. “We wanted it to be spacey and beautiful – a little bit pure somehow,” Birgisson says. “You’re getting older and more cynical and it’s harder to move you – you just want to feel something.” He likes silence, or a soundtrack so soft that it is neighbour to silence: vintage jazz and field recordings of nature. “I’ve always been a little bit of a music hater,” he confesses. “There’s not very much I like.”

When the new album’s slow advance was frozen by the pandemic, this self-defined “big loner” rather enjoyed lockdown, he says. “Because I’ve been living [out of] a suitcase for 20 years, being in the same place for two years was unheard of. So this, for me, was a beautiful rest.” He exhibited paintings and sculptures, released a clubby solo album (2020’s *Shiver*) and continued his study of perfumery. “With aroma molecules you have individual notes and tones, so you can focus your scent composition,” he says. “It’s a little bit like music: how the elements harmonise, how much

space there should be. I love this idea of triggering senses in different ways.”

Could he see himself letting Sigur Rós go altogether? He thinks not. “You have more outlets but you always love the band. It’s been part of your DNA for so long, so you don’t want to kick it to the kerb. I love Sigur Rós and I love what we have created.”

By growing up, the band have somehow looped back to their adolescent origins, when making music was a choice rather than an obligation. “For me, when we’ve done this tour, that’s it; see you in a few years,” Sveinsson says, cheerfully. “I don’t care. I can’t foresee anything after this, but who knows?” Life, they have discovered, sometimes has other plans.

Átta is released on BMG/Krunk today. Sigur Rós perform tonight at [Meltdown festival](#), Royal Festival Hall, London, in collaboration with London Contemporary Orchestra.

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Has he got news for you ... Bryan Cranston stars as the Host in Asteroid City. Photograph: William Widmer/Redux/eyevine

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Bryan Cranston: ‘My dad wanted to be a star. How futile is that?’

[Xan Brooks](#)

His role as The Host in Wes Anderson’s Asteroid City sees the actor return to the desert. He reflects on how Covid protected his privacy, his secrets to acting success, and how his estranged father tried to cash in on Breaking Bad



[@XanBrooks](#)

Fri 16 Jun 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 16 Jun 2023 08.02 EDT

“The circus,” says [Bryan Cranston](#), gesturing to the window of his seafront Cannes hotel. He is indicating the film festival fray on the promenade below. The crowds and the cordons; the limousines and the red carpet. He could walk down and join it, but he is happier staying put. “I’ve never been a keen participant of the circus.”

Cranston is in town for the premiere of Wes Anderson’s [Asteroid City](#), a light-footed account of “brainiac” students at a stargazer convention. It is the 67-year-old actor’s first visit to Cannes: in part because his greatest triumphs have been on TV, most notably in Breaking Bad; in part, perhaps,

because he prefers to avoid the hurly-burly of big events. The publicist suggests cracking open the window to let in the breeze. He must be boiling in his cream suit. His Wyatt Earp moustache may start to wilt. “No, leave it,” he instructs. “The air-con is good.”

Fittingly, Asteroid City positions him adjacent to the action, neatly quarantined in his own private space. Cranston plays the tale’s straight-edged narrator, on hand to introduce the cast and explain the plot’s twists and turns. The bulk of the film plays out in a dust-blown 50s town. Anderson arranges his characters against a salmon-pink desert; every frame resembles a [William Eggleston](#) print, and vintage American cars gleam like boiled sweets. Only once does the narrator blunder on to colourful Main Street. “Am I not in this scene?” he asks, briefly stumped, before scarpering back to the safety of his box.

The narrator is your classic elder-statesman role. It makes the most of Cranston’s velvety voice, his air of authority and his confident swagger, like a riverboat gambler. He took his cue, he explains, from the newsreaders of his youth and studied footage of [Walter Cronkite](#) and [Edward R Murrow](#) to prepare. “The only problem was speed,” he says. “In Wes’s movies, everyone talks very quickly. I don’t think there was any actor on set who didn’t get the same response: ‘Yeah, that’s good. Now much, much faster.’”

He hopes that he nailed it, but occasionally on set he had his doubts. Comedy is a good deal harder than drama, he thinks, because the genre is more fragile and therefore more dependent on tempo and momentum. There were days on Asteroid City when he felt himself lagging, struggling to find the right balance. Probably, that is as it should be. “Frustration is inherent in any production,” he says. “Actually, it’s inherent in any career.”

I am guessing that he is speaking as an expert. His CV, after all, is a testimony to heavy lifting. Cranston has been acting since his early 20s, but spent several decades as a jobbing foot soldier, toiling away in TV sitcoms and little-seen movies. It was OK, he insists, because he was making a living and paying the rent. That was his baseline. Anything beyond that was a bonus.

The book of my relationship with my father is missing seven or eight chapters. You know you're missing things

His father, he tells me, had been a Hollywood workhorse himself. Joseph Cranston acted on TV in Space Patrol, Dragnet and The Red Skelton Hour and wrote B-movie scripts for films I haven't seen (The Corpse Grinders, The Crawling Hand). Joseph, though, always believed that he was built for better things. Indirectly, he taught his son how not to manage a career.

"My dad wanted to become a *star*," he says, emphasising the word as though it's draped in tinsel and wrapped in neon. "Which to me is the equivalent of saying that you just want to be rich, without having an idea or a plan of how to acquire wealth. 'I want to be a star.' How futile is that? It's a sign of immaturity, which I would tell him directly if he were still alive."

Furiously chasing his Hollywood dream, Joseph skipped out on the family when Cranston was 11. The two didn't meet up for another 10 years. "After that, we got along as best we could. But it's as if the book of my relationship with my father is missing seven or eight chapters in the middle. You have to leapfrog the plot and you know you're missing things. What happened? Why?" He shrugs. "So it was never what you'd hope a father-son relationship would be."



Playing for laughs ... with Erik Per Sullivan and Justin Berfield in *Malcolm in the Middle*, 2002. Photograph: Cinematic Collection/Alamy

The way Cranston sees it, a successful acting career depends on four factors. He checks them off one by one. The first is talent, otherwise what is the point? The next is persistence, followed by its cousin, patience. You need those to stay the course. They see you through the endless knock-backs and the more ridiculous gigs. You hold your nose, do your best and keep going. Eventually, hopefully, you graduate to better work.

“The fourth thing is the intangible one,” he says. “The fourth one is luck. No career is made without a healthy dose of luck, and it’s an entity of its own. You can’t will it to come. You have no idea when it might. It comes when it chooses. Sometimes, not at all.”

This brings us back to Cranston, or to his slightly younger self. By the time he hit 50, he was getting good mileage from a three-quarter-full tank. His turn as the put-upon dad in *Malcolm in the Middle* had secured his finances. He had also cropped up in *Seinfeld*, playing the shifty dentist, Tim Whatley, who Jerry suspects has converted to Judaism for the jokes. Cranston says he managed to make *Seinfeld* laugh at the audition and that this, more than anything, is what got him the job. “But I was only in six episodes. People

always think it was more: ‘Oh no, no, it was a lot more than that.’ Like, they know better, like, *they’re telling me!*”

Seinfeld was fun and Malcolm in the Middle was good. It was [Breaking Bad](#), though, that slotted the last piece into place. Here at last was the reward for all that persistence and patience. Here, finally, was a showcase for the man’s acting talent. In the figure of Walter White, the high-school teacher turned drug kingpin, Cranston created an antihero for the ages; a brilliant chemist who has been thwarted and burns with entitlement and self-pity. It was a character, he says, that was based in part on his dad.

Walter was a phenomenal character to play. Because of his complexity, his loss of direction, and the emergence of his ego

Joseph died in 2014, only a couple of months after Breaking Bad’s final season. One obviously wonders what he made of it all. “Oh, he seemed sincerely happy for me,” Cranston says. “Also, he had a great work ethic. He was always writing, always looking for work. And he did look out for opportunities to take advantage of my position in order to further his career. Hitting up my agency to read his scripts.” He laughs shortly. “So yeah, he was hustling right up to the end.”

The great thing about Breaking Bad was that it could be viewed in two ways, often simultaneously, to the point where ambivalence became the show’s natural state. On the one hand it spun a classic tale of redemption, charting an overlooked man’s audacious climb towards greatness. And on the other it pitched us towards hell, and made us root for a monster who destroys everything that he loves. Even Vince Gilligan, the show’s creator, has since found himself cooling on tragic Walter White. “Like, wait a minute, why was this guy so great?” Gilligan [said to the New Yorker last year](#). “He was really sanctimonious and full of himself. He had an ego the size of California and always saw himself as the victim.”

What about Cranston? Did he like Walter White?

“Well,” he says, grimacing, “I can only answer that question in retrospect, because I didn’t have the luxury of objectivity back then. Did I like Walter

White? Now I'm thinking of him as a character. He was a phenomenal character to play. Because of his complexity, his loss of direction, and the emergence of an ego that he hadn't had the permission to show. Did I like him? I mean, if you ask someone if they like themselves, they'd be like, 'Yes'. Basically yes."



The ego has landed ... Cranston's career-making turn as Walter in Breaking Bad. Photograph: Five

It sounds as though he's equating himself with the man that he played. "Well, yeah. Because at the time you're so in it. You're so subjective. You're not seeing how other people perceive you." He scratches his moustache. "I think he'd say – I'd say – that he tried to be a good person."

One downside with luck is that people tend to ride it for too long. That was the problem with ill-starred White, who had his chance to get out once he had safely banked his first fortune. Possibly it was also an issue for Cranston Sr, who regarded his son's lucky streak as his own golden ticket. If there is a last essential to any successful career, it may be the ability to quit when you're ahead. Cash your chips and bow out. Leave the public wanting more.

In a couple of years, Cranston will be 70. This, he has said, might be a good point to sit back and take stock. He would like to spend more time with his wife, Robin Dearden. He wants to read some big novels and regain some sense of privacy.

His impending birthday is one catalyst. Covid was another. Lockdown, he says, taught him the value of home and of a different way of being. For the first time in years he was able to walk about incognito. “This was the great thing about Covid,” he tells me. “And I don’t mean to say that in a flippant way, because it was also devastating to many families. But it taught us cohesiveness, and it taught us to wear masks. That’s been a healthy development. Also, an attractive addendum to my wardrobe. It means I can walk down the street in my mask, hat and glasses and not be recognised. Which is a nice thing. I’d rather not give that up.”

Anonymity and obscurity: that’s what he’s craving today. It appears that the circus will have to proceed without him for a spell. “Obscurity.” He laughs. “Yeah, I like that. Yes, please.”

Asteroid City is released in the UK on 23 June.

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Pierre Olléon on the Argonaute in Paris: ‘I had two lockdowns – one underwater, then one at home.’ Photograph: Magali Delporte/The Guardian

[ExperienceLife and style](#)

Experience: I knew nothing of the pandemic until my submarine surfaced

We were suddenly bombarded with information that made no sense to us

Pierre Olléon

Fri 16 Jun 2023 05.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 16 Jun 2023 08.10 EDT

In 2019, I started at the École Polytechnique, a prestigious French engineering school where students undergo military training with the air force, army or navy. I was sent to the naval school in September for two months of basic training. I was then qualified to be part of the mechanics and engineering team, and could choose my next placement. I signed up to go on a nuclear submarine, which can stay underwater for up to 10 years without surfacing.

I really wanted to go out into the ocean, although I was nervous when we went for the first time. I got used to it after a few trips back and forth for training, and was eager to embark on a longer journey.

In January 2020, I left for a patrolling mission, along with a 75-person crew. I had got to know everyone quite well, which made me feel confident that everything would run smoothly. The main goal of the mission was to navigate through the water, identifying boats and aircraft with our sensors while remaining undetected. We were the eyes and ears of the French navy, 300 metres under the ocean.

Being in a submarine is a bit like being in a spaceship. Letters from family were allowed – to keep crew members motivated – but, for safety and discretion, all communication from the crew's families was seen first by navy staff who removed any content that could cause panic on board. For example, if my partner broke up with me through a letter, that might be censored.

We received regular news bulletins with updates on politics and football games, but not much about things that could affect the crew's efficiency and psychological state. The only news I received from my family were things like "Your brother won his judo competition" or "We miss you".

In February 2020, as Covid started to emerge in Europe, the navy began filtering out all Covid-related news in our bulletins, which meant that we basically stopped receiving any news at all. They asked our families not to send anything that would worry us. My mum later told me she had written to me about Covid several times, but I never read any of that in her letters.

Throughout March and April, we had no idea that Covid was even a thing, let alone that [France](#) was under strict lockdown. We only found out in mid-April 2020, two days before we were set to come back. The radio channels on the submarine announced the news: "There is a deadly virus. It has arrived in France; you can't leave your home." The navy probably thought: "The country is locked down. We have to explain what's going on."

Everyone else in the world had weeks to follow the news, whereas we were suddenly bombarded with information that didn't make any sense. "Lockdown" was a new word to me; I didn't know what to expect.

When I got out of the submarine, I got my phone back and received weeks' worth of panicked messages, along with explanations about Covid and the lockdown. My stepdad sent a detailed plan of how and where to buy a mask – I'd never worn one before.

I took a train back to Paris, where my family lives, and was completely disoriented. People had masks and gloves on. I was not at all in this mindset. Nothing made sense to me. The streets were empty and I was just thinking, "Where is everyone?"

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I tried to hide the feeling that I was arriving from another planet, so on the train, I put over my mouth a fireproof hood that had been given to me by the navy. I just thought, everyone is hiding their mouths, so I'll do it, too, even though I didn't know why.

I had to adjust to being locked down with my family 24/7 after not talking to them for months. The transition was harsh, but the rest of the time was

similar to everyone else's: online classes, family time, not going out.

Today, I am an intern at the French National Centre for Space Studies and I'm almost done with my engineering degree. Looking back, I feel returning to a different world was a unique opportunity. I had two lockdowns: one underwater, then one at home. I couldn't say which one felt weirder.

As told to Livia Giannotti

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[You be the judge](#)[Friendship](#)

**You be the judge: should my friend stop
buying the same clothes as me?**

Ella finds it cringeworthy that Aleesha copies her outfits. Aleesha says it's fine to be a copycat. You decide who gets a dressing down

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Interviews by [Georgina Lawton](#)

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Fri 16 Jun 2023 03.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 16 Jun 2023 21.08 EDT

The prosecution: Ella

It's just embarrassing walking around in the same outfit. It feels like we're back at school

Aleesha and I have been friends since we were 11. I would say that out of the two of us, she is more of a wind-up merchant. She likes to be antagonistic and contrary for the sake of it, and thinks it's hilarious if we go to a party in the same dress or jacket, whereas I find it cringe and weird. I just don't get the whole idea of dressing like your mates.

It was a lot worse when we were younger. I'd choose a top or something I liked when we were out shopping, and Aleesha would say, "That's so nice",

and buy the same one. When we were 16, we fell out over something like that. It doesn't happen as much any more, but on big occasions, like a party, festival or friend's wedding, she'll come up to me and say, "Love your dress. Gonna have to buy the same one now!" She knows how much it winds me up.

Case in point: Glastonbury last year, when she pulled out the same zebra-print jacket as me. I don't know why she does it. It's just embarrassing walking around in the same outfit. I like to be different, I like to feel my choices and fashion sense are my own.

One part of my brain is like – I chose this look first and I don't want to share my style with anyone

After I bought it, I'd told her about it on a call, then she went and got the same outfit behind my back without telling me. Is that not strange? I don't like feeling as if we are back at school.

Antonia, a friend of ours, then started adding fuel to the fire by saying, "Oh, now what are you two going to do? People will get you confused." They were winding me up and it took about 15 minutes for me to see that I probably was reacting unreasonably. But I'd spent weeks planning my outfits and the thought of Aleesha piggy-backing off my well-laid plans just irked me.

I'm trying to be a bit less dramatic about things like this because the logical part of my brain realises that there is no point trying to control what your friends wear. But then the other part of me thinks: I chose this look first and I don't want to share my style with anyone. Aleesha should just get her own fashion sense, that would help us avoid this scenario for ever.

The defence: Aleesha

Our dress sense has become more similar. It's no wonder we buy some of the same items

Ella is amazing. She's kind, generous and hilarious – the life and soul of any party. But whenever I buy an item of clothing that resembles hers, she reverts to the same childlike behaviour from our school days.

Our friend Antonia thinks it's hilarious. I find it mildly amusing, but also think she's in the wrong. Before Glastonbury last year, I'd been talking to Ella about outfits and she had shown me this cool zebra-print jacket on Zoom. I went and bought the same jacket on Depop. I didn't think anything of it until I pulled the jacket out at Glasto and said, "Look what I've got, we can be matching!"

Ella flipped and said, "No, that's not cool. I don't want to look the same as you. Why did you buy it?" I was shocked. I pointed out it was a festival and that the zebra-print jacket was mass produced: anyone can buy one.

We are in our 30s now, so I'm not sure why it still bothers her. I put it down to a funny quirk

Our dress sense has become more similar as we've grown up. Ella used to be preppy and wear classic stuff like plain designer shirts and oversized bags; now she's more eclectic. I'd like to think she takes a bit of inspiration from me, as I've always been drawn to colours and prints. Ella used to rip me for it; now she's come around, so it's no wonder we buy the same items.

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Ella and I don't live in the same city any more, so it's not like we're going to be running into each other wearing matching outfits every day. Once we happened to be in similar flared trousers. Antonia pointed it out, saying, "Uh-oh, you're matching again." It was funny to see a flicker of panic across Ella's face.

