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[Prince Harry](#)

Prince Harry saw ‘red mist’ in William during brother’s alleged attack

Duke of Sussex recounts altercation with brother, saying ‘he wanted me to hit him back, but I chose not to’

Prince Harry saw ‘red mist’ in William during brother’s alleged attack – video

[*Jamie Grierson*](#)

[@JamieGrierson](#)

Fri 6 Jan 2023 03.23 EST Last modified on Sat 7 Jan 2023 04.05 EST

Prince Harry has said he saw “the red mist” in his brother, [Prince William](#), when his older sibling allegedly attacked him during a confrontation over the younger duke’s relationship with Meghan Markle.

In a newly released clip from ITV’s forthcoming interview with Harry, the Duke of Sussex said his brother, William, was so frustrated during the 2019 incident he saw “the red mist in him”.

“He wanted me to hit him back, but I chose not to,” he says of his brother, who he earlier claimed in his book had physically attacked him – as was [first reported by the Guardian](#).

The book’s revelations are spread across front pages of almost every national newspaper in the UK and are likely to reduce the possibility of a reconciliation between the Sussexes and the rest of the British royal family.

In the clip, released early on Friday morning, Harry tells the interviewer, Tom Bradby: “What was different here was the level of frustration, and I talk about the red mist that I had for so many years, and I saw this red mist in him.”

The duke first recounted the confrontation in his autobiography *Spare* – an extract from which was reported by the Guardian on Thursday. In the book, it is claimed the Prince of Wales grabbed Harry's collar and knocked him to the floor, ripping his necklace and shattering a dog bowl under his back.

The duke also states he wants to reconcile with his family – something he says cannot happen without “some accountability”.

“I want reconciliation,” he says, “but, first, there needs to be some accountability.”

In a clip from another forthcoming interview, Harry admits he was “probably bigoted” before his relationship with Markle.

In a new teaser for a CBS News interview that is due to air this Sunday, Harry tells the interviewer Anderson Cooper he was “incredibly naive” about how the British media would treat his relationship with the American actor.

“The race element” to the couple's relationship had been “jumped on straight away” by the British press, he tells the programme, adding that he had no idea how “bigoted” the UK media was until his wife and their relationship were thrust into the spotlight.

“What Meghan had to go through was similar in some part to what Kate and what Camilla went through – very different circumstances,” the duke says in the 30-second clip released on Thursday. “But then you add in the race element, which was what the press – (the) British press jumped on straight away.

“I went into this incredibly naive. I had no idea the British press were so bigoted. Hell, I was probably bigoted before the relationship with Meghan.”

Cooper responds by asking the duke: “You think you were bigoted before the relationship with Meghan?”

Harry replies: “I don't know. Put it this way, I didn't see what I now see.”

Kensington Palace and Buckingham Palace have declined to comment.

Elsewhere in the Brady interview clip, Harry addresses the drug use detailed in the book, Spare. Bradby tells the duke: “There’s a fair amount of drugs (in the book). Marijuana, magic mushrooms, cocaine. I mean, that’s going to surprise people.”

The duke appears to agree and says it was “important to acknowledge”.

The show, called Harry: The Interview, will be broadcast on ITV1 and IT VX at 9pm on 8 January.

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[Books](#)

Prince Harry says woman with ‘powers’ relayed message from Diana

Exclusive: Harry writes in autobiography *Spare* of being told he was ‘living the life she couldn’t ... the life she wanted for you’



Prince Harry with his wife Meghan, his father Charles and Queen Camilla at the funeral of the Queen in September. Photograph: Toby Melville/Reuters

[Martin Pengelly](#) in New York

[@MartinPengelly](#)

Thu 5 Jan 2023 10.06 EST Last modified on Fri 6 Jan 2023 12.12 EST

In his [highly anticipated autobiography](#), *Spare*, Prince Harry describes how his sadness over the death of his mother, Diana, Princess of Wales, led him to seek help from a woman who “claimed to have ‘powers’” and to be able to relay a message.

“You’re living the life she couldn’t,” Harry says the woman told him. “You’re living the life she wanted for you.”

Diana was killed in a car crash in Paris in 1997, when Harry was 12.

Now 38, Harry will publish *Spare* next week. Amid reports of highly restrictive security around the release of the book, the Guardian obtained a copy.

The description of the visit to the woman – about whom Harry does not use words like “psychic” or “medium” – comes late in the 400-page book, amid the prince’s account of his marriage to Meghan Markle, an American actor, and troubled relations with the royal family including [what he says was a physical attack](#) against him by his brother, Prince William.

Harry writes about his mother and his grief throughout his book, at one point describing repeated drives through the tunnel in Paris in which she died, in an attempt to understand what happened.

His account of what he says was a conversation with his dead mother is short. Harry, who now lives in Los Angeles, does not say where the meeting happened, or when. He does not name the woman involved.

The prince says he “recognised the high-percentage chance of humbuggery” but went to meet the woman because trusted friends recommended her.

“The minute we sat down together,” he writes, “I felt an energy around her.”

The prince says the woman told him she felt an energy around him too, and said: “Your mother is with you.”

Harry replied: “I know. I’ve felt that of late.”

The woman, he writes, told him his mother was with him “right now”. Harry says his neck grew warm and his eyes watered.

The woman told Harry his mother knew he was “looking for clarity” and “feels your confusion”, and knew he had “so many questions”, and said answers would come in time.

The prince also says the woman told him Diana said: “You’re living the life she couldn’t. You’re living the life she wanted for you.”

Harry, who in his book also describes endless clashes with the press amid trips to London clubs and visits to Africa, Europe and Hollywood, and admits to regular drinking and drug-taking, says he wanted to believe the woman but needed “proof. A sign. Anything.”

One such sign offered by the woman involved a story about an ornament, and a claim that his mother knew about it because “she was there”.

Earlier in the book, Harry recounts how a Christmas tree ornament in the shape of his grandmother, Queen Elizabeth II, was accidentally smashed by his son, Archie.

The woman, he writes, repeated that his mother was there when the incident happened, saying: “Your mother says ... something about a Christmas ornament? Of a mother? Or a grandmother? It fell? Broke?”

Harry said: “Archie tried to fix it.”

The woman said: “Your mother says she had a bit of a giggle about that.”

After the Guardian broke the first details of Spare on Wednesday night, the book briefly appeared for sale in Spain, leading to other news outlets obtaining copies.

Spare by Prince Harry, The Duke of Sussex (Transworld, £28). To support The Guardian and Observer, order your copy at guardianbookshop.com. Delivery charges may apply.

[Gianluca Vialli](#)

Gianluca Vialli, former Italy, Juventus and Chelsea striker, dies aged 58

- Vialli had been undergoing treatment for pancreatic cancer
- [A life in pictures: memories of Sampdoria, Italy and more](#)

Gianluca Vialli: a look back at the Italy great's football life – video obituary

[Ed Arons](#) and agencies

Fri 6 Jan 2023 04.46 EST Last modified on Fri 6 Jan 2023 16.27 EST

Chelsea have led the tributes to their former player and manager [Gianluca Vialli](#) after his death at the age of 58.

Vialli, who joined [Chelsea](#) in 1996 and helped them win the FA Cup at the end of his first season before guiding the London club to glory in both the League Cup and Uefa Cup Winners' Cup as player-manager the following season, had been undergoing treatment for pancreatic cancer.