Ella's always been a bit like this. At school she wouldn't tell me the name of her perfume because she didn't want me to wear it. I thought that was funny. Maybe she likes to feel unique.

We're in our 30s now, so I'm not sure why it still bothers her. I still love her dearly – I just put it down to a quirk she has. It would just be good to think that, if we accidentally end up in a similar outfit in future, she would be able to keep her cool. It's not that big a deal. If anything, it just speaks to our incredible mutual fashion sense.

The jury of Guardian readers

Should Aleesha stop copying Ella's fashion choices?

There's no need to copy someone's clothes exactly. Of course, most people who are friends will have broadly the same taste – that's the way fashion works – but that's no excuse for stepping out like a pair of overgrown twins. Be a shepherd, not a sheep.

David, 43

Long-standing friendships should be cherished. Despite saying Ella is "amazing", Aleesha seems to take a childish glee in making her friend feel uncomfortable. Similar tastes may lead to choosing the same cut of trousers, but buying an identical jacket and knowing it will upset a friend? It's not a good look.

Frances, 52

Ella's need to feel special apparently trumps decades of friendship, while Aleesha's alleged mimicry seems benign. One hopes that the two of them no longer living in the same city will end this tempest in a teapot.

Donna, 77

I think Aleesha should be more considerate of Ella's feelings. I can see why Ella was upset when her friend bought the same jacket. She is rightly protective and proud of her individual style, and Aleesha should respect this.

Helen, 53

Aleesha is being condescending and dismissive of Ella's perspective, which is a poor way to treat a friend. She knew exactly what she was doing when she bought that zebra-print jacket! Ella is reacting strongly to a small issue, but she's probably over her friends deliberately winding her up.

Kate, 37

Now you be the judge

In our online poll below, tell us: should Aleesha get her own style?

The poll closes at 10am BST on Thursday 22 June

Last week's result

We asked if Kojo should [lock his bike up outside](#), not in the flat.

53% of you said yes – Kojo is guilty

47% of you said no – Kojo is innocent

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2023.06.16 - Opinion

- So long as we treat Boris Johnson as a lone wolf, the other Tory beasts will roam free
- We took direct action against the UK's racist policies, and a jury acquitted us. Resistance can succeed
- AI is already causing unintended harm. What happens when it falls into the wrong hands?
- Sunak should never have made his woolly inflation pledge



‘Underneath, Boris Johnson’s and Rishi Sunak’s governments have been pretty similar.’ Photograph: Henry Nicholls/AFP/Getty Images

[OpinionConservatives](#)

So long as we treat Boris Johnson as a lone wolf, the other Tory beasts will roam free

[Andy Beckett](#)



Arguing that the former leader's premiership was a one-off won't prevent another calamitous Tory government

Fri 16 Jun 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 16 Jun 2023 07.45 EDT

Boris Johnson is history. Or so hope Rishi Sunak, many other Tories, the sober parts of the media and most voters. Johnson's terrible government, which ended only nine months ago, looks even more unlikely to have a sequel after this week's [extraordinarily critical report](#) by the privileges committee on his lies to parliament about Partygate, and his equally extraordinary tantrum in response.

His three years in power, with the constant lying, corrupt sense of entitlement and lethal incompetence, are increasingly presented these days as an aberration, the product of a politician uniquely unsuited to rule us. It is now time to "move on" from the Johnson era, Tories have been saying all week, adopting the faux-casual language politicians always use when conducting awkward manoeuvres.

The argument that his premiership was a one-off suits a lot of people. Ministers seeking to present the Sunak regime as a fresh start. Journalists

keen to make a morality tale out of Johnson's rise and fall. Voters wanting to believe that nothing like his premiership will ever happen again. Even Johnson himself, and his shrinking but still substantial bloc of followers in the electorate, have an interest in his government being seen as profoundly different from what came before and after.

Yet how much of an outlier was his government really? And how far can Johnson be separated from the Tory system that produced him? The answers to these questions will help decide the next election, and the reputation of Conservatism for decades to come. If enough voters can be persuaded that Johnson is not a freak but in many ways a classic product of the Tory media-political complex, the party will be in even deeper trouble than it is now.

Perhaps the favourite conventional wisdom of British politics is that the Conservatives are always changing. Yet the fact that this is broadly true – even relatively dogmatic Tory premiers such as Margaret Thatcher made shameless U-turns – obscures the less-cited truth that in some ways, the Tories are always the same. As the American political scientist Corey Robin points out in his book *The Reactionary Mind*, conservatives of all countries favour hierarchies; and less openly, “liberty for the higher orders and constraint for the lower orders”. You can see this instinct for inequality in Partygate, or in Sunak's desire to [deregulate](#) the City of London while making protest [harder](#).

He and Johnson may openly loathe each other now, and Sunak may try to present himself as a totally different kind of premier, yet underneath their governments have been pretty similar. In their disregard for the law and enthusiasm for culture wars; their blind faith in Brexit and blatant misuse of facts in parliament; their appointment of the same mediocre but tabloid-pleasing ministers; and their [reliance](#) on the same Australian electoral strategist, Isaac Levido. Sunak and Johnson have followed essentially the same formula: Conservatism with populist additives. Johnson was just luckier in having an electorate ready to swallow it.

Another danger with singling out his government is that it downplays other Tory disasters. From appeasing Hitler in the 30s to accelerating the loss of

Britain's great power status through the [1956 Suez blunder](#) to being fatally outwitted by the unions in the early 70s, Conservative leaders have regularly made huge errors. Yet each time, the toxic administration has been effectively sealed off by the party afterwards so as not to contaminate its reputation for grown-up realism in office, which too many non-Tories as well as Tories still buy into.

As the Covid inquiry is already making clear, with its revelations about [inadequate pandemic planning](#) under both Johnson and Theresa May, "because of the preoccupation with readiness for Brexit", it is very important that disastrous Tory mistakes are not treated yet again as isolated and unrepresentative events. In one sense, the Johnson premiership is not even over: we are still living with the damage.

If voters want to reduce the chance of further calamitous Tory governments, there needs to be a much wider awareness that the party of privilege, always including politicians who believe they were born to rule, and egged on by most of the press, has a constant capacity to make spectacular mistakes through overconfidence. And conversely, more voters need to appreciate that Labour, as the party with an inferiority complex that rarely lifts, is likely to make fewer such misjudgements. Its errors are more likely to come from excessive caution, or too much compromise with implacably hostile forces, or a half-defeated passivity in the face of mounting opposition. Labour's [delaying](#) of its one bold spending commitment, to invest heavily in a greener economy, could be a depressing recurrence of this pattern.

If Labour wins the next election anyway and the Tories are faced with the unfamiliar frustrations of opposition, there is little to stop them producing another Johnson: another leader who can bluster but can't govern. Assuming that Sunak resigns or is removed – the latter scenario is already the subtext of much of his Tory press coverage – the system to anoint a populist successor remains in place. A decisive role for the illiberal party membership is likely in any leadership campaign. Simplistic solutions to Britain's problems, such as anti-wokeness, are still in fashion in many Tory circles. More nuanced, less modernity-hating Conservatism remains marginal, as it has been since David Cameron abandoned his relative liberalism a decade ago.

Beyond the party, too, there has still not been nearly enough of a reckoning about the Tory record since 2010. Thoughtful centrist or centre-right publications, such as the Economist and the Financial Times, lament the performance of the economy since then, and criticise individual Tory policies, without ever quite facing up to how extreme and reckless the [Conservatives](#) have often been. One reason for that silence may be that when Labour offered alternatives, under Ed Miliband and Jeremy Corbyn, that in much of Europe would have been considered respectably social democratic, the business establishment did not back them.

To accept that the Johnson government was merely one episode in a longer saga of Tory misrule requires all who rejected the alternatives, including Miliband and Corbyn's opponents inside Labour, to admit a degree of complicity in this awful Conservative era. It's much more comfortable just to write off Johnson as "[a wrong 'un](#)", as the former Tory minister David Gauke did this week. But while we stare at Boris the monster, other Tory beasts roam free.

- Andy Beckett is a Guardian columnist

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The Brook House Three (left to right): Griff Ferris, Rivka Micklethwaite, Callum Lynch. Photograph: Jodie Beck

[OpinionImmigration and asylum](#)

We took direct action against the UK's racist policies, and a jury acquitted us. Resistance can succeed

[Griff Ferris](#), [Rivka Micklethwaite](#) and [Callum Lynch](#)

Our trial exposed a brutal system for targeting people and deporting them to Jamaica. It was worth it knowing we kept some of them safe

Fri 16 Jun 2023 05.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 16 Jun 2023 05.05 EDT

On a cold November afternoon in 2021, the three of us used metal lock-ons to chain ourselves together and [block a quiet, private road](#) near Gatwick airport, outside Brook House immigration removal centre, to prevent people being forcibly removed to Jamaica.

We took action in solidarity with and support of people the government was trying to rip away from their children, partners and loved ones, while some were also physically resisting their deportation inside Brook House. We were arrested and charged with causing a public nuisance. We denied that and told the jury we felt we had a moral responsibility to act. The jury members appear to have empathised. [They acquitted us](#). That speaks volumes.

Living in this country and under a government proactively working to perpetuate racism, violence and other prejudice against marginalised people, there is an obligation to resist, in whatever way you can. That was our motivation.

We now know that 41 of the 50 people the government tried to deport to Jamaica on that flight are [still in the UK](#), and many of them have sent us grateful messages of support. Mothers have thanked us for resisting on behalf of their sons, while others have said that knowing there were people out there willing to stand up for them meant so much at a dark and lonely time – and that they can now enjoy their lives with their families.

We were initially charged with “aggravated trespass” – an offence with a maximum sentence of three months’ imprisonment, tried in a magistrates court. However, a few weeks before our initial trial, the Crown Prosecution Service – undoubtedly influenced by the government’s authoritarian anti-protest rhetoric and legislation – charged us with the much more serious offence of causing a “public nuisance”.

This archaic common law offence can be tried in the crown court and carries a [maximum sentence of life imprisonment](#). This was an overtly aggressive attempt by the government to criminalise protest against its violent, racist detention and deportation regime, and any act of solidarity with those it harms.

At our two-week trial, we argued that what we did was necessary to prevent serious harm to families and communities targeted for detention and deportation. We gave detailed accounts of this country’s profoundly harmful detention and deportation regime, including the history of violent behaviour

and mistreatment of detainees by detention centre guards, specifically at [Brook House](#), as well as the deaths of [Jimmy Mubenga](#), on a deportation flight from Heathrow in 2010, and [Joy Gardner](#), who died in 1993 after being wrapped in 13 feet of tape and a belt by five police officers who had come to her home to deport her.

We told the jury that many of those meant to be on the flight had been in the UK since they were children – some as young as three months – and that many had their own children here. Some of them have family connections with the [Windrush](#) generation. Others had allegedly been subjected to modern slavery and trafficking. Even according to the Home Office’s own oppressive and restrictive policies, [many of them should not have been considered for deportation in the first place](#).

We explained the huge barriers to legal advice and representation for people in detention, which often leads to vital [last-minute legal challenges](#), and how our action – and other direct action, such as that taken by the [Stansted 15](#) – gives people crucial time for their legal challenges to be submitted and heard, sometimes with just [minutes to spare](#).

We gave this detailed evidence to the jury in order to counter the government and mainstream media’s rhetoric – often racist misinformation – about migrants and deportations. The prosecution didn’t even dispute our evidence about the cruelty and brutality of immigration detention and deportation, and instead focused on trying to punish us for resisting it.

The trial judge ruled that none of our reasons was good enough to provide a legal “defence” to the charge of causing a public nuisance. For this reason, and because the prosecution did not contest our evidence, the judge refused to let the jury hear from a witness with a harrowing experience of being held in Brook House and resisting being taken for deportation on the November 2021 flight (and who is still here in the UK). The judge also refused to hear evidence from experts on the UK detention and deportation regime, including an expert witness from the official [Brook House inquiry](#).

Despite this, the jury, having heard our evidence, refused to adhere to the government’s rhetoric. They acquitted all three of us – and were visibly

emotional when giving the verdicts.

This case comes at a time when compassion, solidarity and any attempts to hold the government accountable are being criminalised by a wave of [draconian anti-protest laws](#), and it shows the power and value of collective action, resistance and solidarity. But this government's authoritarianism must be called what it is. These oppressive laws, prosecutions and sentences are intended to suppress anti-government, anti-police and anti-monarchy sentiments. They are designed to prevent people dissenting against the many widespread injustices in this country, including the current cost of living crisis, child poverty, structural racism and climate inaction.

Awaiting trial since 2021 has been at times stressful, intense and exhausting, but we have been moved by the solidarity and support people have shown us, as well as our incredible legal representation. We urge people to continue to resist the UK's racist and violent border regime – by showing up on the streets and in our communities. Make sure you are aware of the potential consequences, and how you (along with others) can deal with them. And know that there are many roles in these movements that are non-arrestable, and these are just as important as those that involve riskier action.

The incredibly heavy-handed response from those in power just shows how concerned they are about how effective we can be at successfully preventing deportations, [immigration raids](#), [evictions](#), [stop and search](#), [new fossil fuel extraction](#) and [arms production](#). As the saying goes: direct action gets the goods. We must continue this resistance.

- Griff Ferris is a researcher and campaigner; Rivka Micklethwaite is a trainee midwife; and Callum Lynch provides legal advice and information to members of the public at a human rights organisation
 - ***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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Illustration: Deena So'Oteh

[OpinionArtificial intelligence \(AI\)](#).

**AI is already causing unintended harm.
What happens when it falls into the
wrong hands?**

[David Evan Harris](#)



Meta, where I used to work, is developing powerful tools. I'm worried about what could happen if they're picked up by malicious actors

Fri 16 Jun 2023 03.00 EDTLast modified on Sat 17 Jun 2023 03.41 EDT

A researcher was granted access earlier this year by Facebook's parent company, Meta, to incredibly potent artificial intelligence software – and [leaked it](#) to the world. As a former researcher on Meta's civic integrity and responsible AI teams, I am terrified by what could happen next.

Though Meta was violated by the leak, it came out as [the winner](#): researchers and independent coders are now racing to improve on or build on the back of LLaMA (Large Language Model Meta AI – Meta's branded version of a large language model or LLM, the type of software underlying ChatGPT), with many sharing their work openly with the world.

This could position [Meta](#) as owner of the centrepiece of the dominant AI platform, much in the same way that Google controls the open-source Android operating system that is built on and adapted by device manufacturers globally. If Meta were to secure this central position in the AI ecosystem, it would have leverage to shape the direction of AI at a

fundamental level, controlling both the experiences of individual users and setting limits on what other companies could and couldn't do. In the same way that Google reaps billions from Android advertising, app sales and transactions, this could set up Meta for a highly profitable period in the AI space, the exact structure of which is still to emerge.

The company did apparently issue takedown notices to get the leaked code offline, as it was supposed to be only accessible for research use, but following the leak, the company's chief AI scientist, Yann LeCun, said: "The platform that will win will be [the open one](#)," suggesting the company may just run with the open-source model as a competitive strategy.

Although Google's Bard and OpenAI's ChatGPT are free to use, they are not open source. Bard and ChatGPT rely on teams of engineers, content moderators and threat analysts working to prevent their platforms being used for harm – in their current iterations, they (hopefully) won't help you build a bomb, plan a terrorist attack, or make fake content designed to disrupt an election. These people and the systems they build and maintain keep ChatGPT and Bard aligned with specific human values.

Meta's semi-open source LLaMA and its descendent large language models (LLMs), however, can be run by anyone with sufficient computer hardware to support them – the latest offspring can be used on commercially available laptops. This gives anyone – from unscrupulous political consultancies to Vladimir Putin's well-resourced GRU intelligence agency – freedom to run the AI without any safety systems in place.

From 2018 to 2020 I worked on the Facebook [civic integrity team](#). I dedicated years of my life to fighting online interference in democracy from many sources. My colleagues and I played lengthy games of whack-a-mole with dictators around the world who used "[coordinated inauthentic behaviour](#)", hiring teams of people to manually create fake accounts to promote their regimes, surveil and harass their enemies, foment unrest and even [promote genocide](#).



‘After multiple rounds of redundancies, I fear Meta’s ability to fight ‘influence operations’ has been hobbled.’ Photograph: ZUMA Press, Inc./Alamy Stock Photo/Alamy Live News.

I would guess that Putin’s team is already in the market for some great AI tools to disrupt the US 2024 presidential election (and probably those in other countries, too). I can think of few better additions to his arsenal than emerging freely available LLMs such as LLaMA, and the software stack being built up around them. It could be used to make fake content more convincing (much of the [Russian content](#) deployed in 2016 had grammatical or stylistic deficits) or to produce much more of it, or it could even be repurposed as a “classifier” that scans social media platforms for particularly incendiary content from real Americans to amplify with fake comments and reactions. It could also write convincing scripts for [deepfakes](#) that synthesise video of political candidates saying things they never said.

The irony of this all is that Meta’s platforms (Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp) will be among the biggest battlegrounds on which to deploy these “influence operations”. Sadly, the civic integrity team that I worked on was shut down in 2020, and after multiple rounds of redundancies, I fear that the company’s ability to fight these operations has been hobbled.

Even more worrisome, however, is that we have now entered the “[chaos era](#)” of social media, and the proliferation of new and growing platforms, each with separate and much smaller “integrity” or “trust and safety” teams, may be even less well positioned than Meta to detect and stop influence operations, especially in the time-sensitive final days and hours of elections, when speed is most critical.

But my concerns don’t stop with the erosion of democracy. After working on the civic integrity team at Facebook, I went on to manage research teams working on responsible AI, chronicling the potential harms of AI and seeking ways to make it more safe and fair for society. I saw how my employer’s own AI systems could facilitate [housing discrimination](#), make [racist associations](#), and [exclude women](#) from seeing job listings visible to men. Outside the company’s walls, AI systems have unfairly recommended [longer prison sentences](#) for black people, failed to [accurately recognise](#) the faces of dark-skinned women, and caused countless additional incidents of harm, thousands of which are catalogued in the [AI Incident Database](#).

The scary part, though, is that the incidents I describe above were, for the most part, the unintended consequences of implementing AI systems at scale. When AI is in the hands of people who are deliberately and maliciously abusing it, the risks of misalignment increase exponentially, compounded even further as the capabilities of AI increase.

It would be fair to ask: are LLMs not inevitably going to become open source anyway? Since LLaMA’s leak, numerous other companies and labs have joined the race, some publishing LLMs that [rival LLaMA](#) in power with more permissive open-source licences. One LLM built upon LLaMA proudly touts its “[uncensored](#)” nature, citing its lack of safety checks as a feature, not a bug. Meta appears to stand alone today, however, for its capacity to continue to release more and more powerful models combined with its willingness to put them in the hands of anyone who wants them. It’s important to remember that if malicious actors can get their hands on the code, they’re unlikely to care what the licence agreement says.

We are living through a moment of such rapid acceleration of AI technologies that even stalling their release – especially their open-source

release – for a [few months](#) could give governments time to put critical regulations in place. This is what CEOs such as Sam Altman, Sundar Pichai and [Elon Musk](#) are calling for. Tech companies must also put much stronger controls on who qualifies as a “researcher” for special access to these potentially dangerous tools.

The smaller platforms (and the hollowed-out teams at the bigger ones) also need time for their trust and safety/integrity teams to catch up with the implications of LLMs so they can build defences against abuses. The generative AI companies and communications platforms need to work together to deploy [watermarking](#) to identify AI-generated content, and [digital signatures](#) to verify that human-produced content is authentic.

The race to the bottom on AI safety that we’re seeing right now must stop. In last month’s [hearings before the US Congress](#), both Gary Marcus, an AI expert, and Sam Altman, CEO of OpenAI, made calls for new international [governance bodies](#) to be created specifically for AI – akin to bodies that govern [nuclear security](#). The [EU is far ahead](#) of the US on this, but sadly its pioneering EU Artificial Intelligence Act may not fully come into force until 2025 or later. That’s far too late to make a difference in this race.

Until new laws and new governing bodies are in place, we will, unfortunately, have to rely on the forbearance of tech CEOs to stop the most powerful and dangerous tools falling into the wrong hands. So please, CEOs: let’s slow down a bit before you break democracy. And lawmakers: make haste.

- David Evan Harris is chancellor’s public scholar at UC Berkeley, senior research fellow at the International Computer Science Institute, senior adviser for AI ethics at the Psychology of Technology Institute, an affiliated scholar at the CITRIS Policy Lab and a contributing author to the Centre for International Governance Innovation

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Rishi Sunak has promised to ‘halve inflation this year to ease the cost of living and give people financial security’. Photograph: WPA/Getty

[Nils Pratley on finance](#)[Rishi Sunak](#)

Sunak should never have made his woolly inflation pledge

[Nils Pratley](#).



The prime minister has set a target that was not in his power to deliver, and he ignored political convention to do so

Fri 16 Jun 2023 05.47 EDTLast modified on Fri 16 Jun 2023 10.07 EDT

Back in January, Rishi Sunak presumably thought it was a smart way to try to project an air of confidence and stability from Downing Street after the Liz Truss wildness. Promise something that, according to the collective wisdom of financial markets, was about 95% likely to happen anyway. Thus the first of the prime minister's [five new year pledges to the British people](#) was this: “We will halve inflation this year to ease the cost of living and give people financial security.”

Never mind the fact that the Bank of England – not the government – sets interest rates to tackle inflation. Sunak's calculation, one assumes, was that an easy win was on the cards and he could scoop the credit by being the person who had set the target.

Less than six months later, the safe bet looks substantially less safe. [Inflation was 8.7% in April](#), confounding the Bank's forecast that a faster fall would materialise as we passed the anniversary of higher energy costs.

The City consensus for May's reading, which will come next week, is about 8.5%. Andrew Bailey, the governor, has conceded that inflation is ["taking a lot longer" than hoped to come down](#). An embarrassed Threadneedle Street is reviewing why its models have proved so wonky.

The gilts market has taken a look at this mess and understandably decided that interest rates will be higher for longer because inflation in the UK is stickier than elsewhere. A halving of inflation this year is still possible but nobody appears to have a handle on the interplay between wage increases, a tight labour market, the second-round effects of energy costs and, possibly, corporate pricing power.

In any case, a halving from what to what? When Sunak made his promise on 4 January, the latest published reading was the November 2022 inflation figure of 10.7%. The number for December was 10.5% and January 2023's turned out to be 10.1%. Which one did the prime minister mean to be used? Or perhaps he was referencing a quarterly rate, rather than a monthly one, which would have some logic. Or perhaps the vagueness was deliberately cunning.

Whatever the truth, the odd half-percentage point may matter to the final reckoning of the "promise". The National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR) last month [forecast that year-end inflation will be 5.4%](#).

The blurry nature of the pledge is one reason why Sunak should never have made it. The main reason, of course, is that the government should not be seen to compromise the operational independence of the Bank in any way. Parliament sets the target for inflation - 2% – and the Bank's monetary policy committee is accountable for delivering it. That's how the system works. The script is not meant to involve the prime minister confusing things by airing additional targets.

Mervyn King, a former governor of the Bank of England, suggested in an interview with LBC this week that Sunak's inflation promise was "not wise". You bet. It was foolish and improper.

Jagjit Chadha, the director of NIESR, went further last month and argued it was "a complete mistake" to set a target. "The government should not be

stepping into that space. In my own view, it has provided a focal point for 5% inflation this year, and contributed to the persistence [of high inflation], by making people plan around that halving,” [he said](#).

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In the circumstances, Sunak is in no position to grumble if the promise returns to bite him – and if consumers, mortgage borrowers and businesses vent their anger in his direction. The prime minister set a target that was not in his power to deliver, and he ignored political convention to do so. The numbers may yet align for him as more rate hikes arrive, but the little political stunt will still have been seriously ill-advised.

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2023.06.16 - Around the world

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- [Donald Trump Former president celebrates as Westchester prosecutor closes tax investigation](#)
- [Canada 'Horrific' highway crash leaves at least 15 dead](#)
- [Pentagon leaks Suspect Jack Teixeira, indicted by federal grand jury](#)



E Jean Carroll after the verdict in the first trial she brought against Donald Trump on 9 May 2023. Photograph: Brendan McDermid/Reuters

[Donald Trump](#)

Second Trump defamation trial brought by E Jean Carroll set for January 2024

The ex-president is being sued for \$10m by the New York writer who already was awarded \$5m in an earlier trial against Trump

[Léonie Chao-Fong](#) and agencies

Thu 15 Jun 2023 20.35 EDTLast modified on Fri 16 Jun 2023 10.29 EDT

A federal judge has set a date for a second defamation trial brought by E Jean Carroll, the New York writer who last month won a \$5m jury verdict against [Donald Trump](#) for sexual abuse and defamation.

US district judge Lewis Kaplan in Manhattan said the civil trial, in which Carroll is seeking at least \$10m in damages, will begin on 15 January 2024, “unless this case has previously been entirely disposed of”.

The timetable raises the prospect that Trump might have to defend himself in three trials early next year as he seeks the 2024 Republican presidential nomination, a contest in which he is now the frontrunner.

Trump has been criminally charged by federal prosecutors in Florida with mishandling classified documents, and by Manhattan’s district attorney with covering up hush-money payments to an adult film star. He has pleaded not guilty in both cases.

US district judge Aileen Cannon, who is presiding over Trump’s Florida criminal case, also today issued her first order since the former president’s arraignment earlier this week. Cannon ordered defense attorneys to contact the justice department to expedite the process of obtaining security clearances, suggesting she is interested in moving the proceedings along without delay.

Carroll’s lawyer Roberta Kaplan, who is not related to the judge, said her client looks forward to moving expeditiously on her claims.

A lawyer and a spokesperson for Trump did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Carroll claims that Trump defamed her in June 2019 when he denied having raped her in the mid-1990s in a Bergdorf Goodman department store dressing room in Manhattan, and said she was not his “type”.

Last month, a Manhattan jury ordered Trump to pay Carroll \$5m for defamation and sexual abuse in a separate lawsuit, after he made a similar denial in October 2022.

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On Tuesday, Judge Kaplan allowed Carroll to amend her lawsuit over Trump's 2019 comments to include similar comments he made recently on CNN.

In a town hall the day after the \$5m verdict, Trump called Carroll's account "fake" and labeled her a "whack job".

Reuters contributed reporting

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Trump at the Turnberry course in Scotland last month. On Thursday he wrote on Truth Social: ‘When will the other fake cases against me be dropped?’ Photograph: Andy Buchanan/AFP/Getty Images

[Donald Trump](#)

Trump celebrates as Westchester prosecutor closes tax investigation

No charges filed against ex-president or Trump Organization in New York inquiry into potential golf-course tax irregularities

Associated Press

Thu 15 Jun 2023 20.07 EDTLast modified on Thu 15 Jun 2023 20.12 EDT

Make that one less legal headache for [Donald Trump](#).

A suburban [New York](#) prosecutor said on Thursday that she has closed a multi-year investigation that focused in part on whether the twice-indicted former president or his company misled authorities to reduce taxes on properties they own.

Westchester county district attorney Mimi Rocah said in a statement that she reached the decision after an investigation that was conducted “objectively, and independent of politics, party affiliation and personal or political beliefs”.

No charges were filed against Trump or his company, the Trump Organization.

Rocah, a Democrat, started investigating Trump in 2021, seeking to determine if he or the Trump Organization provided officials with misleading valuations in an effort to shrink the tax bill on his Trump National Golf Club in Briarcliff Manor, about 29 miles (46km) north of midtown Manhattan.

As part of the investigation, Rocah’s office subpoenaed records from the golf course and the town of Ossining, which handles the course’s taxes.

In an all-capitals post on his Truth Social platform, Trump wrote that ending the investigation was “the honorable thing to do in that I did nothing wrong, but where and when do I get my reputation back? When will the other fake cases against me be dropped?”

A message seeking comment was left with the Trump Organization.

Trump, the early leading candidate for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination, had decried investigations into him and his business practices as a partisan “witch hunt”. The company has described Rocah’s probe in the past as politically motivated and misguided.

Rocah’s announcement came days after Trump was arraigned on Tuesday in federal court in Miami on charges he mishandled classified documents and impeded investigators. Trump is also charged in Manhattan in connection with a scheme to bury allegations of extramarital affairs that arose during his first White House run.

Rocah discussed her decision to close the case in an interview earlier on Thursday with CBS News, confirming a report on Wednesday by the news

outlet Insider.

“It’s really important, more important than ever in our country, to make sure that people understand that we have independent prosecutors, we have a justice system that operates independent of politics,” Rocah told CBS.

“I can stand here and proudly say that I’m one of those prosecutors, and I look at every subject of any investigation, every organization that’s a subject of an investigation, the same way,” Rocah said.

Like many property owners, the Trump Organization has fought vigorously to keep its taxes low, battling Ossining for years for lower tax assessments for the Briarcliff Manor course.

The company once valued the golf club for tax purposes at about \$1.4m, later increasing its estimate to \$6.5m, while the town for years valued it at more than \$15m.

In 2021, a New York judge ruled on a compromise that would cut the assessment to \$9.5m for 2021. The compromise also cut assessments going back several years by about 30%, triggering refunds to the company of about \$875,000 for overcharges on its back taxes.

At the same time, Trump and his company are accused of inflating the value of assets to impress lenders and business associates. New York’s attorney general, Letitia James, sued Trump and the Trump Organization last year, alleging they provided banks and others false information about his net worth and the value of assets such as hotels and golf courses.

Among the allegations in that case, which is slated to go to trial in October, is that the company inflated the value of the Briarcliff Manor golf club by millions of dollars by counting fees for memberships that were not sold or were never paid.

'Mass casualty': Canada highway crash leaves at least 15 dead – video

[Canada](#)

‘Horrific’ Canada highway crash leaves at least 15 dead

Incident involving semi-trailer truck and vehicle used to transport elderly and disabled people sparks huge emergency response

[Leyland Cecco](#) in Toronto

Thu 15 Jun 2023 20.05 EDTFirst published on Thu 15 Jun 2023 17.39 EDT

At least 15 people are dead in [Canada](#) after a crash between a semi-trailer truck and a vehicle used to transport elderly and physically disabled people, as crews mount one of the largest-ever emergency responses in the region.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) in the province of Manitoba said as of Thursday evening, 15 people had been killed in the crash and 10 others taken to hospitals with injuries.

“This is a day in Manitoba and across Canada that will be remembered as one of tragedy and incredible sadness,” commanding officer Rob Hill said at a news conference. “To all those waiting, I can’t imagine how difficult it is not knowing if the person you love the most will be making it home tonight. I’m so sorry we can not get you the definitive answers you need more quickly.”

The RCMP’s major crime services has now taken over the investigation.

Shortly before noon a semi-truck collided with a bus carrying mostly seniors, en route to a local casino. The crash happened near the community of Carberry on Thursday, 100 miles (160km) west of Winnipeg. The drivers of both vehicles survived and are currently in hospital.

“This incident does have echoes of the tragic collision [that happened in Humboldt, Saskatchewan](#), and we are very much aware of that. We have already linked into the investigators in Saskatchewan, who have first-hand experience,” said superintendent Rob Lasson of the major crimes unit, referring to the 2018 crash that left 15 people dead, the majority of whom were young hockey players.

[Images on social media](#) showed the Handi-Transit vehicle engulfed in flame. Subsequent images show the vehicle with its roof burned off.

Manitoba resident Tracy Leitch was traveling on the highway when she spotted smoke ahead, eventually passing a heavily damaged semi truck and another crumpled vehicle.

“There was nothing left of the vehicle,” she told CTV News. “I was almost in tears and almost had a panic attack. Like I just felt really sick to my stomach.”

Trucker Caroline Bleackley passed through the intersections of two highways around noon when she spotted the scene of the collision.

“I have seen collisions before, but not like this, not of this magnitude,” she told the Winnipeg Free Press. “There was a lot of damage ... It was pretty sad to see.””

A spokesperson for the Shock Trauma Air Rescue Service (Stars) air ambulance service said the scene was “in line with the similar large incidents that we responded to in the past, such as [the tragedy with Humboldt Broncos](#), the [incident in James Smith Cree Nation](#).” The service sent 14 physicians, paramedics and nurses as well as two helicopters and two planes to the scene.

Winnipeg’s Health Sciences Centre hospital declared a code orange, a designation used for mass casualty events. Other hospitals in the area were preparing to receive an influx of patients.

The head of the Day & Ross trucking company, whose truck was involved in the crash, said they were heartbroken by the tragic news.

“The thoughts of the entire Day & Ross team are with those who have lost loved ones in this terrible incident, and we are holding out hope that those injured will recover,” CEO William Doherty said in a statement. “We will fully cooperate with the investigation and offer any assistance and support that we can.”

Political leaders issued statements of condolence.

“Our hearts are broken, and our thoughts are with the families and loved ones of all the lives impacted by the horrific and devastating tragedy near the Town of Carberry,” Manitoba’s premier, Heather Stefanson, said in a statement. Flags at the province’s legislative building will be lowered to half mast.

The Conservative leader, Pierre Poilievre, [tweeted](#): “My heart is broken to hear of the victims in the horrific crash near Carberry, Manitoba earlier today.”

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said: “The news from Carberry, Manitoba, is incredibly tragic. I’m sending my deepest condolences to those who lost loved ones today, and I’m keeping the injured in my thoughts. I cannot imagine the pain those affected are feeling – but Canadians are here for you.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jun/15/canada-highway-crash-manitoba-mass-casualty>



Family and friends of Jack Teixeira, the US national guardsman accused of leaking military secrets, arrive for hearing at courthouse in Worcester, Massachusetts, 19 May. Photograph: Brian Snyder/Reuters

[Pentagon leaks 2023](#)

Jack Teixeira, Pentagon leaks suspect, indicted by federal grand jury

US airman charged with six counts of retention and transmission of classified documents relating to national defense, DoJ says

[Maya Yang](#) and agencies

Thu 15 Jun 2023 17.57 EDTFirst published on Thu 15 Jun 2023 17.14 EDT

Jack Teixeira, the 21-year-old US airman accused of leaking confidential intelligence and defense documents online has been indicted by a federal grand jury, the Department of Justice said on Thursday.

Teixeira, of North Dighton, Massachusetts, has been charged with six counts of willful retention and transmission of classified information

relating to national defense, the justice department [said](#).