“You’ll be missed by so many. A legend to us and to all of football. Rest in peace, Gianluca Vialli,” read a tweet from Chelsea on Friday after news of his death was confirmed by the Italian Football Federation. The club’s Supporters’ Trust (CST) described Vialli as a “foundational pillar” in ushering in a trophy-laden era at Stamford Bridge. “Even after his time at Chelsea, Gianluca was Chelsea through and through,” read a CST statement. “He was a frequent visitor to Stamford Bridge and he was loved by everyone at our football club.”

Vialli began his career at Cremonese, his hometown club, before starring in Serie A [for Sampdoria](#) and Juventus, and ended his playing career at Chelsea before going into management and coaching. He scored 16 goals in 59

appearances for Italy and featured in the *Azzurri*'s 1986 and 1990 World Cup squads.

It was announced in recent weeks that Vialli would be stepping away from his role as delegation chief with the Italy team to focus on his treatment for pancreatic cancer. He had been reunited of late in the Italy setup with the head coach, Roberto Mancini, his former [Sampdoria](#) strike partner, and Vialli was hoping he would be able to resume his national-team role.

Vialli announced he had undergone radiotherapy and chemotherapy in November 2018, having been diagnosed with cancer one year earlier. He was initially given the all-clear in April 2020, but in December 2021 he announced the disease had returned.



An image of Gianluca Vialli is projected onto a building in Genoa.
Photograph: Luca Zennaro/EPA

Explaining his decision to suspend his [Italy](#) involvement, Vialli said on 14 December: “The goal is to use all my psycho-physical energies to help my body overcome this phase of the disease, in order to be able to face new adventures as soon as possible and share them with all of you.”

Sampdoria wrote on Friday in [an emotional article](#): “You gave us so much, we gave you so much: yes, it was love, reciprocal, infinite. A love that will

not die today with you. We will continue to love and adore you because – as you well know – you are better than Pelé. And because, despite everything, our beautiful season is destined to never end.”

They added: “We will remember you as a boy and a relentless centre-forward, because *heroes are all young and beautiful* and you, since that summer of 1984, have been our hero. Strong and beautiful, with that 9 printed on the back and the Italian flag sewn on the heart.”

Graeme Souness, who played alongside Vialli at Sampdoria, paid tribute to him on Sky Sports. A visibly emotional Souness said: “I can’t tell you how good a guy he was. Forget football, he was just a gorgeous soul. He was just a truly nice human being.

“He was just fabulous to be around. He was such a fun-loving guy, full of mischief, wonderful footballer and a warm human being. People will say things about his magnificent football ability, and correctly so, but above all that what a human being. My condolence go to his family – the kids were blessed to have a dad like that, his wife was blessed to be married to a man like that.”

The Italian football federation’s president, Gabriele Gravina, said: “Gianluca was a wonderful person and leaves an unfillable void, in the national team and in all those who appreciated his extraordinary human qualities.”

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2023.01.06 - Spotlight

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Poison in the haze: documenting life under Ahvaz's oppressive orange skies

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‘She’s breaking the walls down!’ Olivia Colman and Sam Mendes on mothers, mental illness and the movies

[Catherine Shoard](#)



Micheal Ward, left, Sam Mendes and Olivia Colman on the set of Empire Of Light. Photograph: PictureLux/The Hollywood Archive/Alamy

Empire of Light is Mendes' most personal film to date. He and its stars, including Colman, Micheal Ward and Toby Jones, talk medication, escapism and kicking down sandcastles



[@catherineshoard](#)

Fri 6 Jan 2023 01.00 ESTLast modified on Fri 6 Jan 2023 14.49 EST

Just before she falls asleep, [Olivia Colman](#) often has the same fantasy. “There’s a phrase in French,” she says, “which is that as you’re going into your slumber, you become your most eloquent. I don’t know what it is, but I *love* that they have a word for it. Anyway, I have these incredible dreams about seeing a bully. Nowadays I think I could go: ‘Don’t fucking do that!’ But as a younger person, I couldn’t. So in my dream, I stand up and I do a speech and go: ‘Fuck you!’ And the people go, ‘Oh! I’m so sorry for my behaviour!’”

She shivers with pleasure. From the next chair, a great thunderclap of cackles courtesy of [Micheal Ward](#), her co-star in [Empire of Light](#). Colman clarifies: “I’ve never done that, given a speech like that. But to watch someone with no inhibitions, unleashed to say what they want to say ... goosebumps!”

Empire of Light gives Colman ample chance to give it both barrels. She plays Hilary, a cinema manager with bipolar disorder in Margate in 1981. Hilary returns from another hospital stay numb on lithium, dead-eyed whether doling out the Opal Fruits or another dusty handjob for her boss (Colin Firth).

Then Stephen (Ward), a young Black man, is hired as a ticket-seller. They begin a fling. Hilary stops the pills, starts dancing, gets into [two-tone](#). All is peachy. Until it’s not.

The first crack appears on a date at the beach. Hilary abruptly destroys a sandcastle while ranting about patriarchal oppression. “She’s breaking free of the shackles!” says Colman, all empathy and delight. “Kicking down the neat and regular!”

Ward demurs. “I just sort of thought: ‘Why you going so crazy? Yo, we’re making this fucking sandcastle! It’s in proportion! Why you breaking it up?’ Stuff like that really annoys me. ‘We’ve made this thing. It’s ...’”

“Perfect!” says Colman. “Beautiful!”

“And she’s literally just ruining it!”

“She’s breaking the walls down! Literally!”



Hilary (Olivia Colman) begins the destruction of a sandcastle she and Stephen (Micheal Ward) have built on the beach. Photograph: Landmark Media/Alamy

On screen, Hilary and Stephen’s affair is soulful stuff. Poetry volumes are given as gifts. Trysts conducted in front of the view immortalised by Turner. In the flesh, their dynamic is more domestic – maternal, even.

Ward, 25, best known for his work on the television drama [Top Boy](#), rattles away garrulously about how the old folk (“in their 60s or 70s”) at his Chigwell gym told him about Black skinheads in the early 80s, who Colman, 48, gently suggests were probably just into ska rather than actual fascists. “Yeah,” says Ward. “A lot of older people just love to talk about when they were younger.”

“I know that feeling,” she says companionably. [Three years on from her Oscar win](#), Colman is as unassuming as ever; nicely described by the film’s writer and director, [Sam Mendes](#), as a Ferrari disguised as a Mini. They had never met before he asked her, over Zoom, to play a character heavily based on his mother, Valerie.

“I had Sam every day to hold my hand and describe how she felt,” says Colman. “But there’s always you, too. If you’re playing someone angry, you find the bits of you that are angry. That’s, y’know, the job.”



Colin Firth and Colman in Empire of Light. Photograph: AP

She took a lot from [The Secret Life of the Manic Depressive](#), Stephen Fry’s 2006 documentary, in which he asked bipolar people if they would choose not to have the condition if they could. “They all said no,” says Colman. “The highs are too great. The feeling of power. They all felt so liberated at the top of the psychotic episode.

“I kept thinking about that. About just wanting to feel something again. Then you start to feel amazing. And then you’ve got the fall. And the comedown is horrendous.”

Valerie, 83, has seen the film and liked it, reports her son. Empire of Light is a mainstream Oscar contender that can easily wrongfoot you, not least for its suggestion that untrammelled truth-telling born from mental illness should be celebrated, as well as, if necessary, curbed.

“Even as a child,” says Mendes, “I could see that my mother, when she was medicated or controlled, was being manipulated, mostly by men. Coming off the medication allowed her finally to tell them the truth. I *did* feel that was

heroic. There was something extraordinary when she turned on them. And magnificent. Her full self was expressed.”



Toby Jones, who knew Mendes growing up in Oxford, plays Norman, the projectionist. Photograph: Everett Collection Inc/Alamy

Mendes was three when his parents divorced, leaving Valerie “a single mother trying to bring up a little boy, a stropky ball of ego and need, and trying to make a living in a very male-dominated environment”.

When he was 11, they moved from London to Oxford, where Sam started mixing in the same crowd as [Toby Jones](#), who plays the cinema projectionist in *Empire of Light*. “Sam radiates this sort of tremendous self-assurance,” says Jones with a crinkled smile. “And he was like that as a boy.”

The film made Jones rethink that bravado. “You are very aware the film is informed by autobiography, and alert to the sensitivities of that. There’s a fragility in certain scenes that you have to honour.”

“When you’re a child,” says Mendes, “you deal with what’s in front of you. And what doesn’t kill you makes you stronger. It definitely gave me resources, but it also turned me into a caretaker. In a sense I was parenting my own mother.”

That meant watching her “like a hawk. Every little shift: a change of scent, of clothing, of hair, of makeup can mean huge things. So I grew up very quickly and I also moved into a job where I could create an environment, which in opposition to my life was completely controllable.”

Watch the trailer for *Empire of Light*.

Jones also loves the liberation of everything being scripted. “When you go to the cinema, you want to be in a world that ultimately makes a kind of sense. Because the bits we struggle to deal with have been edited out.”

Yet unlike superficially similar recent films – [Roma](#), [Belfast](#), [The Fabelmans](#) – Mendes didn’t put himself in the picture; Hilary does not have a child. Why? “You place any kid in any movie and I, as a parent, immediately go: ‘Oh no! Are they gonna be OK?’” says Mendes. “It’s not a particularly interesting emotion to try and generate in an audience.”

More than his previous films, Mendes is concerned about what people make of this one: [1917](#) was inspired by his grandfather, Alfred; *Empire of Light* gets even closer to home. He is worried it’s not quite what people expect, he says, and is uncomfortable with some of its billing.

And it *is* hard to pin down: a big, slippery, ambitious fish, at once a romance, a portrait of psychiatric breakdown, a hymn to workplace community, a look back at the escalating racial tensions of the early Thatcher years and a love letter to cinema.

Mendes squirms. “It’s not trying to be [Cinema Paradiso](#). But if you are broken, movies can help put you back together again. I’m a romantic. I do believe that. Yet that could easily be tilted into being: it’s about the magic of movies.”

He wrote the script – his first by himself – in the early days of the pandemic, as Black Lives Matter exploded and the future of cinema and theatre seemed shaky. Where would he have been without the “many surrogate families” they had offered? “Home for me was a dark auditorium with actors and crew.”



Ward, Mendes, Colman and Tanya Moodie at the film's Toronto premiere, 12 September 2022. Photograph: Sharon Dobson/Alamy

Plus, he says, he has a five-year-old daughter, Phoebe, (with the trumpeter [Alison Balsom](#)). “When you have young kids you always think about how difficult it is to parent in times of great emotional global disturbance.” As a teenager at the time of the Brixton riots and the [New Cross fire](#), he felt “the shifting of the tectonic plates”. Today’s upsets “feel similar, but on a bigger scale”.

That has changed how young people engage with them, he thinks. The other day, his 18-year-old son, Joe (with Kate Winslet) “launched into a speech about why I needed to be vegan and why if everyone didn’t start thinking about this, the planet was going to end, and what was the point of his having children, etc. I couldn’t possibly have contemplated making a speech asking what the point of life was at his age! It’s staggering the existential issues teenagers are having to deal with now. I was just worrying when the next party was.”

The cast’s memories of 1981 are a mixed bag. Colman recalls the thrill of spotting punks on a shopping trip with her mother to Norwich. Jones can still visualise skinheads storming the stage at a Police gig. “There was a kind of intensity. It was a really violent time. You realise the proximity to the

[second world] war and why all play seemed to be infiltrated with this kind of indiscriminate violence.”

[Tom Brooke](#), who plays Hilary’s deputy, Neil, remembers the 80s as a model of compassion compared to today. “Now, it feels like empathy is no longer baked-in. There used to be a sense of helping people. These days people ask: ‘Why should we?’ If you are asking that question, I sort of feel you’re already lost.”



Colman and Brooke in the film. Photograph: Entertainment Pictures/Alamy

[Tanya Moodie](#), who plays Stephen’s mother, Delia, says that if you were Black, the 80s were a time when “you either had friends who genuinely liked and respected you as a person, or friends who tolerated you and eventually would say something demeaning and undermining, and then you’d know where you stood. I just thought that as long as I’m with someone who’s nice, that’s enough.

“I’m 50 now, and I’ve lived my whole life in the body of a Black woman. But it was only three years ago I learned what anti-racism was and what it meant.”

A key reckoning in the film comes when Stephen is treated with contempt by a regular cinema customer. Little is explicit, but a bag of chips is eaten

with unusual aggression, and a lot of dribble. Worse is the blind-eye turned by the staff, keen to defuse the situation. Afterwards, Stephen scolds Hilary for her complicity.



Sparks fly ... Olivia Colman and Micheal Ward in *Empire of Light*.
Photograph: Landmark Media/Alamy

Speaking out is still hard, says Moodie. “Who wants to be that guy? It’s very difficult to call things out. I find it scary – unless someone is racist to my face, in which case I just think they’re dicks.”

The day after they shot the chips scene, says Ward, he went to a bar in Margate. Another young Black man came in, dressed in a suit, fresh from the new [Tracey Emin](#) opening. “This white guy was like: ‘Where have you been? To court?’” Colman gasps. “Yeah!” says Ward. “And I started laughing. It’s so subconscious, even to me as a Black man. It’s easier to laugh than to pull someone up on it. Or to not realise what’s actually going on.



Colman and Ward at the film's Los Angeles premiere, 1 December 2022.
Photograph: Leon Bennett/Getty Images

“The Black guy said to me: ‘Bro, don’t laugh. It’s not funny.’ And I was like: ‘Fucking hell, we literally just filmed that scene and I’ve gone and done the same thing.’”

Colman considers. It wasn’t just her younger self who didn’t stand up to bullies, she says. It was almost everyone. “You didn’t say anything, or you’d watch, say, an older man being revolting to a young woman. And you wouldn’t go: ‘No’.”

She does now, and not just in her dreams. “It’s important to not allow that to slip. To actually always go: that’s not OK.” Has she an example? “Yes. A cab driver example. When they might say: ‘Some of my best friends are black, but ... ’ And you’re like: ugh, Jesus. Am I willing to have this conversation? There were times when I would have maybe just ignored it. But now I go: ‘You know, that’s not OK. By saying that you are exhibiting racism.’ ‘Ah, no, no, no.’ ‘Yes, you are.’

“It’s important.”

She and Ward smile at each other and, for a second, they look like lovers again.

Empire of Light is in UK cinemas from 9 January.

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You be the judge: should my girlfriend stop using my toothbrush?



Illustration: Joren Joshua/the Guardian

She can't understand why she shouldn't use her boyfriend's brush. He bristles at the very thought. Who should clean up their act?

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[Georgina Lawton](#)

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Fri 6 Jan 2023 03.00 ESTLast modified on Fri 6 Jan 2023 21.11 EST

The prosecution: Dave

Lara says sharing my toothbrush is just the same as us kissing. But it's not. It's gross

There's quite a few gross things about being in a relationship, but I'll stick with the PG-rated ones for now: I hate it when my girlfriend Lara uses my toothbrush.