US district court magistrate judge David Hennessy granted the government's motion for detention on 19 May, the justice department added in the press statement.

Attorney general Merrick Garland said: "As laid out in the indictment, Jack Teixeira was entrusted by the United States government with access to classified national defense information – including information that reasonably could be expected to cause exceptionally grave damage to national security if shared."

He added: "Teixeira is charged with sharing information with users on a social media platform he knew were not entitled to receive it. In doing so, he is alleged to have violated US law and endangered our national security."

Teixeira, who currently remains in federal custody, was arrested by armed FBI agents at his family home in April this year. He had enlisted in the US Air National Guard in September 2019 and held a top secret security clearance since 2021.

According to federal prosecutors, Teixeira is accused of willfully, improperly, and unlawfully retaining and transmitting national defense information beginning in or around January 2022. The files in question were classified as "top secret" or "secret", according to charging documents.

The leak is believed to have started on Discord, a social media platform popular among the online gaming community. Teixeira is believed to have been a leader of a Discord group chat called Thug Shaker Central. The chat includes 20 to 30 young men and teenagers who frequently post about guns, games and racist memes.

In April, Teixeira was [charged](#) with two separate counts under the Espionage Act.

One of the counts is unauthorized retention and transmission of national defense information which “[could be](#) used to the injury of the United States or to the advantage of any foreign nation”.

The other count is the unauthorized removal and retention of classified documents or material.

Each charge of unauthorized retention and transmission of national defense information provides for a sentence of up to 10 years in prison, up to three years of supervised release, and a fine of up to \$250,000, the justice department said.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/jun/15/jack-teixeira-pentagon-leaks-indicted-federal-grand-jury>.

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Fears women and children among Greece shipwreck's growing toll as nine arrested – video

[Greece](#)

Greece shipwreck: up to 100 children were below deck, survivors say

Women also said to have been in the hold, amid fears 78 so far confirmed dead could rise into the hundreds

[Helena Smith](#) in Kalamata, and [Jon Henley](#)

Thu 15 Jun 2023 14.25 EDTFirst published on Thu 15 Jun 2023 04.32 EDT

Survivors from an overcrowded fishing boat that capsized and sank on Wednesday off the Greek coast in one of the worst disasters in the Mediterranean in recent years have told doctors and police that women and children were travelling in the hold of the vessel.

Seventy-eight people have been confirmed dead, but there are fears the number of victims could run into the hundreds.

“Right now everything is guesswork but we are working on the assumption that as many as 500 are missing,” said Nicolaos Spanoudakis, a police inspector. “Women and children, it seems, were in the hold.”

Doctors at Kalamata general hospital told Greek media and the BBC that survivors said as many 100 children had been in the bottom of the ship.

It has not been possible to verify the figure, though asked by a reporter from Greece’s ANT1 channel if there were 100 children onboard, one survivor replied: “Yes.”

On Thursday night it was announced that Greek authorities had arrested nine suspected people-smugglers believed to have piloted the vessel before

it sank off the southern Peloponnese.

Skai TV reported that the nine – all men – were of Egyptian descent and were suspected of masterminding the illegal voyage of hundreds of people to Italy from Egypt, from where they had set out with the trawler.

“They are in custody and will appear before a local magistrate,” Nikos Alexiou, the Hellenic coastguard spokesperson, told the Guardian. “They are being held by the coastguard in Kalamata.”

A public prosecutor is likely to press several charges against the group including that of mass murder. Local media reports said the ship’s captain was not among them and had died when the vessel went down.

Erasmia Roumana from the United Nations’ refugee agency described the disaster as “really horrific” and added that the survivors were in a very bad psychological state. “Many are in shock, they are so overwhelmed,” she told reporters in the port of Kalamata. “Many worry about the people they travelled with – families or friends.”

All 104 survivors were men aged between 16 and 40, authorities said. Most spent the night in a warehouse in the port. “They’re from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria and Egypt,” said Giorgos Farvas, Kalamata’s deputy mayor. “We’re talking about young men, mostly, who are in a state of huge psychological shock and exhaustion. Some fainted as they walked off the gangplanks from the vessels that brought them here.”

About 30 people were treated in hospital for pneumonia and exhaustion but were not in immediate danger, officials said, and several had been discharged.

Reports suggested up to 750 people had packed on to the fishing boat that [capsized and sank early on Wednesday](#) about 50 miles (80km) from the southern coastal town of Pylos while it was being shadowed by the Greek coastguard.

“The fishing boat was 25-30 metres long. Its deck was full of people, and we assume the interior was just as full,” a coastguard spokesperson said. A

government spokesperson said smugglers were known to “lock people up to maintain control”.

At least 78 people dead and hundreds feared missing as refugee boat sinks off Greece – video

Greece’s caretaker government has called three days of national mourning, with electoral campaigning ahead of polls on 25 June suspended.

Early on Thursday, a coastguard vessel sailed into Kalamata, transporting victims. After an official count, authorities revised the death toll to 78 from 79.

The coastguard said a surveillance plane from Europe’s Frontex agency had spotted the boat on Tuesday, but officials said people on the boat, which had set off from the Libyan port of Tobruk, repeatedly refused offers of help.

“It was a fishing boat packed with people who refused our assistance because they wanted to go to Italy,” the coastguard spokesperson, Nikos Alexiou, told Skai TV. “We stayed beside it in case it needed our assistance, which they had refused.”

A senior prosecutor on Thursday took over supervision of the investigation into the incident. Alexiou suggested the boat may also have capsized if the coastguard had attempted to stop it without the crew’s and passengers’ cooperation.

But Alexis Tsipras, the leftwing opposition leader, said during a visit to Kalamata port that survivors told him they had “called for help”.

He said: “What sort of protocol does not call for the rescue... of an overloaded boat about to sink?”

Tsipras, who was prime minister from 2015 to 2019 at the peak of Europe’s migration crisis, blamed the continent’s migration policy for the incident. “There are very big political responsibilities,” he said. “The immigration policy that Europe has been following for years ... turns the Mediterranean, our seas, into watery graves.”

[Map](#)

An independent refugee activist, Nawal Soufi, said on Facebook she had been in contact with people on the boat until 11pm on Tuesday. “The man I was talking to expressly told me: ‘I feel that this will be our last night alive,’” she wrote.

The boat’s engine gave up shortly before midnight UK time on Tuesday and it capsized soon afterwards, with coastguard experts saying the movement of people inside may have caused it to list and overturn. No one onboard was thought to be wearing a life jacket.

The acting Greek migration minister, Daniel Esdras, told the TV station ERT that Greece would examine survivors’ asylum claims but those not entitled to protection would be sent home.

The search operation was due to continue until at least Friday morning, according to government sources. The chances of retrieving the sunken vessel were remote, they said, because the area of international waters where the incident occurred was so deep.

“The chances of finding more people alive are minimal,” a retired Greek coastguard admiral, Nikos Spanos, told ERT. “We have seen old fishing boats like this before from Libya. They are not at all seaworthy. To put it simply, they are floating coffins.”

The deadliest migrant tragedy in Greece was in June 2016, when at least 320 people were listed as dead or missing in a sinking near Crete.

Reuters and Agence France-Presse contributed to this report



The cable car from Roosevelt Island to Manhattan last week, when haze from the Canadian wildfires shrouded New York. Photograph: Shannon Stapleton/Reuters

[Climate crisis](#)

Fears of hottest year on record as global temperatures spike

Early data shows June temperatures hitting record highs ahead of El Niño that experts say will have significant heating effect

[Oliver Milman](#)

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Thu 15 Jun 2023 03.30 EDTLast modified on Fri 16 Jun 2023 07.21 EDT

Global temperatures have accelerated to record-setting levels this month, an ominous sign in the climate crisis ahead of a gathering El Niño that could potentially propel 2023 to become the hottest year ever recorded.

Preliminary global average temperatures [taken so far in June](#) are nearly 1C (1.8F) above levels previously recorded for the same month, going back to 1979. While the month is not yet complete and may not set a new June record, climate scientists say it follows a pattern of strengthening global heating that could see this year named the hottest ever recorded, topping [2016](#).

There has been “remarkable global warmth” so far in June, [confirmed](#) Copernicus, the European Union’s Earth observation arm, which said that the first few days of the month even breached a 1.5C increase compared with pre-industrial times. This is probably the first time this has happened since industrialization, the agency said.

The long-term warming conditions caused by the burning of fossil fuels will probably receive a further pulse of heat via El Niño, a naturally recurring phenomenon where sections of the Pacific Ocean heat up, typically causing temperatures to spike across the world.

[Line chart of global temperatures where each line is a year. 2023’s line is above the grouping of years between 1979 to 2021.](#)

Last week, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (Noaa) [said](#) El Niño conditions are now present and will “gradually strengthen” into early next year. Michael Mann, a climate scientist at the University of Pennsylvania, said human-caused warming will be exacerbated by an event that typically adds between 0.1C to 0.2C (0.18F to 0.36F) to the overall global temperature.

“The global surface temperature anomaly is at or near record levels right now, and 2023 will almost certainly be the warmest year on record,” said Mann. “That is likely to be true for just about every El Niño year in the future as well, as long as we continue to warm the planet with fossil fuel burning and carbon pollution.”

Mika Rantanen, a Finnish meteorologist, [said](#) that the spiking heat so far this month was “extraordinary” and that it was “pretty certain” it would result in a record warm June.

This year has already seen severe, record heatwaves roil places from [Puerto Rico](#) to [Siberia](#) to [Spain](#), while blistering heat in Canada helped spur huge wildfires that [blotted the skies above New York City and Washington](#) with toxic smoke last week.

According to an [update issued by NOAA on Wednesday](#), the world had its third warmest May in a 174-year temperature record last month, with North America and South America both having their hottest May ever recorded.

NOAA is more circumspect about the prospects of an annual heat record in 2023, placing the odds at about 12%, but has said it is almost certain the year will rank in the top 10 warmest and is very likely to be in the top five.

In May, the World Meteorological Organization [warned](#) that global temperatures will probably soar over the next five years, fueled by El Niño as well as emissions, with a new record hot year almost guaranteed during this period.

There is also a good chance the average temperature will exceed 1.5C (2.7F) beyond pre-industrial times, a key threshold agreed by governments at which point heatwaves, droughts, flooding and other climate impacts become significantly worse.

While people are feeling the heat on land, an even more remarkable burst of warmth is [occurring in the seas](#), with NOAA confirming a second consecutive month of record high ocean surface temperatures in May. Excess heat in the oceans, which cover 70% of the globe's surface, influences overall global temperatures, as well as warping fish populations, bleaching coral reefs and driving coastal sea level rises.

“The oceans have been warming steadily but we are now seeing record temperatures which is certainly alarming given we are expecting El Niño to strengthen,” said Ellen Bartow-Gillies, a climate scientist at NOAA. “That will undoubtedly have an impact on the rest of the world.”

[Guardian graphic from NOAA data in April 2023.](#)

Guardian graphic from NOAA data in April 2023.

Bartow-Gillies said NOAA had not yet processed its temperature data for June but that it appeared the elevated heat will continue this month, although El Niño will not be a major factor until later in the year. “We are off to a pretty warm start to the year, it’s not unprecedented, but we could be getting even warmer due to El Niño,” she said.

Regardless of whether 2023 ends up the hottest ever recorded, scientists caution that the escalating impacts of the climate crisis are now starkly evident and will not be slowed until greenhouse gas emissions are radically cut.

“Without stronger emission cuts, the changes we are seeing are just the start of the adverse impacts we can expect to see,” said Natalie Mahowald, an atmospheric scientist at Cornell University. “This year and the extreme events we have seen so far should serve as a warning.”

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Shadow education secretary Bridget Phillipson. ‘It is very easy to make her sound unreasonable by keeping your cool,’ said an Independent Schools Council official. Photograph: Leon Neal/Getty Images

[Labour](#)

Private school officials called Labour’s Bridget Phillipson ‘chippy’ in emails

Exclusive: Comments about shadow education secretary revealed as lobby group steps up pushback against Labour plans

[Pippa Crerar](#) *Political editor*

[@PippaCrerar](#)

Thu 15 Jun 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Thu 15 Jun 2023 02.15 EDT

The body representing independent schools in the UK has described the shadow education secretary as “very chippy” in private messages, as it steps up its campaign against Labour’s plan to [add VAT to school fees](#).

A public access request to the Independent [Schools](#) Council about Bridget Phillipson revealed that officials said she “doesn’t know diddly” and suggested she should “appreciate the great good our sector does”.

In a sign of their more aggressive tactics as [Labour](#) moves further ahead in the polls, the lobby group has written to the party’s MPs with private schools in their constituencies to warn them of the impact of the policy on pupils’ families.

It has also sent an email, seen by the Guardian, to independent schools predicting that it is looking “increasingly likely” that Labour will come to power at the next general election and that the VAT policy could cause “damage” to their sector.

One letter gives schools a template that Labour insiders suggest could be shared with parents to try to discredit the party’s policy, including details of, for example, how much the ISC claims the local state education system saves as a result of private schools existing.

It has prompted warnings from party figures that they could write to the Charity Commission about any independent schools – which are exempt from VAT and some other taxes due to their charitable status – that express political opinions or conduct a political campaign.

Labour has pledged to use about £1.7bn generated from ending private school tax breaks to recruit more than 6,500 new teachers and give every child access to a mental health counsellor at school and professional careers advice.

The party wants to make state schools more attractive to middle-class parents priced out of private education by focusing on activities such as debating and the arts alongside high academic standards.

A Labour source said: “For too long the Conservative government has failed abjectly to be the kind of determined advocate that state school-

educated children and their families badly need to break down barriers to opportunity in this country.”

The public access request was submitted to the ISC last November after education experts criticised Jeremy Hunt’s use of data from the leading private school lobby group to justify his decision not to raise £1.7bn by adding VAT to school fees.

ISC officials said Phillipson was “clearly annoyed” that the Treasury “got away with” pointing to research provided by the group after the shadow education secretary accused the chancellor of “shamelessly” using the data to justify his actions.

Before a media appearance with Phillipson, one official emailed: “I think she has no independent schools in her constituency so she doesn’t have the real experience you have. She is bound to peddle the Labour lines off-pat.”

A further email said: “Essentially, her line is that independent schools are for the rich and that they are flourishing at the expense of state schools. It’s an us vs them thing (which I think is covered by the class war answer below). She gets very chippy when people don’t agree with her or push back at her, so it is very easy to make her sound unreasonable by keeping your cool.”

Officials defended their data, which has been criticised by experts, in internal ISC WhatsApp messages from January 2023. “With all due respect to the shadow SoS [secretary of state], our numbers are right and beyond reproof and she don’t know diddly,” one said.

And in March, another official wrote: “I do wish Bridget Phillipson would take a moment to appreciate the great good our sector does. It’s so disappointing that Labour doesn’t grasp it. Saddening.”

An ISC spokesperson said: “Schools are engaging with their local MPs over a policy that they are extremely worried will impede their charitable work. They are perfectly entitled to do so under Charity Commission rules, and the threat to silence independent schools’ right to object to a tax that would

do very real harm to them and their local communities is both empty and cynical.

“ISC has been consistently clear that it is opposed to the Labour party’s stated policy on independent schools, not the Labour party itself. Indeed, ISC would welcome the opportunity to work with the Labour party to build on the good work already being done in the sector, instead of Labour penalising parents with a tax on their choice of school.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2023/jun/15/private-school-officials-called-labour-minister-chippy-in-private-messages>

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[Ukraine war live](#)[Ukraine](#)

Russia-Ukraine war: Ukrainian fighter pilots learning to fly F-16 jets as Kyiv claims progress in counteroffensive – as it happened

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A particular concern is how bookmakers use targeted online adverts to lure back individual gamblers. Photograph: Daviles/Getty Images/iStockphoto

[Gambling](#)

The Guardian bans all gambling advertising

Ban will apply worldwide to all of media group's online and print outlets, including the Guardian, Observer, and Guardian Weekly

- [All bets are off: why the Guardian has decided to reject gambling advertising](#)
- [Support open, independent journalism today](#)

[Jim Waterson](#) *Media editor*

[@jimwaterson](#)

Thu 15 Jun 2023 04.00 EDTLast modified on Thu 15 Jun 2023 09.28 EDT

The Guardian has announced a global ban on gambling advertising, arguing it is unethical to take money from services that can lead to “addiction and financial ruin”.

Anna Bateson, the chief executive of [Guardian Media Group](#), said advertising – particularly online – could trap gamblers in an “addictive cycle” that caused financial distress, mental health issues and wider social problems.

She said: “Guardian journalists have reported on the devastating impact of the gambling industry in the UK and Australia, helping to shift the dial and ensure the issue remains high on the public agenda. [Studies](#) highlight a clear correlation between exposure to gambling advertising and increased intentions to engage in regular gambling.”

Bateson said a particular concern was how bookmakers used targeted online adverts to lure back individual gamblers. “Ultimately, we believe that our primary obligation is to do the right thing for our readers, which is why we’ve decided that there are other ways to generate revenue,” she said.

The ban covers all forms of gambling advertising, including promotions for sports betting, online casinos and scratchcards. It will apply worldwide to all of the company’s online and print outlets, including the Guardian, Observer, and Guardian Weekly.

Lottery advertising has been excluded from the ban, with a spokesperson for the Guardian saying it could have social benefits through raising money for good causes and typically involved “non-instantaneous draws”.