It happens whenever she stays over at mine, or when we go away for weekends. She never seems to pack her own. We've been together just under

a year and it's time for Lara to start remembering to bring one.

She stays over around three times a week, but instead of buying a toothbrush and leaving it at mine, she brings her own back and forth. But often forgets. When she remembers, she makes a big deal out of it and asks, "Are you happy now?" The truth is, I'm more unhappy every time she forgets.

Even if we were married, I'd still find sharing a toothbrush repulsive. You use it to scrub away nasty gunk from your teeth and mouth – then you're expected to share it with someone else and take in all their nasty bacteria.

When Lara says, "But we kiss, isn't that the same?" My answer is a firm "No, it's not." When you kiss someone, you aren't deliberately dislodging the food particles from between their teeth. You don't run your tongue vigorously along their teeth. It's totally different.

I want to kiss Lara but I'll be damned if I want her to brush the bacteria from her teeth with my toothbrush

I want to kiss her, but I'll be damned if I want her to brush the plaque from her teeth with my toothbrush. When Lara uses my toothbrush, I'll say, "This is gross. Do you have to?" but she says it'll be worse and less hygienic for me to experience her bad breath.

We'll argue, I'll let her use it at the time, then the next morning she'll use it again. Then I'll throw it away and get a new one.

I've taken it upon myself to keep a pack of spare brushes for her, but Lara sometimes takes one home by accident instead of leaving it here. We're locked into this cycle of arguing about not having a toothbrush on hand – but it's totally her fault. When I stay over at hers, which is only once a week or so, I'll always bring mine. Why can't she just do the same? Or just leave one here? I don't ever want to share mine again.

The defence: Lara

I don't know why it's such a big deal for Dave. I think it's more of an ego thing than a hygiene thing

I don't get why toothbrush sharing is a the big deal, I really don't. We're a couple and we often kiss. We're already committed to putting our tongues in each other's mouths, so what does it matter if we share a toothbrush ?

Dave says there's a difference between swapping bodily bacteria (for pleasure) and swapping food bacteria that comes from a toothbrush, which he says is out of laziness and should be avoided. I see that, but it's not like I'm his sibling. I'm his girlfriend. It should not gross him out as much as it does.

When I stay over, I do sometimes bring my own toothbrush but, as it's electric, it doesn't fit in my overnight makeup bag. I'll rock up at Dave's and sneakily try to use his toothbrush, but he always makes a huge deal out of it.

He'll say something like: "This is disgusting, you're grim." But he has a normal, non-electric toothbrush, which isn't even as good for removing food, so what's the big deal if we share? It's not like there are loads of bits of food hanging off it.

I saw Dave throw away his brush after I'd used it and I think that's really over the top

Part of the problem is that I go to his house more than he comes to mine. I am a bit scatty so I'll always forget something. If he stayed at mine more, perhaps the toothbrush would be less of an issue. I saw Dave throw away his toothbrush the next day after I'd used it, which is really over the top.

He's now taken to buying cheap plastic ones for me to use when I stay at his, but on a couple occasions I've accidentally taken them home so the next time I go around, I borrow his again. That drives him nuts.

I think this is more of an ego thing than a hygiene thing for Dave. He has a load of gross habits – I won't reveal them all here, but let's just say his record is not unblemished when it comes to personal hygiene. He's been known to skip the odd shower.

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I would rather use his toothbrush and have clean teeth than morning breath, especially if I have to go straight to work from his flat. And I don't think I should apologise for that as I make more of an effort to go to his than he does coming to mine.

The jury of Guardian readers

Should Lara stop using Dave's toothbrush?

Dave's theory reminds me of Trump's super insane, bleach-based cure for Covid. Dave's differentiation between kissing and toothbrushing is as flimsy as his argument as a whole. I say keep on brushing or else quit kissing.

Rory, 55

Sexy kissing isn't the same as oral hygiene. Lara's communal approach to toothbrushes has reached the end of the road, and she needs to change her ways. But old habits die hard, and perhaps Dave should start hiding his toothbrushes to prove a point.

Amber, 45

Sharing a toothbrush is unhygienic (and, given the prevalence of Strep A, potentially dangerous). It also clearly annoys Dave, so could damage the relationship. Lara should buy either a second toothbrush or a bigger overnight bag, neither of which seem like unreasonable asks.

Paul, 47

Even if Lara were right about the harmless nature of swapping “food bacteria”, which she isn’t, she should respect Dave’s wishes. It comes down to consent and consideration of your partner’s feelings is crucial.

Dave, 57

Lara should respect that sharing his toothbrush is out of Dave’s comfort zone. He may be rather unrelaxed about this, but she has to accept how he feels. Lara could buy an electric toothbrush to keep at Dave’s, which would also be too heavy to accidentally get carried home.

Indra, 54

Now you be the judge

In our online poll below, tell us: should Lara stop using Dave’s toothbrush?

The poll closes on Thursday 12 January at 10am GMT

Last week’s result

We asked whether Thierry should stop [leaving the sponge in the sink](#), because it annoys his girlfriend Mary.

61% of you said yes – Thierry is guilty

39% of you said no – Thierry is not guilty

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US work & careers

The company purging meetings from calendars: ‘Uninterrupted time is precious’

Shopify has set strict limits on gatherings, earning cautious praise from experts amid concerns over isolation



Shopify has banned many recurring meetings and all meetings on Wednesdays. Photograph: Mehmet Yaman/Alamy

[Alaina Demopoulos](#)

Fri 6 Jan 2023 01.00 EST

A new year often brings about purges – closet clean-outs, Dry Januarys – and one company is urging its employees to ditch work meetings, too.

Shopify, the Canadian e-commerce company, [announced this week](#) that it will conduct a “calendar purge” in 2023, requiring staff to scrap recurring

meetings with more than three people in attendance. Meetings of any sort held on Wednesdays are out, too, and any event with an invite list of over 50 people can only be held on Thursdays between 11 and 5pm ET.

“Uninterrupted time is the most precious resource of a craftsperson, and we are giving our people a ‘no judgment zone’ to subtract, reject meetings, and focus on what is most valuable,” Kaz Nejatian, Shopify’s vice-president of product and chief operating officer, said in a statement.

A representative for Shopify said on Wednesday that the change gave employees time to actually get work done – a task that can be near impossible if they have three or four 30-minute meetings in a morning, with not much space between Zooms to do anything else.

The news, first [reported](#) by Bloomberg, may sound familiar to those who follow trendy policy changes affecting many businesses. According to Bloomberg, Meta, Facebook’s parent company; the software company Atlassian; and Clorox all have no-meeting days on the calendar.

Reclaim.ai, a scheduling app, found that meetings [increased](#) by almost 70% between February 2020 and October 2021, as the pandemic pushed office work remote. Nixing meetings may be a boon for Zoom-fatigued workers, but some experts say leaving gatherings totally behind in 2023 does not help employees.

“Most organizations have too many meetings, and most meetings aren’t good,” Lee Gimpel, founder of the Washington DC-based meeting facilitation and training firm Better Meetings, told the Guardian. “Canceling all meetings is a blunt tool that still doesn’t necessarily fix what’s going on.”

According to Gimpel, meetings drag on because most bosses are not trained on how to effectively run them, and too many people are invited. “Small meetings work well. Two, three, four, or five people can get together fine, but when you have meetings of 20, 30, or 50 people – which is easy to do when you blast out a Zoom request – those are not good,” he said. “It’s very

hard for all of those people to talk over the course of one hour, so you have a lot of meeting tourists who are just sitting there, observing.”