The Guardian already has a ban on adverts from fossil fuel companies, which has been place since 2020.

The decision to exclude gambling advertising from the Guardian’s publications follows the rapid growth of online betting on sporting events, aided by deregulation and the huge increase in the number of smartphone users. The US has recently embraced online betting on sport, following the

lead of Australia and the UK, where gambling has exploded in popularity over the past decade.

In order to sustain their profits, gambling companies spend enormous sums of money on advertising to attract new customers – and to persuade existing ones to return for one more flutter.

Many media outlets are increasingly reliant on money from betting companies. British television channels have said their business models increasingly depend on advertising from bookmakers, while TikTok is [trialling gambling advertising in Australia](#), and the US outlet Barstool Sports was bought outright by a casino group.

There are signs that of growing discomfort about this approach among the public and prominent journalists, at a time when other countries are instituting outright bans on gambling advertising. The veteran football commentator Clive Tyldesley [recently left the radio station TalkSport](#) because he felt uncomfortable with the obligation to promote bookmakers and odds during matches.

Guardian Media Group increasingly relies on contributions directly from readers, rather than advertising, for its income.

Bateson said: “We are able to make these types of decisions due to our independent ownership structure, balancing purpose and profit.”

She said the Guardian’s own reporting had shown how the UK’s government’s proposed betting reforms “fell short on any meaningful action on gambling advertising”.

She said: “We understand and respect that millions of our readers, including our reporters and staff, are passionate sports fans who may occasionally choose to engage in gambling as part of their sporting experience. It is a matter of personal freedom, and we have no issue with that.

“We fully support the enjoyment of sports and respect individuals’ choices to participate in occasional gambling on football, horse racing, or any other

sport. Our concern lies with the pervasive nature of retargeted digital advertisements that trap a portion of sports fans in an addictive cycle.”

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Photograph: adamkaz/Getty Images/iStockphoto

[Salad](#)

**Eat the rainbow! 10 spectacular salads
to help you eat 30 plants a week**

The more colourful your plate, the more nourishing it will be, too. Here's how to eat the widest range of veg – while having your most delicious summer ever



[Dale Berning Sawa](#)

Thu 15 Jun 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Thu 15 Jun 2023 06.50 EDT

‘Eating the rainbow’ is an excellent maxim by which to fill your belly. The easier on the eye your plateful is, the more enjoyable it will be to eat – and the more nourishing, too. All of which is good news for anyone following the advice to eat 30 plants a week for the sake of your gut.

Nutritionists have long extolled the goodness of what they call phytonutrients: a group of at least 5,000 compounds that are responsible for the colours, flavours and scents of the plants we eat. As Evangeline Mantzioris, a food scientist at the University of South Australia, [has shown](#), carotenoids tend to make things red, orange or yellow and anthocyanins (among others) make things blue and purple. The green in your veg, meanwhile, is due not only to chlorophyll, but also to catechins, phytosterols, nitrates and other chemicals.

Each compound comes with benefits to the various systems in your body. Some improve blood circulation, some boost eye function and others guard brain plasticity.

The challenge, then, is to fit as many as you can into your meals. Here are 10 creative ways to brighten up your plate.

Anna Jones's salad system



Anna Jones's warm butter bean salad with green olives and tomatoes.
Photograph: Matt Russell

In her book [The Modern Cook's Year](#), Jones outlines a great system for hearty salads. Start with some leaves. Add a “hero” veg (beetroot, tomatoes, avocado) and something heartier (a grain, a pulse, some cheese). Heighten it with some texture (croutons, toasted seeds, caramelised nuts, crispy onion) and a herbaceous top note. Then dress: two parts oil to one part vinegar or citrus, with your seasoning of choice (miso, chilli, mustard, capers, cheese, spice). She recommends alternating between a tonal splash of greens (asparagus, peas, little lettuce leaves, bright herbs) with a dill and caper dressing, and a vegetarian niçoise (tomatoes, capers, olives and green beans bolstered with chickpeas or butter beans).

Yotam Ottolenghi's way with citrus



Yotam Ottolenghi's three-citrus salad with green chilli, stem ginger and crunchy salsa. Photograph: Jonathan Lovekin/The Observer

[Ottolenghi](#) – the man who single-handedly repainted the basic British table – is very precise in his methods, which makes following them to the letter a culinary masterclass. That said, I take his ingredient lists as invitations to play, particularly with citrus in a salad. So, take your cue from his many pairings with grapefruit (sumac, red chicory and cress; shallot, chilli and lime), orange (caramelised fig and feta; dates, radishes and rocket) or lemon (thinly sliced, with za'atar and cucumber; sugar-roasted, with sage and tomato; preserved and finely diced, with courgette and fennel). Even better, make his citrus salad, which combines orange, pomelo and grapefruit with bitter leaves and an almond salsa.

Jeremy Lee's cobb salad

The Quo Vadis chef-patron's take on the cobb is not arranged in neat rows on a plate, but tumbled together – and all the better for it. Feeds six.

Cook 250g small new potatoes and 150g each of peas and green beans. Halve the potatoes and quarter the beans. Julienne 2 medium carrots (peeled), 1 small cucumber (peeled and de-seeded), 1 small courgette (topped and tailed) and 1 small celeriac (peeled). Finely chop the heart and leaves of a bunch of celery, 1 apple (cored) and 2 tomatoes. Thinly slice 2 heads of little gem lettuce, 1 small fennel head and a bunch of spring onions. Cut up the leaves of a small bunch each of mint and flat-leaf parsley. An optional extra is 3 hard-boiled eggs (peeled and coarsely chopped) and 6 rashers of streaky bacon, baked until crispy. Make a mayo: whisk together 2 large egg yolks, then slowly add 200ml light vegetable oil, then 50ml olive oil. Season with 1 tsp cider vinegar, 1 tbsp dijon mustard, a few drops of tabasco, the juice of half a lemon and a big pinch of sea salt, then toss in the bowl with all the ingredients. Adjust seasoning to taste and scatter the bacon on top, if using, with a little chopped parsley and a drizzle of olive oil.

Sabrina Ghayour's sweetcorn, black bean and avocado salad



Sabrina Ghayour's sweetcorn salad. Photograph: Kris Kirkham

The British-Iranian chef says that, as a kid, she would eat sweetcorn straight from the can, but now she prefers to cook it on the cob. To serve 10-12 people, boil 6 sweetcorn cobs until tender (about 10 mins), then drain and rinse under cold water. Hold each upright on a chopping board and, using a sharp knife, slice off the kernels in strips, from top to bottom. Place in a bowl with 2 avocados (peeled and sliced), a drained can of black beans, 4 makrut lime leaves, 4 spring onions and 30g fresh coriander, all finely chopped, plus 1 small red pepper, 1 small green pepper and 2 long red chillies, all de-seeded and finely sliced. Dress with 2 heaped tablespoons of mayonnaise and a drizzle of olive oil and season to taste. *Adapted from Simply (Mitchell Beazley)*

Miguel Barclay's 10-minute wonders



Miguel Barclay's carrot and coriander salad. Photograph: Dan Jones

Barclay is the time-poor home-cook's friend. When it is hot outside, his simple ideas are exactly what is needed. These make one portion each.

In a bowl, mix a handful of thinly sliced red cabbage with $\frac{1}{4}$ thinly sliced red onion, $\frac{1}{4}$ carrot (julienned) and a handful of fresh, chopped coriander. Squeeze over the juice of $\frac{1}{2}$ lime, add a splash of olive oil and a pinch each

of salt and pepper, then leave it to rest for at least 10 minutes before serving.

Defrost a big handful of frozen peas and a small handful of frozen broad beans, then shell the beans. Tip into a bowl, dress with a splash of olive oil and season with a pinch each of salt and pepper, then add a handful of chopped mint, 1 sliced red chilli and a small handful of crumbled feta. Mix to combine. *Adapted from [Meat-Free One Pound Meals](#) (Headline)*

Honey and Co's Jerusalem water salad

Honey and Co's Sarit Packer and Itamar Srulovich say to prepare this only in high summer, when tomatoes and cucumbers are at their best. It feeds four.

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Finely dice 150g peeled cucumber, 2 spring onions, 1 red pepper, a handful of small radishes and 2 tomatoes (de-seeded). Mince 1 garlic clove. Mix everything together in a bowl, cover and chill for up to a few hours. Just before serving, add the juice of ½ lemon, 240ml water, ½ tsp of salt and a pinch of freshly ground black pepper and mix well. *Adapted from Honey & Co: [Food](#) from the Middle East (Pavilion).*

Sally Butcher's crunchy cauliflower and brown rice salad with miso and amardine dressing



Sally Butcher's brown rice salad Photograph: Yuki Sugiura

Butcher is the grocer in Peckham, south London, whose books spring to mind when you think of vibrant salads. This also works with quinoa or any crunchy cruciferous veg, such as broccoli or kale. Serves four as a side, or two for lunch.

Soak 50g raisins in water for 30 minutes. Meanwhile, cook 250g brown rice, drain and refresh. When fully cooled, place in a mixing bowl with $\frac{1}{4}$ cauliflower (cut into tiny florets), 2 celery sticks and 1 medium red onion (all finely chopped), 1 carrot (peeled and grated) and the drained raisins. To make the dressing, place 100g amardine (apricot fruit leather – dried sheets – which you can find in most Arabic food shops) in a small pan with a splash of water and warm gently until dissolved. Cool slightly, then mix with 2 tbsp miso, 2 tbsp balsamic vinegar, 3 minced garlic cloves, 1 heaped tsp Aleppo pepper flakes and 2 tbsp olive oil. Season to taste, then pour over the vegetables and stir well to serve. *Adapted from Veganistan: A Vegan Tour of the Middle East (Pavilion)*

Batten and Rowe's green and gold fruit salad



Batten and Rowe's fruit salad. Photograph: Claire Winfield

Rhiannon Batten and Laura Rowe suggest serving this with yoghurt, which would make a perfect all-day breakfast. But I never restrict fruit in a salad to dessert; I would happily eat this alongside some roast chicken and rice, dressed with a rice wine and soy dressing. Serves four.

Heat the oven to 130C fan/150C/300F/gas mark 2, then mix 2 tbsp melted salted butter, 2 tsp caster sugar, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp ground cinnamon and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp ground ginger in a bowl. Pour in 100g seeds (try a mix of pumpkin, sunflower and sesame) and stir to coat. Spread the sticky seeds on a baking tray and bake for 10-15 minutes, stirring and turning midway through cooking. Allow to cool. Meanwhile, de-seed and peel 2 different-coloured melons (honeydew or galia plus cantaloupe works well) and stone 2 white nectarines and 4 apricots, then cut them all into slices. Arrange on a plate, scattered with mint leaves and the spiced seeds. Serve with yoghurt, if you like. *Adapted from Rustle Up (Pavilion)*

Fliss Freeborn's halloumi, chickpea and bulgur wheat salad



Fliss Freeborn's bulgar wheat salad. Photograph: Luke J Albert

Freeborn, Fortnum & Mason's cookery writer of the year, has no time for salads as sides. For her, they have to feed a person, so she believes in including carbs. Here, she suggests adding to bulgur wheat (or rice, if you want to make it gluten-free) either pomegranate seeds or chopped apricots, but I would include both. Substitute tofu for the halloumi to keep it vegan. Serves two, generously.

Cook 120g bulgur wheat in salted water, according to the packet instructions. Fry 220g halloumi slices in a splash of olive oil until golden on both sides, then remove and chop up. To the same pan, add a can of chickpeas and 2 tbsp harissa paste. Stir-fry for 4-6 minutes, to coat the pulses, then leave on a low heat, stirring occasionally, while you dice 1 small deseeded cucumber and very finely chop 20g each coriander and parsley. When the bulgur wheat is cooked, drain it, then tip into a big serving bowl with the chickpeas. Mix, then add in the halloumi, cucumber and herbs, along with 2 tbsp pomegranate seeds or chopped apricots. Drizzle with olive oil and 1 tbsp lemon juice and serve warm, sprinkled with 1 tbsp flaked almonds, if you like. *Adapted from Do Yourself a Flavour (27 July, Ebury)*

Nancy Singleton Hachisu's potato chip salad

In her most recent book, *Japan: The Vegetarian Cookbook*, Singleton Hachisu shares a recipe from a friend of hers – a nun called Harumi Kawaguchi – that, she says, is most appealing because it contains so many of her favourite summer vegetables. First, make a batch of crisps (sorry, Americans, they are not called potato chips). All you need is 3cm of oil in a pan on a medium heat, in which to batch-fry 450g of very thin potato rounds. When golden, remove them and pile on top of a bed of red lettuce, tomato and cucumber, dressed with a vinaigrette spiked with curry powder. Garnish with thin rounds of celery. As Singleton Hachisu puts it, the crisps might take a bit of effort, but they elevate the dish into something special.

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The advent of 24/7 betting apps on smartphones has placed high-stakes gambling machines in almost every pocket. Photograph: Monika Wisniewska/Alamy

[Inside the Guardian Gambling](#)

All bets are off: why the Guardian has decided to reject gambling advertising

[Anna Bateson](#)



We believe our primary obligation is to do the right thing for our readers, says the chief executive of Guardian Media Group

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Thu 15 Jun 2023 04.00 EDTLast modified on Thu 15 Jun 2023 04.58 EDT

The gambling industry has grown rapidly in recent years, and Britain and Australia have led this global expansion. Many people like the occasional bet, but the advent of 24/7 betting apps on smartphones, marketed to the public through billions of pounds and dollars in advertising across all forms of media, has placed high stakes gambling machines in almost every pocket. This creates a greater risk of gambling addiction and financial ruin.

Guardian journalists have reported on the devastating impact of the gambling industry in the [UK](#) and [Australia](#), helping to shift the dial and ensure the issue remains high on the public agenda. Problem gambling poses significant risks, leading to [financial distress, mental health issues such as depression, and various personal and social problems for many individuals](#). The [costs of problem gambling for individuals](#), their families, and for wider society, are significant.

[Studies](#) highlight a clear correlation between exposure to gambling advertising and increased intentions to engage in regular gambling.

Australia holds the unenviable title of having the [highest gambling losses globally](#). [Annually, approximately \\$25bn \(£13bn\) is lost to gambling](#), predominantly by those who can least afford it. Despite repeated efforts to enact policy reforms, these attempts have struggled to gain traction. The Australian National Rugby League's pursuit of the [“absolute revolution” in online sports gambling in the US](#) illustrates concerns about the connections between sport and the global gambling industry.

The tides have been shifting for some time. Surveys in the [UK](#) and [Australia](#) reveal a majority of the population would support a ban on gambling advertisements, a position taken by the [Italian government in 2019](#), and the [Belgian government](#) more recently.

The UK government has recently introduced a [ban on gambling and betting companies from using advertising featuring footballers and reality TV stars](#), and [Premier League clubs have agreed to ban gambling company sponsorships on club shirts](#) from the 2026-27 season. Likewise, [gamblers in Australia will soon be banned from using credit cards for online betting](#). Meanwhile, in the US, the [sports gambling industry has boomed since a federal ban was lifted in 2018](#); previously it was only legalised in Nevada.

The recent UK gambling white paper noted that the [“loss of revenue from gambling adverts could impair public service broadcasters’ ability to meet their obligations”](#). Ultimately, we believe that our primary obligation is to do the right thing for our readers, which is why we’ve decided that there are other ways to generate revenue.

As a recent [Guardian editorial explained](#), the UK government's proposed gambling reforms fell short of any meaningful action on gambling advertising. [In Australia, a parliamentary inquiry](#) into online gambling and its associated harms is due to report back in the coming weeks.

We think now is the right time to say no to gambling advertising on all Guardian platforms, effective globally from 15 June 2023.

Our new policy will apply to all online advertisements on the Guardian's website, app, audio, video, and newsletters, as well as print advertisements in the Guardian and Observer newspapers and Guardian Weekly. The policy covers all forms of gambling advertising, including sports betting, online casinos and scratchcards. Given the different nature of lotteries, we do not propose to include lottery advertising in this policy.

We understand and respect that millions of our readers, including our reporters and staff, are passionate sports fans who may occasionally choose to engage in gambling as part of their sporting experience. It is a matter of personal freedom, and we have no issue with that. We fully support the enjoyment of sports and respect individuals' choices to participate in occasional gambling on football, horse racing, or any other sport.

Our concern lies with the pervasive nature of retargeted digital advertisements that trap a portion of sports fans in an addictive cycle. By taking a stand against gambling advertising, we believe we can offer a place for sport fans all over the world to enjoy world-class sports journalism in an environment free from advertising pushing betting, wagering or online casinos.

The Guardian is committed to responsible advertising practices that will have a positive impact on society. High-quality advertising is welcome on our platforms, and plays an important role in helping to fund the Guardian's journalism, something more and more brands and agencies mention in our conversations. They want to advertise within trusted media environments that represent the values of their audiences.

We will continue to regularly review and update our policies to ensure they remain up to date with any changes to laws relating to gambling advertising. We are committed to working with our partners and stakeholders to ensure that the transition to a gambling advertising-free environment is as smooth as possible.

We made a similar decision in 2020 when we decided to [stop carrying advertising from oil and gas companies](#). We are able to make these types of decisions due to our [independent ownership structure](#), balancing purpose

and profit. To support quality journalism and our decision to ban gambling advertising, please consider [supporting the Guardian today](#).