Jon Petz is a motivational speaker and the author of *Boring Meetings Suck: Get More Out of Your Meetings, or Get Out of More Meetings*. He says that quashing recurring meetings, as Shopify plans to do, is a good start for workers. “When we get together on Friday afternoons because that’s what we always do, we don’t have a mission or a specific task, so we don’t do anything,” he said. “Those are time-killers.”

Petz and Gimpel say shortening meetings is key to improving them. A meeting scheduled for an hour should end at the 45-minute mark to give employees time to take a break, Gimpel suggested. If a company has to hold weekly recap meetings, Petz suggests keeping speakers to a strict two-minute limit, with other employees keeping time with buzzers. “That teaches people to be succinct, and to pass the mic if they don’t have anything to share,” he said.

Eliminating gatherings altogether frees up workers’ calendars, but does it also isolate them? “There are lots of staff meetings held every Monday morning that have been held for 20 years straight that we don’t need to have, but they are what brings an organization together,” Gimpel said. “It’s what gets Mary from accounting and Jim from marketing to be in the same room together, so they grow to know and like each other. That won’t happen if people sit in cubicles or at home, typing emails and never meeting.”

The minutes before and after a meeting allow people to make informal connections. Those workplace friendships may make employees feel more connected to their jobs. “Those little interpersonal moments, where people get coffee, file in, or hang out, are where an organization is made and strengthened,” Gimpel said.

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2023.01.06 - Opinion

- Harry's allegations are not just about a royal fist fight – but the very real dangers of hereditary power
- I left my baby to write this. How do artists balance creativity and the ache for their child?
- Battle of the new year speeches: softly, softly Starmer makes vague Sunak look defeatist
- Starmer may lack Blair's charisma, but he may well change Britain more than New Labour ever did

[Opinion](#)Monarchy

Harry's allegations are not just about a royal fistfight – but the very real dangers of hereditary power

[Gaby Hinsliff](#)



The personal is political when resentment is baked into a monarchy whose instinct is to protect the heir at all costs



Prince Harry and Prince William at a Remembrance Day service in London, November 2019. Photograph: James Veysey/Rex/Shutterstock

Thu 5 Jan 2023 10.42 EST Last modified on Fri 6 Jan 2023 06.03 EST

When my younger sister was very small, I once pushed her down the stairs. Fortunately, she was still small enough to bounce. But it was the beginning, not the end, of the fighting. We pinched and slapped in the back of the car on long interminable journeys, over a fraction of an inch invasion into each other's elbow space. We scrapped over toys and games and who got the biggest share of pudding; then over clothes and boys and who was most popular at school (all right, it was her). We fought like all siblings fight and I can't even remember now what most of it was about, but deep down it was probably the thing most sibling fights are really about, namely who is the most loved. Luckily in our family it was never obvious who was the favourite, which may help explain why these days we love each other to death; why the older we get, the closer we have become, through the years of bringing up our own children and now into the years of looking after our parents. But as I said, we were lucky. Prince William and Prince Harry have been less so, which may explain why – [according to the latter's new book, *Spare*](#), a grimly revealing title if ever there was one – three years ago the brothers came to blows even as full-grown men.

The fight was ostensibly about Harry's wife, Meghan, and he writes angrily about his older brother calling her "difficult", "rude" and "abrasive", echoing the whispers beginning to circulate about her in parts of the press. But it seemingly escalated violently after Harry accused William of acting like an heir: the chosen one, around whom everything else seemingly revolves. There isn't a sibling alive who won't, on some level, recognise that feeling. But the twist in this case is that resentment is inexorably baked into a hereditary monarchy from birth. Its strength but also its weakness is that it exercises power through a family, with all the primordial and potentially destructive emotions that entails.

Like them, loathe them, or merely long to hear no more about them ever again, in recent weeks the Sussexes have [raised questions](#) of genuine and awkward public interest. They held up an important mirror to the country by exploring the reaction, public and private, to a mixed-race royal marriage. They have served up some uncomfortable truths too about the long and sometimes grubby relationship between royals and the media, where some intrusion is grudgingly permitted in return for the nation keeping the family in the gilded style to which they have become accustomed. But this book takes the prince into a queasier realm, where the washing of dirty linen in public is no longer obviously linked to effecting change and the political gives way to the intensely personal.

The details of the brothers' alleged punch-up in a palace cottage are at once almost ridiculously trivial (he pushed me into a dog bowl!) and heartbreakingly sad. They were so young when they lost their mother, but at least they still had each other, and now it seems they don't even have that. Harry clearly aches still to be reconciled – in trailers for yet more promotional interviews to be screened this weekend, he talks of [wanting both his father and brother back](#) – but every revelation surely makes that less likely. The younger prince's tragedy is that the harder he fights for what he seems to want, which is to matter as much to his family as his older brother does, the further that slips out of reach.

For William doesn't come out of all this looking good, and since childhood Harry's function in brutal dynastic terms has been to absorb criticism that might otherwise fall on his older brother. The goal of monarchy is its own

survival, which means its instinct is generally to protect the heir at all costs, while the spare – the younger brother – inevitably becomes more disposable. Harry was born the understudy, the plan B, and even then only until his brother had children. Unlike in centuries past, pushing back against this quasi-feudal order of things isn't going to get him locked up in the Tower, but this is nonetheless a sibling relationship forged with the confines of a family that still considers it reasonable to curtsy to each other. If there's a lesson to be drawn from all this misery, beyond the bleeding obvious one that there's something deeply unhealthy about hereditary power, it's arguably one for parents. For sadly, it's not only children born into immense privilege who can be left feeling like spares.

The perennially wise psychologist Dorothy Rowe [once wrote](#) that sibling relationships were ultimately all about “being validated or invalidated as a person”, since they are where we learn our first indelible lessons about rivalry and resentment, victory and shame, love and hate. They're intense enough when all you're fighting over is who stole whose tights, never mind the vast reserves of power embodied in a crown. What siblings crave above all else is fairness – or perhaps more accurately, the sense that the other one isn't too far ahead in the eternal and terrifying war for their parents' attention. It is a catastrophic thing, for a child to feel the lesser loved, and the scars run deep. For the sake of spares everywhere, I hope Harry finds the peace he so clearly seeks.

- Gaby Hinsliff is a Guardian columnist

[Republic of Parenthood](#)Parents and parenting

I left my baby to write this. How do artists balance creativity and the ache for their child?

[Rhianon Lucy Cosslett](#)



All writers and painters who are mothers must tread a heroic path. In an ideal world, we wouldn't have to



‘Toni Morrison [pictured in 1979] got up to write before her children woke.’
Photograph: Jack Mitchell/Getty Images

Fri 6 Jan 2023 03.00 EST Last modified on Fri 6 Jan 2023 14.36 EST

Since having a baby, I have never felt more creatively inspired, and never more frustrated. “The fire is still on, I’m just on the back burner,” I might say – one of the phrases in the artist Andi Galdi Vinko’s transcendent photo book, *Sorry I Gave Birth I Disappeared But Now I’m Back*.

It chronicles motherhood in all its strange, visceral, leaky realism, as well as its naturalistic beauty. Recently, it has become a visual bible for me, as I wonder what it is to be on the back burner, or even to disappear, at a time when the tension between caring and creating has never felt more acute.