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Smartphones and wall-to-wall TV coverage followed the 2005 step-change in gambling regulation. Photograph: John Stillwell/PA Images

[Gambling](#)

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Tony Blair's bet on gambling Britain has spiralled out of control

[Rob Davies](#)

Nearly two decades after New Labour revolutionised the gambling industry, millions of lives are being harmed for industry profits

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Thu 15 Jun 2023 04.00 EDTLast modified on Thu 15 Jun 2023 09.32 EDT

The [phenomenal rise of the UK gambling industry](#) owes much to reforms, introduced by Tony Blair, that flipped the state's attitude to sports betting and casino gaming on its head.

At the turn of the century, the government recognised that betting and gaming, in particular online, could not be prohibited and ought, instead, to be properly regulated.

But the 2005 [Gambling](#) Act went much further than that, in line with New Labour's light-touch approach to business.

The new regulatory landscape meant that gambling could be aggressively advertised, rather than simply tolerated. Britain's bookmakers and online casinos were now to be celebrated as the vanguard of a truly world-leading industry, creating jobs and paying taxes.

This step-change was accompanied by two other pivotal factors: the launch of the first iPhone in 2007, an innovation that would put a 24-hour casino in every pocket, and wall-to-wall television coverage of sport. Football fans soon got used to Ray Winstone's disembodied head floating across the screen at half-time of televised matches, urging prospective customers of Bet365 to "Bet now!".

Ladbrokes' adverts cast punters as swaggering chancers, reminiscent of the opening credits introducing the characters of a Guy Ritchie film. Meanwhile, technological innovation spawned new subcultures, from the online poker boom to in-play betting and betting exchanges.

The atmosphere of supposedly harmless fun, even glamour, was infectious.

When I began reporting on the gambling sector almost eight years ago, I had few preconceptions about this seemingly ubiquitous industry. It was brash, yes, but was it really so different from other pastimes?

It soon became clear that vast swathes of Britain's gambling industry were anything but benign.

In February 2016, Paddy Power was found by the industry regulator, the Gambling Commission, to have [encouraged a problem gambler to keep betting](#) until he lost five jobs, his home and contact with his children.

There were [so-called VIP schemes](#) that showered those who lost the most money with rewards – tickets to football matches, free food and drink, bonus offers – to encourage them to keep ploughing in their pay packets, or even [their redundancy cheques](#).



The new regulatory landscape meant that from 2005 gambling could be aggressively advertised. Photograph: Maureen McLean/Rex/Shutterstock

Some plunged their families into financial ruin, while other victims [stole millions of pounds to feed a high-roller lifestyle](#) that enriched only their bookie. One large operator [took 83% of its deposits from such “VIPs”](#), even though they made up just 2% of its customer base.

There were email marketing campaigns that [offered “free” spins and bonuses to recovering addicts](#), even as countless stories emerged of family finances being ruined while casino companies looked the other way.

On the high street, [bookmakers “clustered”](#) as many fixed-odds betting terminals in one place as possible, [typically in lower-income areas](#).

In one 10-month period in 2016-17, on more than 233,000 occasions punters lost £1,000 in a single session playing these digital roulette machines. Seven people [lost more than £10,000 in a day](#).

Such figures are shocking in the abstract but each number represented a life changed, or at worst, lost.

A particularly pernicious feature of gambling addiction is that it often remains a secret until it is too late. Unlike drug or alcohol abuse, which is often physically evident, a gambler can silently ruin their family's finances in an evening, while their unwitting partner sits next to them on the sofa.

Hidden tragedies began to emerge in ever greater numbers. One such case was [the death of Jack Ritchie](#), who took his own life at 24, lost to an addiction that began with lunch-break trips to the bookies with his schoolmates.

Through their [Gambling with Lives group](#), Jack's parents, and others who have endured the same loss, channelled their pain into a powerful force for change.

Another case was that of Bylent "Bill" Troshupa. His estranged wife, Julie Martin, told how he [set himself on fire in front of their teenage son](#) after a mental breakdown that intensified as his gambling escalated.

And this week, an inquest into the death of Luke Ashton, who was targeted with free bets during Covid-19 lockdowns, will look at [the role the gambling operator Flutter played](#).

Despite these extreme cases, the gambling industry and its lobbyists have long argued that overall "problem gambling" rates are low. This assertion relies on statistics that are either cherrypicked or misrepresented.

The recent NHS Health Survey found that 0.4% of the public in England are "problem gamblers". The survey does not count homeless people, individuals in social care or prison, or students, all disproportionately likely to be high-risk gamblers. It also relies heavily on telephone interviews, which [tend to skew towards lower numbers](#).

One 2020 survey by YouGov [pitched the problem gambling rate much higher](#), at 2.7% of adults, or 1.4 million people.

Whatever the truth of that much-disputed number, it is not that helpful when assessing how dangerous certain gambling products actually are.

Take mountain climbing: rates of death and injury in the general population are very low, chiefly because very few people climb mountains. Among mountain climbers, however, casualty rates are rather higher.

Something similar is true for online casino games, which have grown faster than any other gambling segment, with [annual revenues of nearly £4bn](#), nearly double that of sports betting.

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The 2018 NHS Health Survey, the last to measure addictiveness according to product types, found that [8.5% of online casino players were problem gamblers](#), while almost 14% were at moderate risk. That is nearly a quarter of customers of the industry's most lucrative product.

What is more, for every “problem gambler”, six other people are affected, [according to some estimates](#). On that basis, even a conservative analysis indicates that millions of people are being harmed for the sake of industry profits.

Yet whenever campaigners, politicians or the media raise these concerns, they meet the same slur: “Prohibitionist!”

The term has been repeatedly deployed by the head of the Betting & Gaming Council (BGC) lobby group, the former Labour MP Michael Dugher. It has also been wheeled out by Tom Watson, the former deputy Labour leader, who styled himself as [the scourge of the gambling industry](#) while an MP, before going on [to work for Paddy Power](#).

Measures put forward in the government’s recent white paper on gambling reform are likely to affect only a small proportion of gamblers.

If there is a powerful, secretive lobby working to affect the government’s plans, it is not the “prohibitionists” leading it.

Big gambling operators and the BGC have lavished [hundreds of thousands of pounds of hospitality on MPs](#), some of whom have [rehearsed industry talking points in parliament](#). Pro-industry MPs [such as Philip Davies](#) and [Laurence Robertson](#) have earned tens of thousands of pounds from second jobs, with companies including the Ladbrokes owner Entain and the BGC.

The Tory MP Scott Benton [had the whip suspended](#) after an investigation by the Times filmed him apparently offering to lobby for the sector.

If political support was not enough, gambling can rely on its lucrative alliance with the UK’s most popular sport. The English Football League only recently agreed to end a partnership under which [clubs took a cut of fans’ betting losses](#). Earlier this month, it signed a five-year extension to its partnership with SkyBet.

Premier League clubs have agreed to give up gambling sponsors on shirts from 2026 [but will keep pitch-side displays](#), the most visible form of gambling advertising in the game. Football has gambling’s back.

With much of the political and sporting establishment sympathetic to the gambling industry, it is no surprise to find that [the government’s white paper envisages tweaks](#), rather than wholesale reform.

It includes some laudable [efforts to make gambling safer](#), from tougher affordability checks to limits on online casino stakes. Yet advertising remains virtually untouched. Vague undertakings to improve the targeting of online and social media adverts offer scant meaningful change. Casino companies can continue [to market their wares over the UK's car radios during the school run](#), or during the trailers of PG-rated films.

Industry revenues, the government estimates, could fall by as little as 3% as a result of the reforms.

There is ample opportunity to make up the shortfall elsewhere. The gambling industry is making [huge inroads into the new and lucrative US market](#), as well as [turning its sights on developing economies in Africa](#), where rates of poverty are high and regulation is threadbare or nonexistent.

The onward march of technology offers untold new revenue streams, whether from the increasing convergence of gambling and video gaming – through features such as [“loot boxes”](#) – or emerging frontiers, such as betting in the metaverse.

The Blairite vision of Britain's money-spinning gambling industry has been realised in lurid Technicolor and it looks likely not only to endure, but to flourish anew.

The house, of course, always wins.

To order a copy of [Jackpot](#) by Rob Davies (Guardian Faber, £14.99) for £8.79, go to [guardianbookshop.com](#). Delivery charges may apply.

In the UK and Ireland, Samaritans can be contacted on 116 123, or email jo@samaritans.org or jo@samaritans.ie. In the US, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is 1-800-273-8255. In Australia, the crisis support service Lifeline is 13 11 14. Other international helplines can be found at [befrienders.org](#).

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‘This show has changed my life in the most positive, liberating way’ ...
Bridget Christie Photograph: Suki Dhanda/The Observer

[Comedy](#)

[Interview](#)

‘My reproductive life is over? That’s liberating!’ Bridget Christie on comedy, TV and the menopause

[Emine Saner](#)

What’s it like to break into television in your 50s? The award-winning standup talks about her new series *The Change*, her late-blooming career and her issues with Tupperware



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Thu 15 Jun 2023 05.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 16 Jun 2023 08.02 EDT

There is a photograph of [Bridget Christie](#) and her siblings, she says, taken in a forest in the 70s, that sounds so dreamy and nostalgic I can almost picture its curling edges: nine children, probably dressed in hand-me-downs, smiling out from under a big oak tree. “Or was it eight of us, and my eldest brother had to take the photo?” she wonders aloud. It must have been hard to keep track when there were so many of them.

We have been talking about her childhood in Gloucester, as the youngest of all those kids, and the forests that inspired her new [TV comedy](#) drama. A

big oak tree stands in the centre of The Change, seemingly transported straight from Christie's childhood. The heroine, a tree-climbing girl like Christie was, hid a time capsule in its boughs some time in the late 70s. We meet Linda, played by Christie, at her 50th birthday party – weary, put-upon, menopausal – wondering what happened to her life. For years, in stacks of notebooks, she has recorded the time she has devoted to caring for her family and home, the invisible work usually done by women. She decides to take some of that time back, and heads off on a motorbike (Christie has one, too, bought around the time she turned 50 last year) on a heroic quest in search of who she used to be. That time capsule should have some clues.

Christie has packed so many themes into six episodes. There is sexism, the menopause, sexual harassment, the climate emergency, capitalism and greed, the importance of local community, our lost connection with the land, folk traditions and who they are for, gender identity, the inescapable sense of time passing, even a fair bit about eels.



Accelerating past 50 ... Bridget Christie as Linda in The Change.
Photograph: Channel 4

It's funny, touching, sometimes unsettling, and singularly Christie's voice. Making it has, she says, been "a defining moment in my life and career. I feel like whatever happens with it, it's already changed my life in the most positive, liberating way. I kind of can't lose with it."

This is her first TV commission, which seems remarkable, given her success: she won Britain's top comedy award at the [Edinburgh festival in 2013](#), and has had sellout West End and Edinburgh shows. She has had series on Radio 4, but it's hard for comedians to get TV shows, she says: there are only so many slots available. But other comics – I mean men – get shows commissioned all the time, I point out. "Yeah, I'm really angry," she says with a laugh, when we meet in a London hotel bar. "I'm having a hot flush now – you've made me really angry."

What gives me a hot flush? OK, eliminate those things: caffeine, alcohol, stress, Tupperware

She started writing *The Change* about six years ago. She had always wanted to set something in the [Forest of Dean](#), stretching across the border of England and Wales, near where she grew up. "It hasn't been gentrified, it's quite hard to get to, you can't really build there, so it's still this kind of forgotten place," she says. While she was writing it, Christie's menopause started and with it, a new phase. "I think finding out who you are when you've lost yourself is a universal story," she says. "I don't think that this just talks to women of a certain age – I hope it does, because we really need to be represented much better on TV and film – but I think most people understand that feeling of losing your identity and wanting to get it back."

The Covid lockdowns had made her think even more about domestic life, and the division of labour – surveys showed women in heterosexual partnerships did more housework. "And [teenage girls were doing more while their brothers got on with homework](#)," she says, eyes widening. "I thought about my mum and my sisters, and my friends, and all the women over time who have been doing this. It seems like a really simple thing to be able to sort out in terms of equality, but we haven't, so how are we going to sort anything else out?"

In her house (she has two children with the [comedian Stewart Lee](#)), she does the most. “Probably. But I think it’s a universal story rather than my own personal ...” She pauses, before pouncing on the example of Tupperware, that symbol of domestic labour. In *The Change*’s opening episode, Linda battles an avalanche of plastic. “The [Tupperware thing](#) does drive me a bit crazy,” Christie says, “but I got rid of a lot of it. That was the good thing about the menopause. What gives me a hot flush? OK, eliminate those things: caffeine, alcohol, stress, Tupperware.”



Standup success ... Christie at the Edinburgh fringe in 2014. Photograph: Murdo MacLeod/The Guardian

She likes to think women could go on strike, [like they did in Iceland in 1975](#), when they took a “day off” from their workplaces and homes. “It might make the government think about women’s contribution to the economy. I’ll be the [Mick Lynch](#) of dusting.” Ultimately, she says, it’s about whose time is of more value, and women’s time is clearly considered less worthy. “I’ve often been early for meetings with male producers, and they’ve been late – there is a real difference in how we handle our time.”

Lockdown also gave Christie the opportunity to think about nature. “I did start kind of worshipping the sky and the wind and the sun and the moon,” she says, smiling at herself. “I moved a sofa and then I noticed a tree over

the road that I hadn't noticed before. It made us stop and notice things. We were reminded about the beauty and the magic of our own country, and it made me think about our ancestors, and the really rich seam of culture that we have." She brought the [artist Ben Edge](#) in as "folklore expert" to consult on the show. "That idea of who are we, where did we come from? These traditions and rituals, who are they for, and why do we do them? We're so divided at the moment politically, and, I think, emotionally and socially. I wanted to bring all those themes into the show."

The small town that Linda arrives in is about to host its annual eel festival, and she quickly witnesses a culture skirmish, rather than a war, about its traditions. It cuts to the idea of what Britishness is, and who is allowed to be considered British. "What do we see in our minds when we think about that?" says Christie. "Do we just see white people? It's not even factually correct – we are a multicultural nation and that's what we should see. These rituals and festivals are for all of us. Once you start excluding any of us, then they're meaningless, because they are a celebration of what it means to be human and to be British." And traditions and rituals should evolve, she says – how is [changing black face paint to blue, for instance](#), any great loss to morris dancers? If festivals don't evolve, she says, "they become irrelevant. You need to retain the things that make it what it is, and make us connect to it, but also connect with who we are now, and who we want to be in the future."

However frustrating her previous attempts to get something made have been, she says she is glad that this show happened at this point in her life. "I'm not sure I could have written it before. Sometimes you've just got to hold your nerve and keep going and keep working." Christie is a model of success in the middle years, having garnered most of her commercial and critical acclaim when she was in her late 30s, and now this in her early 50s. "I think it's great that things are happening to me post-50. It feels really exciting, and I hope it inspires other women to think that they don't have to have done everything by the time they're 30." When she was 30, she hadn't even started standup.



‘Out the other side’ ... Bridget Christie. Photograph: Suki Dhanda/The Observer

She grew up in a Catholic family, 14 years younger than her oldest sibling; for a time, all 11 of them lived in the same small house. Their father worked in a factory and their mother was a nurse. Christie and one brother had bunk beds in their parents’ room, and she thinks there were six girls in one bedroom. What happens when you are the youngest of that many children – did it make her an attention-seeker, or was she overshadowed? “Both,” she says. “We were very creative. We would put on plays, create our own fun, make stuff in the garden, come up with weird games that didn’t cost anything. I was born quite extrovert, I think – I’ve always been sociable and outgoing. But also, I don’t think I was always heard, because I was the youngest.” She smiles. “It might be why I’m in standup.”

Christie left school at 15. “I felt like I wanted to get on with my life,” she says. For a while, she was in a biker gang, then she moved to London and took jobs in factories and offices, working on the Daily Mail’s diary column for a while, so she could do standup gigs in the evenings. Her early work included dressing up as Charles II for her show [The Court of King Charles II](#), until her breakthrough 2013 Edinburgh show, the feminist triumph A Bic for Her.

“I started talking about things that were important to me,” she says, although she points out that feminism “was a hard sell back then”. But she had nothing to lose, she says. “I didn’t care by that point. No one was really coming to my gigs anyway.” The timing helped – [fourth-wave feminism](#) was taking off – but Christie found that she liked the challenge of “working out how to talk about difficult subjects in a humorous way – that felt like a breakthrough. How can I be silly and funny about something that’s quite important?”

A stag party came to my standup show about the menopause – and they stayed for the whole thing

Had she been close to giving up? “I came close to thinking that my tours were not financially viable,” she says. But as long as she had enough money from day jobs – she was 38 when she became a full-time writer and performer – she could carry on with comedy. “I didn’t want to compromise, because it’s so important to me. I love the creative process, starting with nothing. I love the puzzle of writing and performing – why is this funny? What is the wider context? I didn’t want to do work that I didn’t enjoy and wasn’t proud of. That’s probably made this process longer for me. Maybe if I had done jobs that raised my profile I would have got a TV commission. Maybe I wouldn’t have; I don’t know.”

It was tough for female comics when Christie started. She remembers the heckles: “‘Get your top off, show us your tits.’ Rolling their eyes, bit of hostility. But I genuinely don’t think that is the case now, because the numbers are just different – there are far more female comics.” She is touring her new show, [Who Am I?](#), and at one gig recently a stag party came. “I mean, they’d come to a show about the menopause and they stayed for the whole thing. They were slightly disruptive at the start and then it became this fun back-and-forth. But they weren’t sexist at all – it was a human-to-human interaction. There was nothing to do with my gender. That was interesting to me.”

Her experience of the menopause has been positive, and liberating – although, she stresses, “I know for a third of women it isn’t, and it’s terrible

and there should be more help”. Menopause brought a confidence she hasn’t had before – for her TV show, she sent the script out to her dream cast, including [Omid Djalili](#) and [Tanya Moodie](#), and asked people such as the [folk singer Shirley Collins](#) to be involved. “I probably wouldn’t have asked certain people a couple of years ago, but I just felt: ‘What is the worst thing that can happen? They just say no. Is it so bad?’” They didn’t say no.

For Christie, [menopause has been a rebirth of sorts](#). She has a sense that she is “out the other side and I feel like it’s the beginning of the rest of my life. I find the fact that my reproductive life is over quite liberating, like a return to form. There was this middle section that was all about, whether we know it or not, ‘attractiveness’, or having relationships, and I feel that that’s gone. The Bridget I was when I was a child, before I had my periods – I feel more like that person now.”

The Change is on Channel 4 from 21 June. Who Am I? is at the Edinburgh festival from 2 to 9 August, then touring. Details: [bridgetchristie.co.uk](https://www.bridgetchristie.co.uk)

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2023.06.15 - Opinion

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- Brexit was Johnson and Johnson was Brexit. Now that he has gone, Britain must think again
- Call it the Rod Stewart manoeuvre. Who hasn't had to dump a really appalling friend?
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Illustration: Danielle Rhoda/The Guardian

[OpinionClimate crisis](#)

**The hard right and climate catastrophe
are intimately linked. This is how**
[George Monbiot](#)



As climate policy is weakened, extreme weather intensifies and more refugees are driven from their homes – and the cycle of hatred continues

Thu 15 Jun 2023 03.00 EDTLast modified on Thu 15 Jun 2023 04.38 EDT

Round the cycle turns. As millions are driven from their homes by climate disasters, the extreme right exploits their misery to extend its reach. As the extreme right gains power, climate programmes are shut down, heating accelerates and more people are driven from their homes. If we don't break this cycle soon, it will become the dominant story of our times.

A [recent paper](#) in the scientific journal Nature identifies the “human climate niche”: the range of temperatures and rainfall within which human societies thrive. We have clustered in the parts of the world with a climate that supports our flourishing, but in many of these places the niche is shrinking. Already, around 600 million people have been stranded in inhospitable conditions by global heating. Current global policies are likely to result in about 2.7C of heating by 2100. On this trajectory, some 2 billion people may be left outside the niche by 2030, and 3.7 billion by 2090. If governments limited heating to their agreed goal of 1.5C, the numbers exposed to extreme heat would be reduced fivefold. But if they abandon

their climate policies, this would lead to around 4.4C of heating. In this case, by the end of the century around 5.3 billion people would face conditions that ranged from dangerous to impossible.

These conditions include extreme disruption, morbidity and death through heat-shock, water stress, crop failure and the spread of infectious disease. The figures do not take into account the effect of rising sea levels, which could [displace hundreds of millions](#) more.

Already, weather stations in the Persian Gulf have [recorded wetbulb measurements](#) – a combination of heat and humidity – beyond the point (35C at 100% humidity) at which most human beings can survive. At other stations, on the shores of the Red Sea, the Gulf of Oman, the Gulf of Mexico, the Gulf of California and the western side of south Asia, measurements have come close. In large parts of Africa there is [almost no monitoring](#) of extreme heat events. People are likely to have been dying of heat stress in high numbers already, but their cause of death has not been registered.

India, Nigeria, Indonesia, the Philippines, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Papua New Guinea, Sudan, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali and central America face extreme risk. Weather events such as massive floods and intensified cyclones and hurricanes will [keep hammering countries](#) such as Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Haiti and Myanmar. Many people will have to move or die.

In the rich world we still have choices: we can greatly limit the damage caused by environmental breakdown, for which our nations and citizens are primarily responsible. But these choices are being deliberately and systematically shut down. Culture war entrepreneurs, often funded by billionaires and commercial enterprises, cast even the most innocent attempts to reduce our impacts as a conspiracy to curtail our freedoms. Everything becomes contested: [low-traffic neighbourhoods](#), [15-minute cities](#), heat pumps, even [induction hobs](#). You cannot propose even the mildest change without a hundred professionally outraged influencers leaping up to announce: “They’re coming for your ...” It’s becoming ever

harder, by design, to discuss crucial issues such as SUVs, meat-eating and aviation calmly and rationally.

Climate science denial, which had almost vanished a few years ago, has now returned with a vengeance. Environmental scientists and campaigners [are bombarded](#) with claims that they are stooges, shills, communists, murderers and paedophiles.

As the impacts of our consumption kick in thousands of miles away, and people come to our borders desperate for refuge from a crisis they played almost no role in causing – a crisis that might involve real floods and real droughts – the same political forces announce, without a trace of irony, that we are being “flooded” or “sucked dry” by refugees, and millions rally to their call to seal our borders. Sometimes it seems the fascists can’t lose.

As governments turn rightwards, they shut down policies designed to limit climate breakdown. There’s no mystery about why: hard-right and far-right politics are the defensive wall erected by oligarchs to protect their economic interests. On behalf of their funders, legislators in Texas are [waging war on renewable energy](#), while a [proposed law in Ohio](#) lists climate policies as a “controversial belief or policy” in which universities are forbidden to “inculcate” their students.

In some cases, the cycle plays out in one place. Florida, for example, is one of the US states most prone to climate disaster, especially [rising seas](#) and [hurricanes](#). But its governor, Ron DeSantis, is building his bid for the presidency on the back of climate denial. On Fox News, he denounced climate science as “[politicisation of the weather](#)”. At home, he has passed a law forcing cities to [continue using fossil fuels](#). He has slashed taxes, including the [disaster preparedness sales tax](#), undermining Florida’s capacity to respond to environmental crises. But the hard right thrives on catastrophe, and again you get the sense that it can scarcely lose.

If you want to know what one possible future – a future in which this cycle is allowed to accelerate – looks like, think of the treatment of current refugees, amplified by several orders of magnitude. Already, at Europe’s borders, displaced people are [pushed back](#) into the sea. They are imprisoned, assaulted and used as scapegoats by the far right, which widens

its appeal by blaming them for the ills that in reality are caused by austerity, inequality and the rising power of money in politics. [European nations pay governments](#) beyond their borders to stop the refugees who might be heading their way. In Libya, Turkey, Sudan and elsewhere, [displaced people](#) are kidnapped, enslaved, tortured, raped and murdered. Walls rise and desperate people are repelled with ever greater violence and impunity.

Already, the manufactured hatred of refugees has helped the far right to gain or share power in Italy, Sweden and Hungary, and has greatly enhanced its prospects in Spain, Austria, France and even Germany. In every case, we can expect success by this faction to be followed by the curtailment of climate policies, with the result that more people will have no choice but to seek refuge in the diminishing zones in which the human climate niche remains open: often the very nations whose policies have driven them from their homes.

It is easy to whip up fascism. It's the default result of political ignorance and its exploitation. Containing it is much harder, and never-ending. The two tasks – preventing Earth systems collapse and preventing the rise of the far right – are not divisible. We have no choice but to fight both forces at once.

- George Monbiot is a Guardian columnist
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Boris Johnson in front of the Vote Leave bus, bearing the claim that leaving the EU would mean £350m extra a week to spend on the NHS. Photograph: Stefan Rousseau/PA

[OpinionBrexit](#)

Brexit was Johnson and Johnson was Brexit. Now that he has gone, Britain must think again

[Martin Kettle](#)



The disgraced former PM and our disastrous exit from the EU were umbilically linked. His fall presents a precious opportunity

Thu 15 Jun 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Thu 15 Jun 2023 08.42 EDT

It is easy to overlook the fact that something larger is at stake amid the Conservative party's midsummer mayhem. Something larger, for sure, than Boris Johnson's petulance or Nadine Dorries' attention-seeking. Something affecting us all, not just the Tory party. Something that underlies everything else about current British politics and will outlast the current excitement. That something is the future of Brexit.

Yes, Johnson's latest self-centred lord-of-misrule melodrama is remarkable even by his own standards. Yes, Dorries' latest career move, going postal in parliament, [on the run from her own resignation](#), is providing a suitably disturbing coda to an already dauntingly disturbing political career. And, yes, Rishi Sunak's laboriously constructed authority as prime minister is again under threat from the intemperate disloyalty that has become the default setting of a section of the Tory party.

So, yes, much of this pantomime is indeed about Johnson's desperation to remain at the centre of the stage – as those smirking outings with his dog each morning for the cameras confirm. Some of that may really be about trying to manoeuvre himself back into parliament in a safer seat at the general election, though his strategy has clearly not been thought through.

All of it also raises existential questions for the [Conservatives](#), a party that was for so long the international paradigm for pragmatic adaptation in the cause of electoral success, even in the era of Margaret Thatcher. The question “What does the Conservative party now stand for?” is harder to answer these days. The Tory party Jenga tower sometimes feels just a brick away from collapse.

Nevertheless, behind all of this stands Brexit itself. This crisis, in other words, goes beyond the short-term problems of the Sunak government and the struggle over the Tory party's identity. The link between the events of the past week and Britain's break with [Europe](#) is umbilical, because the cord that binds them is Johnson himself.

Part of this, but not all of it, is about the lies that were integral to both [Brexit](#) and Johnson's fall. Lies about pandemic lockdown parties pushed Johnson from government and now from the Commons. But lies about Brexit were also the reason why he got into No 10 in the first place. His political banishment and humiliation for one set of lies ought to call into question his earlier political coronation for a different set.

It was ever thus with Johnson. His departure is not a tale of an essentially decent and truth-telling man who ruined it all by lying. Johnson's contempt for truth and rules is lifelong. His housemaster at Eton, Martin Hammond, famously nailed the problem many decades ago when he wrote: “I think he honestly believes that it is churlish of us not to regard him as an exception, one who should be free of the network of obligation which binds everyone else.” Telling the truth matters to you and me. It does not matter to Johnson.

Rishi Sunak and Keir Starmer clash over Boris Johnson's honours list at PMQs – video

Johnson's conduct in the pandemic and since receiving the draft of the privileges committee report is fully in line with that Eton report. Any other prime minister would have been scrupulously careful not to break the rules that his own government had imposed. Many would have erred on the side of caution and self-denial. None of that applies to Johnson because it would not have occurred to him that it should. He is the self-appointed exception, a sociopathic narcissist. He has departed because, in his view, he is infinitely more important than any precedent, or rule or institution.

But the same applies to his attitude to Brexit. He didn't really have a strong view about whether to leave or remain. But he did have a strong view about which was best for Boris Johnson. Having made his choice, he said whatever came to hand in the campaign, whether it was true or wise, just as he had done in his journalism. A serious political leader – serious in the sense of according priority to national needs not the leader's own advantage or gratification – would never have been so reckless. Later, he claimed to be the one who could get Brexit done, but that was another lie; these were mere words and this was a mere pose. He had no idea what would work or do damage and he didn't care either.

In their book, [Johnson at 10](#), Anthony Seldon and Raymond Newell distil Johnson's career into three core traits: his charisma, his self-absorption and his selfishness. Their common thread is an absence of moral seriousness, reflected in the way he lived and ruled. "Causes, commitments, colleagues, as well as pledges, policies and partners were regarded as merely transitory and transactional," they write. "Any could be jettisoned when they no longer served his interests or pleasure." Events have confirmed the truth of that. European Union, parliament, Conservative party. Who really cares? Not Johnson.

Johnson has now, it seems, walked away from party politics. Perhaps he has departed for ever. Perhaps he will return. A minority of Tories, an even smaller minority of voters and a handful of overmighty newspapers are still praying for another act. For the rest, Johnson leaves behind a damaged personal reputation, a damaged party, a damaged system of government, a damaged parliamentary democracy and a damaged country.

The political system on which Johnson attempted for so long to impose his personality and his lack of standards has, by and large, repulsed his assault. But it has taken losses in doing so, and a second assault cannot be ruled out. Leaders such as Johnson sometimes win and sometimes lose. But they always damage, and the damage must be repaired and must be guarded against in future.

That is why, in an important sense, these past few days are fundamentally about Brexit. Until recently, Brexit had become a taboo. It felt inevitable that a generation would have to pass before it was politically possible for a new form of relationship to be constructed with the EU that would undo the harm of the vote in 2016. Economic struggles, the challenges of climate and migration, and the war in Ukraine all make the need for that rebuilding more pressing. A steady shift in public opinion towards closer cooperation, followed by Johnson's fall, now opens the door to a much more determined re-engagement.

That will not be easy. But the biggest lie that Johnson ever told, and the one that was most widely believed, was over Brexit. It has resulted in the largest piece of damage of the many he inflicted on the country. Johnson's fall and unpopularity ought, therefore, to reopen Britain's relationship with Europe. That is too big a question for this or any other future government to keep locked away in the too-difficult box. It is time, in other words, to take back control.

- Martin Kettle is a Guardian columnist

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‘This is a classic case of what I call spousal cover.’ Photograph: Jack Dredd/Shutterstock

[OpinionFriendship](#)

**Call it the Rod Stewart manoeuvre.
Who hasn’t had to dump a really
appalling friend?**

[Coco Khan](#)



The rock star used to be firm friends with Donald Trump but says his wife put a stop to it. Call it spousal cover – and know it works

Thu 15 Jun 2023 02.00 EDTLast modified on Thu 15 Jun 2023 07.06 EDT

Among all the important and serious headlines about the former US president [Donald Trump](#) this week, one minor curiosity caught my eye involving the mulleted older rocker Rod Stewart.

In a recent interview with the lifestyle magazine [Scottish Field](#), Stewart described how his wife, Penny Lancaster, banned him from hanging out with Trump. At the time, the two men had known each other for a while as neighbours in Palm Beach, Florida: Stewart would regularly attend Trump's parties, occasionally even performing at his casinos. Stewart's friends, meanwhile, got to play golf at Trump's courses for free. All of it was enough for Stewart to describe Trump as a "[dear friend](#)" in 2018, despite admitting in the same breath that "his moral compass is way off".

But at some point, Lancaster put an end to their relationship, severing the bromance because comments Trump had made about women were "a disgrace" (it's hard to identify exactly which comments tipped her over the

edge, because there are just so many). I like to imagine Stewart and Lancaster in their mansion, a confused-looking Rod slumped in one of the [14 ornate chairs](#) they have around their giant dining table, while Penny sits with a notepad. “Priorities” it reads at the top of the page, as he watches her cross out the words “[hot legs](#)” and replace them with “creating an inclusive environment for women”.

But here’s my totally unverified, based-on-nothing theory. I submit that Lancaster *didn’t* ban Stewart from hanging out with Trump at all. Rather, this is a classic case of what I call “spousal cover”: saying your partner is keeping you from something or someone, rather than admitting you don’t care for it or them either.

In fairness, spousal cover is effective. I say this as someone who got married recently, though I imagine the principle holds for any long-term relationship. The first time I used it was accidental. Some religious preachers had knocked on the door. They had a young child with them, and not having the heart to slam the door, I listened for a while. Inevitably, they asked me if I’d come to a meeting and the words just slipped out: “Oh, my husband would not be happy with that.”



Donald Trump, who is facing 37 federal criminal counts, can no longer count on the support of his ‘dear friend’ Rod Stewart. Photograph: Ed

Jones/AFP/Getty Images

It was true. In fact, I don't think anyone in my life would be happy about it, given how out of character it would be – though I'm sure none would stop me. But before I could think what to say next, the preachers said: "OK, we totally understand" and went on their way, all awkwardness and discomfort avoided.

Perhaps that is not so surprising, given the sanctity of marriage in many religions. But I have since used spousal cover in a whole host of situations. If anyone tries to sell me anything I don't want, I just say: "My husband already has it." It doesn't matter if it's a car, a blender or a bra – no one ever presses any further. I'm fairly certain he has used me as an excuse, too, to worm out of whatever mandatory fun is being pushed. I don't mind; I consider it a major perk of a committed relationship. True love and shared bills are great, but what about having the ultimate "politely-decline-the-offer" card in your back pocket that never expires?

But spousal cover is a dangerous drug, and not good in the long term. It is by its nature old-fashioned, entrenching unhelpful stereotypes about ball-and-chains, hen-pecked men and the idea that one person wears the trousers. And often it's a sign of weakness. It's one thing to tell a white lie to preserve the happiness of someone harmless; it's another not to stand up to someone actively harmful, especially if you do have a bit of influence with them.

I suspect Stewart is probably grateful for Lancaster's intervention now a jury has branded Trump as not just your common-or-garden sleazebag but an actual [sexual predator](#) (not to mention the [37 felony counts](#) he currently faces). So, if there is a lesson in this inconsequential side plot in the lives of the rich and famous, it is surely for Stewart himself – and anyone who remains friends with someone they suspect to be a creep. He may have once sung "I don't want to talk about it", but hopefully he now knows what we all should: that when it comes to standing up to bullies and the unconscionable, talking about it is our job.