In order to do both, you have to, it seems, put the proverbial baby on the fire escape. It’s probably apocryphal, but this is what the painter [Alice Neel](#)’s inlaws claimed she did in order to work. I’ve been savouring the book, *The Baby on the Fire Escape: Creativity, Motherhood and the Mind-Baby Problem*, these past months. It looks at how celebrated female artists and writers, such as Neel, [Doris Lessing](#), [Alice Walker](#) and [Ursula K Le Guin](#) navigated the demands of motherhood into the need to create. The author, [Julie Phillips](#), tried to find a common thread between how these women

made it work, but instead was confronted with “a negative space, an impossible position”.



The sculpture Mother and Child (1934) by Barbara Hepworth, who raised triplets. Photograph: Barbara Hepworth © Bowness. Photography by Jerry Hardman-Jones

Whether it is relying on a network of “othermothers” for support, having a partner who does their share or more of the care, going it alone, building a career first, or finding success late – there is no easy way to be an “[art monster](#)” while also trying to raise a child.

In the absence of societal encouragement or approval, women have had to find their own ways through that tension, some of them not always admirable. Some, like Lessing, lost access to their children. The common narrative continues to be that she fully [abandoned them](#) without looking back – which says it all, really. Others had strained or distant relationships with their offspring. But many flourished, too, as did their children.

What these women all needed, Phillips concludes, was time. How they achieved that differed – [Toni Morrison](#) got up to write before her children woke, Le Guin didn’t, because hers would always stir when she did. But, heroically, each of them endeavoured to find ways around it. [Barbara](#)

[Hepworth](#) claimed that taking as little as half an hour a day for herself, “to allow the images to build in one’s mind”, was enough to maintain her artistic consciousness while caring for triplets.

They also needed a sense of self. It is so easy to be entirely sublimated by motherhood, to allow your self to be annihilated. To demand boundaries, to assert that you have a right to make art: that requires strength and conviction. It is, as Phillips has it, a hero’s journey.

To put the baby on the fire escape is not to literally leave your child out in the cold. But it is the ability to put the baby out of your mind for the time required to create something else. That’s not to say you’re immune to guilt. It can feel like a constant tug of push and pull, the need to be present for your child versus the desperate need to create. It is far from easy.

Many women know this – it is the tension at the heart of Sheila Heti’s book [Motherhood](#), in which her narrator eventually decides not to sacrifice her artist self through motherhood. There was a time when I feared every baby might be a book I didn’t write. The proverbial “[pram in the hall](#)” as the “enemy of all good art” still haunts so many of us, though it is a nonsense. Furthermore, as Vinko and a long line of female artists before her have shown, the experience of motherhood also lends itself to groundbreaking works interrogating and interpreting it.

I left my baby to write this, when all he wanted was to nestle close to me and feed and sleep. While writing, my body has literally ached for him. This will ease with weaning, but that knowledge sits with the fact that I will only have so many of these days, and that I have never, not since he was born, been fully present for him, because there is a treacherous part of me that will always need to write. I believe that I have the sense of self to do it, but sometimes it can feel exhausting. The temptation to put down one’s pen, or one’s paintbrush, can be immense, but, as the Swedish artist and writer Emma Ahlqvist writes in her book *My Body Created A Human*, “I don’t want my child to grow up having the pressure of having a parent who has given up everything in their life for them.” She concludes that, “Having limited time has made me realise what I really need in my life, and that is to make art.”

Of course, in order to keep going as a mother and an artist, you need an art world, or a publishing world, that is hospitable to both mothers and works about motherhood. [Hettie Judah](#)'s *How Not to Exclude Artist Mothers and Other Parents* is a manifesto for change at every level, from art schools to studios to institutions and beyond. As she writes, "When an artist discovers she is pregnant she should not immediately be gripped by the anxious prospect of having commissions cancelled, abandoning her studio practice and losing sight of a fruitful career. Parenthood should be the start, not the end of things."

What's working

The (updated, jauntier) Postman Pat theme song came on automatically after some nursery rhymes and I thought the baby was going to explode with laughter. He was in complete hysterics, particularly when the cat appeared. It was gorgeous to see, especially as he's been having a tricky time recently.

What's not

Sleep, food, bottles – you name it. Teething and tummy trouble have combined to make the past few weeks a bit miserable for the little one, for whom only the breast will currently do. It's understandable, and I'm treasuring our remaining breastfeeding time as much as I am feeling the frustration of the steps back, but I'm also keen to get some proper food into him.

- Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett is a Guardian columnist and author of [The Year of the Cat](#), which will be published in January 2023

[The politics sketch](#) **Keir Starmer**

Battle of the new year speeches: softly, softly Starmer makes vague Sunak look defeatist

[John Crace](#)



Labour leader delivers a bold message of hope while his Tory opposite offers empty, nostalgic imagery



Who did it best? Rishi Sunak speaks at Plexal, Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, on 4 January, and Keir Starmer delivers his new year speech at Here East tech campus in Stratford on 5 January. Composite: Stefan Rousseau/WPA/Justin Tallis/AFP

Thu 5 Jan 2023 12.27 EST Last modified on Thu 5 Jan 2023 16.45 EST

Compare and contrast. On Wednesday, Rishi Sunak had popped out to London's East End to rush out his new year message. A day later, just a stone's throw away in a university hub near the Olympic park, the [Labour leader showed up](#) to deliver his. Truly, as a nation, we are doubly blessed. Just what the country was waiting for. More words from politicians.

In substance there was little to choose between the two. Yes, the [Labour](#) leader's speech was more coherent and better argued – not the highest of bars, as Rishi's effort seemed to have been written in about half an hour while he was in the car – but if you were to close your eyes, at least two-thirds of the actual policy statements could have been interchangeable. Which said more about Starmer than Sunak. Keir is developing the softly, softly approach of a stealth bomber. Do and say nothing to frighten the horses. The battle is for the centre ground.

It was in tone where the differences were most striking. Sunak was at best lost in empty, nostalgic imagery and at worst defensive and defeatist. His only offer was [five vague promises](#) to try to make the UK a bit less shit. To try to undo a bit of the chaos that the Tories had created over the past 13 years. To persuade voters he wasn't a career sociopath like his two predecessors had been. Even though he had served as chancellor to one of them. To create the impression of distance. As if he had been just as surprised by the Conservative psychodrama as we had.

Starmer was far bolder. Offering a picture of Britain that was almost hopeful. There hasn't been much of that in recent years. Better still, he was untainted by the past. He has done the hard work of trying to detoxify the Labour brand. No one now believes that Labour is still antisemitic. No one thinks Labour is opposed to Nato.

This is a Labour that is comfortably Middle England. Not all Labour supporters will necessarily be thrilled with that, but they are having to suck it up. Starmer is bending the party to his will. The prize of an election victory is in sight. Nothing must get in the way of that. Without it, Labour are just another opposition party pissing in the wind.

Rachel Reeves – she and Starmer come as an inseparable double act these days – made the introductions. She was welcoming the next Labour prime minister. She hesitated to say next prime minister, as there was no knowing what the Tories might do to hang on to power in the next 18 months. [Beware the return of Boris](#). Just when you think things can't get any worse ...

Then came Starmer. Without a jacket and with shirt sleeves rolled up. The ready-for-action clichés wrote themselves. He could have been Bob the Builder. And the image fitted. In the past, the Labour leader has been a somewhat awkward public speaker. At odds with the image he is trying to project. Now, though, he's relaxed into the role. He's never going to be dynamic and charismatic. But right now, boring and dependable is more than good enough.

He looks and sounds like a credible prime minister. He's not asking us to view him through some rose-tinted prism. He is the real deal. We've seen the Tory options and the [polls suggest](#) the country has had enough. All Keir

needs to do is to just look normal. And not do or say anything mad. He's seen off Boris Johnson and Liz Truss. And he's seen through Rishi! And Starmer likes what he's seen. Because he reckons Sunak is decidedly second rate at politics.

The message was similar to the speech he had given in Leeds back in December where he had proposed a wholesale devolution of power to cities, towns and the regions. The Tories were headless chickens. Just reacting wildly to the latest crisis to emerge. Usually of their own making. But all they had were sticking-plaster solutions. Labour would tackle the problems at their root. Though he wouldn't commit his government to turning on the spending taps. Because that would be wrong. Not that there weren't problems that needed cash, but he would only spend as much as was strictly necessary. However much that turned out to be would be the right amount.

Unusually, he also mentioned Brexit. Though not as an explanation of why the UK's economy was still the worst performing in the G7. This was not a speech to indulge in inconvenient truths. Rather, it was shrewd realpolitik. Hijack "Take Back Control", the most successful slogan of the decade, for Labour's next election manifesto. Leave the Tories limbless. Embrace the "red wall" voters with their own message. Give people the control they want. Just don't tell them that they could have just as easily had it all without leaving the EU.

Unsurprisingly, the media chose to ignore many of Starmer's long-term strategic commitments and focused instead on the sticking-plaster solutions. The ones that were going to be needed to get the UK through the next three months. Like the strikes and hospital waiting lists. If the Labour leader was bothered that his 10-year plan had barely lasted 10 minutes, he didn't let it show. Rather it was a sign that most of it must have sounded too plausible to be controversial.

On strikes, Starmer merely stated the obvious. That negotiation and compromise were required. Though even this appears to be beyond Sunak, who has backed himself into a corner where he can only wait on a miracle and hope that nurses suddenly turn round and say "you know what? Two per cent will do us nicely". The Labour leader also observed that it would be

undemocratic for the government to [legislate against strike action](#). So the Tories surely wouldn't do that?

They would. Yet another wrong move. A sticking plaster in the wrong place. It won't end well. Faced with a choice, Rishi! invariably makes the wrong one. Against the odds, Starmer has the [Conservatives](#) rattled. In the battle of the new year speeches, it's 1-0 to Labour.

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[Opinion](#) **Keir Starmer**

Starmer may lack Blair's charisma, but he may well change Britain more than New Labour ever did

[Andy Beckett](#)



Without the optimism that carried Labour to power in the mid-90s, the party now has no choice but to go big on reform



Illustration by Nate Kitch

Fri 6 Jan 2023 01.00 EST Last modified on Fri 6 Jan 2023 09.35 EST

Britain seems in a strange mood as 2023 blearily begins. One of the worst periods of peacetime crisis in our modern history grinds on. Frighteningly, it is spreading into more and more areas of life that we're used to thinking the state and business have largely under control. One of the world's richest countries, even after the economic calamities of Tory rule, has in many ways become dysfunctional.

Yet the response from voters seems complex and relatively muted. There is fear – please don't let me [need a hospital](#) – and frustration at how the stoppages and shortages are dragging on. There is disbelief at the country's accelerating deterioration; but also fatalism, a feeling that Britain was due a fall after years of cost-cutting, complacency and overindulgence. There is exhaustion at the sheer length of the disruption; and scepticism about the ability of any politician to end it. But there is less overt anger than might reasonably be expected. Unlike the early 1980s, or the early 2010s – like now, both times when Tory policies were doing immense social damage – Britain is not rioting. At least, not yet.

Voters have deserted the Conservative party in the opinion polls, it is true. Support is between a third and a half lower than it was at the last election. But while this fall has produced a big lead for Labour, beneath the surface shift the polls suggest there is still a lot of flux and confusion. When [YouGov](#) asked people last month who would be the best prime minister, 39% said they were not sure, 25% said Rishi Sunak, and only 32% said Keir Starmer, despite his increasingly confident tenure as Labour leader.

With possibly two years still to go until the next election – a long time in our eventful politics – a [Labour](#) government, let alone one that solves some of the country's problems, remains quite abstract and distant for many voters. They sense that the Tories are on their way out, but they also appreciate that before that finally happens the current crisis may well get worse. A small but growing sense of anticipation about more competent and principled government under Starmer coexists with larger fears about the present and the immediate future.

How might Labour – or perhaps less foreseen political forces – navigate this hugely unsettled period? Given the breadth and depth of the current crisis, and the long accumulation of its causes, at least some of the turmoil may well continue past the election and deep into the next government. If any politician can produce some appealing and effective solutions to Britain's suddenly sharp decline, they could be in power for a long time. This may be why, [in a speech](#) on Thursday trailed as promising “a decade of national renewal”, Starmer said Labour would introduce “a completely new way of governing”.

There can also be more cynical responses to national crises. Recently, Boris Johnson has begun to drop heavy hints that he could act as a national saviour. In a new year message delivered in his most drawling, charming mode, he said he was “confident that things will get better” for Britain in 2023, “lengthening our lead as the best place on Earth”. It's easy to find this optimism absurd and offensive, coming from the person responsible for [so many of our current disasters](#). Yet Johnson has made a career out of enough people believing his promises. Unless Sunak's low-key and disengaged premiership wakes up, it would be foolish to rule out an attempted Johnson comeback.

But the anti-crisis politicians with most potential may be outside their party, given how associated the Tories are with the chaotic status quo. The relentless Nigel Farage, the increasingly popular rightwing populists of [Reform UK](#), or perhaps some new, millionaire-backed reactionary movement: all could use Britain's ongoing emergencies to their advantage. In the mid-70s, an economic crisis less severe in its social effects than today's produced a toxic flowering of new far-right groups, until Margaret Thatcher's radicalisation of the Tories took these groups' members and impetus away. Given that much of our media is even more rightwing and at least as panicky about the state of the country as it was in the 70s, a would-be messiah from the fringes of the right might find plenty of backers.

Starmer lacks messianic qualities. Unlike Tony Blair at the equivalent stage of his Labour leadership, in the mid-90s, Starmer can't use personal charisma to suggest that a government led by him would be fresh and dynamic. Nor does Starmer have Blair's advantage of only having to devise solutions for a relatively contained national crisis. In the mid-90s, public services were struggling after years of Tory underfunding, but the economy was growing and many voters were feeling quite upbeat, ready to believe Labour when it said that "things can only get better".

The public mood is different now. And while the Blair era is clearly an influence on Starmer – from his use of [Gordon Brown and David Blunkett](#) as advisers to his shadow ministers' revival of Blairite strategies such as being "tough on crime" and "reforming" public services – Starmer's policy proposals and rhetoric increasingly suggest that he would go further than New Labour in trying to change the country. He feels he has no choice. As he summed up today's Britain at the last Labour conference: "We can't go on like this."

He still has a careful, hair-shirt side as a politician, warning almost with relish that a Starmer government would have to "make very difficult choices". But the state of the country is simultaneously forcing him to be more expansive. This expansiveness is not just about winning the election. If a Starmer administration produces policies that are too small for the scale of the crisis – what he calls "sticking plaster politics" – his carefully acquired reputation for competence won't last long.

It's also possible that he is finding being bolder quite exciting – more so than the miserably tentative “constructive opposition” of his leadership’s first phase. That a typically cautious Labour leader could end up being a conduit for public dissatisfaction with the country the Tories have created, and an architect of whatever replaces it, still feels quite an unlikely outcome. But we live in strange times.