- Coco Khan is commissioning editor for Guardian B2B and a writer. She is co-host of the politics podcast Pod Save the UK
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The ‘fixation with coining pithy three-word expressions to define cultural moments’ dates back to 2019 with Megan Thee Stallion’s Hot Girl Summer. Photograph: Broadimage/Shutterstock

[OpinionFashion](#)

#BarefootBoySummer has arrived – but really it’s just another seasonal hashtag to sell us stuff

[Morwenna Ferrier](#)



From #ShortKingSpring to #BelowAverageMan, micro-trends have become big business for eagle-eyed marketers

Thu 15 Jun 2023 05.00 EDTLast modified on Thu 15 Jun 2023 06.50 EDT

Last week, I received an email about women’s sandals, aimed at anyone “planning a #barefootboysummer”. I have no such plans, but I was curious to see how shoes would help me achieve this, so I opened it.

The sandals had a thin corkbed and a thong and were pretty far from being barefoot but that didn’t seem to matter. [#Barefootboysummer](#), the micro-trend for a few famous men to go barefoot, had established itself as yet another snappy phrase to add to the vast lexicon of ways in which each season is now being packaged up in the hope of conjuring promise – and ultimately, bringing in profit.

This fixation with coining pithy three-word expressions to define cultural moments began, in earnest, in 2019 with #hotgirlsummer. A US phrase borrowed from a lyric by Megan Thee Stallion, it didn’t so much infiltrate social media as overwhelm it. “Being a Hot Girl is about being unapologetically YOU, having fun, being confident, living YOUR truth,

being the life of the party etc,” the rapper [wrote](#) on Twitter. Part ironic, part sincere, anyone could be a “hot girl”, and proclaim it with a sort of giddy and communal self-acceptance.

Its success was so huge that it quickly became a tool to hawk everything from cocktails and holidays to two-for-one pizzas – and even iron supplements. What had begun organically was soon pounced on by advertisers, who, as any Mad Man will know, have always sought to capture the zeitgeist and market it. Wendy’s, Forever 21 and Duolingo all adopted the phrase to sell their wares. Despite being four years old, #hotgirlsummer remains a popular hashtag on social media.

Seasons are obvious targets for branding. We know that much from Christmas. From a high street perspective, using a viral phrase seems to be the simplest way to push a new or existing trend. But today, seasons are being broken down into seasons within seasons, moments within moments, all catalogued through hashtags. I have yet to get through a week without being told it’s Friyay (Friday) by [Uber Eats](#) or hump day (Wednesday) by [a pub](#).

During the pandemic #hotgirlsummer was replaced, briefly, by #Christiangirlautumn (white women enjoying Horlicks and wholesome activities), which felt more ironic than capitalist, only to return in early 2021 – gender-free, upbeat and political – as [#hotvaxsummer](#), with its post-pandemic promise that if we all got vaccinated, natural order would return. Inevitably, that too became a [springboard for selling shoes](#). [#Shortkingspring](#) had some success, too, beginning life as a body-positive movement in praise of small men such as Tom Holland and Volodymyr Zelenskiy – though even that [ended up on a tank top](#).

But few took off in the same way as Stallion’s original (it was strangely hard to sell anything using 2022’s #belowaverageman and its celebration of normality as a jumping-off point).

[Some argue](#) this explosion in seasonal branding points to – very plausibly – the cruel hope of summer compounded by pandemic disappointment and childhood nostalgia. Summer, in particular, feels hotter and more unpredictable in the UK. Selling a pastoral fantasy that we’ll spend the

season barefoot (or having sex, or once upon a time, getting vaccinated) is a nice idea when the world, and seasons, are in flux.

But it also points to something darker. That co-opting of the social realm is at the beating heart of capitalism. Anything that is spontaneous, organic and – crucially – free, can end up being sold back to you; even being barefoot. This process steals the life out of things, dilutes their meaning and renders them boring, absurd or even actively dangerous. Just look at the way oil companies have absorbed the language of sustainability and the environmental movement, or fast fashion’s “[sponsorship](#)” of Pride.

Perhaps that’s why these phrases are losing impact. The ones I like best now are laden with irony – see #fedgirlsummer, devised by a friend bikini shopping last weekend. Or my own aesthetic for 2023, #Which?girlsummer, because I’m doing up my kitchen.

Returning to the latest neologism, [#barefootboysummer](#) has yet to take off; all around me, men are shoed. It has stiff competition in #Europecore (wearing linen, reading Deborah Levy), #Italiancore (wearing linen, reading Natalia Ginzburg) and #tomatogirl (more linen, less reading) which all sound a lot nicer. But it’s also unclear why it is happening – why one Australian actor was photographed barefoot while also wearing a fleece, or why Ye was seen in a pair of “sand socks” during 28C heat.

Perhaps these early adopters were “[grounding](#)”, or perhaps, like my aunt, they prefer to drive without shoes on. From here, though, it looks like the podiatry equivalent of no-makeup selfies in all their “I’m just like you” pseudo-authenticity – and another opportunity for eagle-eyed marketers to sell us more stuff. It also, apparently, contributes to bunions.

- Morwenna Ferrier is the Guardian’s fashion and lifestyle editor
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Submarine the USS Key West returns to the US naval base in Guam in November 2022. Increased US military access to bases in Papua New Guinea could reinforce the Guam facilities. Photograph: Alamy

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US military will have ‘unimpeded’ access to Papua New Guinea bases under new security deal

Deal signed last month gives US ‘exclusive use’ of parts of bases, as Palau PM says he has asked US to step up patrols after Chinese incursions into its waters

Agencies

Thu 15 Jun 2023 01.44 EDT

The US military can develop and operate out of bases in [Papua New Guinea](#), according to a landmark security pact that is part of Washington’s

efforts to outflank China in the Pacific.

The full text of the deal was tabled in Papua New Guinea's parliament on Wednesday evening and obtained by AFP, shedding light on details that have been closely guarded since the [pact was signed](#) in May.

With PNG's agreement, the US will be able to station troops and vessels at six key ports and airports, including Lombrum naval base on Manus Island and facilities in the capital, Port Moresby.

Washington would have "unimpeded access" to the sites to "pre-position equipment, supplies and materiel", and have "exclusive use" of some base zones, where development and "construction activities" could be carried out.

The agreement opens the door to Washington establishing a new military footprint in the western Pacific, at a time of growing rivalry with Beijing.

The details emerged as the president of the Pacific island country of [Palau](#) told Reuters he had asked the US to step up patrols of its waters after several recent incursions by Chinese vessels into its exclusive economic zone.

Palau's president, Surangel Whipps Jr, said in an interview he would also welcome a bigger US military presence, with troops stationed alongside existing coastguard and civil action teams.

Palau identified Chinese vessels in its waters as recently as May, when a ship appeared to be surveying an area near fibre optic cables vital to Palau's communications, Whipps said.

"No matter what, we're going to be in the centre of whatever's happening, so it's important that we're protected," Whipps said during a visit to Tokyo on Wednesday, adding that "to get peace, you have to project strength".

The Pentagon and China's foreign ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Palau has a decades-old pact with Washington whereby the US retains responsibility for its defence and provides economic assistance – a legacy that has its roots in the second world war.

In PNG, access to Lombrum could be used to reinforce US facilities on Guam to the north, which could be key in the event of a conflict over Taiwan.

PNG's prime minister, James Marape, has been forced to defend the deal against a wave of protests and criticism, with some opponents questioning whether PNG was signing away its sovereignty.

“We have allowed our military to be eroded in the last 48 years,” he told parliament on Wednesday evening. “Sovereignty is defined by the robustness and strength of your military.”

Rich in natural resources and close to key shipping routes, PNG increasingly finds itself at the centre of a diplomatic tug-of-war between Washington and Beijing.

Former prime minister Peter O'Neill said the agreement painted a target on PNG's back. “America is doing it for the protection of their own national interest, we all understand the geopolitics happening within our region,” he said.

The US president, [Joe Biden](#), [had been due to visit PNG](#) to sign the deal in May, a trip that was derailed by a budget tussle in the US Congress.

Washington is trying to woo Pacific nations with an array of diplomatic and financial incentives in return for strategic support, after similar moves by Beijing.

Chinese firms have snapped up mines and ports across the Pacific, and last year [signed a secretive security pact with nearby Solomon Islands](#) that allows China to deploy troops to the Solomons.

The US fears that a Chinese military foothold in the South Pacific could outflank its facilities on Guam, and make the defence of Taiwan more

complicated in the event of an invasion by China.

With Agence France-Presse and Reuters

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The headquarters of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) in Beijing. Canada has frozen ties with the bank after a claim that it was ‘dominated by the Communist party’. Photograph: Tingshu Wang/Reuters

[Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank](#)

Canada freezes ties with Chinese bank AIIB over claim it is ‘dominated by Communist party’

Finance minister announces immediate review of Canada’s involvement with Beijing’s alternative to the World Bank

Reuters

Wed 14 Jun 2023 19.45 EDTLast modified on Wed 14 Jun 2023 22.08 EDT

Canada is freezing its ties with the China-led [Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank](#) (AIIB) after the bank’s global communications director resigned and said the bank was “dominated by the Communist party”.

Finance minister Chrystia Freeland said on Wednesday [Canada](#) was putting its ties with AIIB on hold while it investigated the allegations and did not rule out any outcomes, a clear hint that Ottawa could pull out of a bank it officially joined in March 2018.

The AIIB was established by Chinese president Xi Jinping in 2016 as a Chinese alternative to the World Bank and other western-led multilateral lending institutions. It has 106 members worldwide and says it is an “apolitical” lender.

The bank’s global communications director, Bob Pickard, who is Canadian, [announced his resignation](#) on his personal Twitter account on Wednesday, saying he had left because of its “toxic culture” and accused it of being “dominated by Communist party members”.

“As a patriotic Canadian, this was my only course. The bank is dominated by Communist party members and also has one of the most toxic cultures imaginable. I don’t believe that my country’s interests are served by its AIIB membership,” he said.

AIIB said the claims were “baseless and disappointing”. “Throughout this time, the bank has supported and empowered him to perform his role,” it said in a statement. “We are proud of our multilateral mission and have a diverse international team.”

China’s embassy in Canada described the statements as “pure sensational hype and outright lies.”

Liberal prime minister Justin Trudeau was in power when Canada joined the AIIB in 2018. The opposition Conservatives have long demanded Ottawa pull out of the bank, claiming it is a tool for Beijing to export authoritarianism throughout the Pacific.

Before its launch, the US urged countries to think twice about signing up to the bank and questioned whether it would have sufficient standards of

governance and environmental and social safeguards, Reuters reported in 2015.

As of November, the AIIB had financed 194 projects in countries such as India, Uzbekistan and the Philippines, totalling \$37bn, up from \$29bn in October 2021, according to S&P Global Ratings.

Freeland told reporters on Wednesday: “The government of Canada will immediately halt all government-led activity at the bank. And I have instructed the Department of Finance to lead an immediate review of the allegations raised and of Canada’s involvement in the AIIB.”

She said as the world’s democracies worked to limit their strategic vulnerabilities to authoritarian regimes, they must be clear about the ways such governments exercised their influence.

“The review I am announcing today is to be undertaken expeditiously. And I am not ruling out any outcome following its completion,” she said.

The Chinese embassy in Ottawa, asked for comment, said in an email that “the claim that ‘AIIB is controlled by the Communist party of China’ is nothing but a lie.”

Freeland’s remarks mark a new dip in bilateral relations with China, which have been [frosty for the past five years](#).

Canada has accused China of trying to interfere in its affairs through various schemes, [including illegal police stations](#) and the targeting of lawmakers. Beijing denies all such allegations.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police said on Tuesday it was investigating allegations China tried to intimidate a federal Conservative legislator.

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Protestors sing Glory to Hong Kong at a shopping mall in Hong Kong in 2019. The song has disappeared from some online platforms amid efforts by the government to ban its distribution. Photograph: Tyrone Siu/Reuters

[Hong Kong](#)

Protest anthem Glory to Hong Kong starts to vanish from online sites as government seeks ban

Version of the song that rose to fame during 2019 pro-democracy protests disappear from platforms including Spotify, iTunes and Facebook

[Rachel Cheung](#) in Hong Kong

Thu 15 Jun 2023 00.36 EDTLast modified on Thu 15 Jun 2023 04.34 EDT

Versions of Glory to [Hong Kong](#), the unofficial anthem of the city's pro-democracy movement in 2019, have disappeared from several streaming platforms, amid a government bid to ban online distribution of the song.

Variations of the song distributed by DGX Music, the team of creators who own the rights to the title, were no longer available on Spotify, Apple's iTunes, Facebook and KKBOX worldwide on Wednesday, though a rendition performed by a Taiwanese band still remained. Several music videos were also accessible on YouTube on Thursday.

In a social media post on Wednesday, DGX Music said it was handling "technical issues unrelated to the streaming platforms" and apologised for the "temporary impact".

Spotify confirmed to the Guardian the song was taken down by the distributor, not by the platform.

The song became widely popular during the 2019 pro-democracy protests and was repeatedly mistaken as Hong Kong's official anthem [during international sporting events](#), angering authorities.

The city government applied last week for a court injunction to block its distribution. Citing the need to safeguard national security, it is seeking to prohibit anyone from broadcasting the song – including its melody, lyrics or any adaptation – with a seditious intent or to incite secession on any media accessible online. The hearing on the court order has been adjourned to 21 July.

The Hong Kong government allege the lyrics of the song contained a slogan that amounts to advocating secession under a previous court ruling. Its writ also included links to 32 YouTube videos related to the song.

The attempt to ban the song outright pushed it to the top of the charts in Apple's iTunes store in Hong Kong last week as people rushed to download the title.

The court bid was the latest twist in Hong Kong authorities' ongoing feud with internet giants such as Google for hosting the work. Officials blame Google for featuring it prominently in the search results and have tried to pressure it into removing the song.

Eric Lai Ho-yan, a fellow at the Georgetown Center for Asian Law, said the injunction, if granted, would put foreign tech companies that host the song on their platforms in a dilemma, forcing them to choose between upholding their commitment to freedom of expression and complying with the court order to avoid being liable for contempt.

“This move tells us that the HK government is relentlessly weaponising the laws and courts to create a chilling effect in society,” Lai said.

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Amnesty International protests outside the Qatari embassy in Brussels on International Migrants Day, just before the 2022 World Cup began.
Photograph: REX/Shutterstock

[Football politics](#)

Qatar World Cup organisers ‘failed to protect workers,’ claims Amnesty

- Amnesty says Fifa has ‘not effectively investigated the issue’
- Claims of migrants working 12-hour shifts for up to 38 days

[Sean Ingle](#)

[@seaningle](#)

Wed 14 Jun 2023 19.01 EDT

Amnesty International has accused Fifa and the Qatari authorities of failing to properly address a “pattern of abuse against migrant workers” at the

[World Cup](#), some of whom worked 12-hour shifts for up to 38 days in succession without any time off.

A new investigation from the human rights body also found that some workers who were hired as security guards and marshals had to pay illegal recruitment fees – that were never repaid – and had promised overtime pay and bonuses withheld.

Amnesty says the workers reported their treatment on the World Cup grievances hotline in November, but that no action was taken. In one case a worker claimed a manager threatened to fire him and others in retaliation for complaining.

The latest investigation was based on interviews with 22 men from Nepal, Kenya and Ghana, who were among thousands of migrant workers employed by the Qatar-based company Teyseer Security Services to work at World Cup sites, including the Khalifa International Stadium, fan zones and the Corniche.

More than a third of those interviewed said they had to work 12 hours every day and worked for up to 38 consecutive days without a day off, which breaches Qatari law. And all 22 accused Teyseer's representatives, or recruitment agents, of making false promises such as suggesting that they could take up more senior roles and earn an extra £220 a month.

Amnesty said hundreds of workers had protested in Qatar in early January to demand their unpaid overtime and a bonus be paid before their short-term contracts ended. But while both Teyseer and the government promised they would be compensated, the pledge was not honoured.



Argentina's Lionel Messi celebrates with the World Cup but workers endured 12-hour days to build the stadiums in Qatar. Photograph: Martin Meissner/AP

Steve Cockburn, Amnesty International's head of economic and social justice, said: "The World Cup organisers were well aware of the issues but failed to put in place adequate measures to protect workers and prevent predictable labour abuses at World Cup sites, even after workers raised these issues directly.

"Although six months have passed since the World Cup, [Fifa](#) has yet to effectively investigate the issue, or offer remedies. Workers have already waited too long for justice."

In a statement, Teyseer denied any wrongdoing and said: "As a company, we respect and follow labour laws and human rights in order to create a safe and fair work environment for our employees. We are appalled at the allegations, and we take every one of them very seriously."

It added: "We strictly follow ethical recruitment processes and standards and all our agencies abide by them. Every employee was paid the appropriate amount for the hours worked over and above the regular

working hours as per the labour laws or the employment contract ... and we provide a weekly day off to employees as it is their entitlement.”

However Fifa confirmed that the Supreme Committee workers’ welfare department had received “several complaints from Teyseer workers through its hotline and worked to address these together with Teyseer management”.

“Fifa understands that there are different perceptions and views regarding some of the above points,” football’s governing body told Amnesty. “We will continue to be in contact with the SC’s Workers’ Welfare Department and other relevant stakeholders to obtain more clarity on these questions.

However it also added: “It is the primary responsibility of the respective companies as well as the Qatari authorities to rectify possible adverse impacts on workers.”

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