- Andy Beckett is a Guardian columnist

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Aukus

US senators urge Joe Biden not to sell 'scarce' nuclear submarines to Australia

Democrat and Republican lawmakers reportedly warned president that Aukus security pact could stress US submarine industrial base 'to breaking point'

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The US aims to build its own fleet of at least 60 nuclear-powered submarines but is struggling to meet its own needs. Photograph: Reuters

[*Paul Karp*](#)

[*@Paul_Karp*](#)

Fri 6 Jan 2023 00.51 EST

Two top US senators have urged president Joe Biden not to sell nuclear-powered submarines to Australia, warning it would diminish US national security given the vessels are “scarce”.

The intervention confirms the US is under pressure not to sell its submarines before Australia is able to build its own as part of the [Aukus](#) alliance – meaning it could be decades before Australia gains nuclear submarines.

A spokesperson for the Australian defence minister, Richard Marles, played down the leak, saying “the optimal pathway for Australia to acquire nuclear-powered submarines is taking shape, and an announcement remains on track to be made in the first part of this year.”

The Australian government is due to announce whether it plans to buy nuclear submarines from the US or UK by March.

According to [US news site Breaking Defense](#), the Democratic senator Jack Reed, chair of the US Senate armed services committee, and the then ranking Republican senator James Inhofe, now retired, sent Biden the letter in December.

Reed and Inhofe wrote that “over the past year, we have grown more concerned about the state of the US submarine industrial base as well as its ability to support the desired Aukus SSN [nuclear submarine] end state.”

“We believe current conditions require a sober assessment of the facts to avoid stressing the US submarine industrial base to the breaking point,” they reportedly wrote.

“We are concerned that what was initially touted as a ‘do no harm’ opportunity to support Australia and the United Kingdom and build long-term competitive advantages for the US and its Pacific Allies, may be turning into a zero-sum game for scarce, highly advanced US [Virginia-class submarines].”

“We urge you to adopt a ‘do no harm’ approach to Aukus negotiations and ensure that sovereign US national security capabilities will not be diminished as we work to build this strategic partnership with Australia and the United Kingdom over the coming decades.”

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The US aims to build its own fleet of at least 60 nuclear-powered submarines but [is struggling to meet its own needs](#).

In December the US secretary of defence, Lloyd Austin, recommitted the Biden administration “to ensuring that Australia acquires this capability [nuclear submarines] at the earliest possible date”.

But the two senators reportedly noted “just 1.2 Virginia-class [nuclear submarines] have been delivered, on average, per year over the past five years”.

Selling or transferring Virginia-class submarines prior to meeting the US navy’s requirements would make it “less capable of meeting sovereign wartime and peacetime requirements”, they wrote.

“Make no mistake, we recognise the strategic value of having one of our closest allies operating a world-class nuclear navy could provide in managing long-term competition with an increasingly militaristic China.

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“However, such a goal will take decades to achieve, and we cannot simply ignore contemporary realities in the meantime.”

Marles’s spokesperson said Aukus would “significantly transform Australia’s strategic posture and the work undertaken over the last 16 months speaks to a shared mission between Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States”.

Australia was “grateful” for the US and UK enabling Australia to acquire a nuclear-powered submarine capability and “that important capability is not lost on us”, the spokesperson said.

In September 2021, Australia [tore up a \\$90bn conventional submarine contract with France](#) to instead acquire nuclear submarine technology from the US or the UK as part of the new Aukus alliance.

The deal created a looming capability gap, requiring the Collins-class submarines [to be upgraded and their life extended](#) until the first nuclear-propelled submarines could be made in Australia by the late 2030s.

In June, [Peter Dutton, the opposition leader and former defence minister, revealed](#) he “believed it possible to negotiate with the Americans to acquire, say, the first two submarines off the production line out of Connecticut”.

“This wouldn’t mean waiting until 2038 for the first submarine to be built here in Australia,” he wrote. “We would have our first two subs this decade. I had formed a judgment the Americans would have facilitated exactly that.”

The revelation [prompted criticism](#) from experts including Marcus Hellyer, a senior analyst at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, who said this had not been agreed by the US government and it would be a “pretty serious kind of breach or leak [to disclose it]” if it had.

“No boats are available before 2030 unless the US gives up its own – that would be quite remarkable – the US has been clear there is no way they can build additional submarines,” Hellyer told Guardian Australia at the time.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/06/us-senators-urge-joe-biden-not-to-sell-scarce-nuclear-submarines-to-australia>

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Twitter

Hackers reportedly leak email addresses of more than 200 million Twitter users

Information posted on a hacking forum in ‘one of the most significant’ breaches of users’ email addresses and phone numbers



There were no clues to the identity or location of the hacker or hackers.
Photograph: NurPhoto/Rex/Shutterstock

Reuters

Thu 5 Jan 2023 22.14 ESTLast modified on Fri 6 Jan 2023 11.34 EST

Hackers stole the email addresses of more than 200 million [Twitter](#) users and posted them on an online hacking forum, a security researcher said on Wednesday.

The breach “will unfortunately lead to a lot of hacking, targeted phishing and doxxing”, Alon Gal, co-founder of Israeli cybersecurity monitoring firm

Hudson Rock, wrote on LinkedIn. He called it “one of the most significant leaks I’ve seen”.

Twitter has not commented on the report, which Gal first posted about on social media on 24 December, nor responded to inquiries about the breach since that date. It was not clear what action, if any, Twitter has taken to investigate or remediate the issue.

Reuters could not independently verify if the data on the forum was authentic and came from Twitter. Screenshots of the hacker forum, where the data appeared on Wednesday, have circulated online.

Troy Hunt, creator of the breach notification site Have I Been Pwned, viewed the leaked data and said on Twitter that it seemed “pretty much what it’s been described as”.

There were no clues to the identity or location of the hacker or hackers behind the breach. It may have taken place as early as 2021, which was before Elon Musk took over ownership of the company last year.

Claims about the size and scope of the breach initially varied with early accounts in December saying 400m email addresses and phone numbers were stolen.

A major breach at Twitter may interest regulators on both sides of the Atlantic. The data protection commission in Ireland, where Twitter has its European headquarters, and the US Federal Trade Commission have been monitoring the Elon Musk-owned company for compliance with European data protection rules and a US consent order respectively.

Messages left with the two regulators were not immediately returned on Thursday.

Japan

Legacy of Japan's Nakagin Capsule Tower Tower lives on in restored pods

One of Tokyo's most famous buildings was dismantled in April due to asbestos fears. Now 23 of the capsules have been saved for posterity



Nakagin Capsule Tower in Tokyo featured in films and as a backdrop to fashion shoots before its demolition. Photograph: Franck Robichon/EPA



[Justin McCurry](#) *in Tokyo*

Thu 5 Jan 2023 23.00 EST Last modified on Fri 6 Jan 2023 12.01 EST

Tatsuyuki Maeda had more reason than most to feel a pang of regret as he joined admirers and passing office workers to watch Nakagin Capsule Tower being dismantled.

The building was not just [one of Tokyo's most famous structures](#); for more than a decade it had been Maeda's occasional home – a pied-à-terre in the heart of the city he had coveted since he first set eyes on it from his nearby workplace.

Its creator, the celebrated architect Kisho Kurokawa, had intended for the capsules to be removed and replaced every 25 years at the end of what he saw as their natural life cycle – an innovation rendered impracticable by a design fault that made it next to impossible to remove single pods.

In 2021, as the building neared its half century, the ravages of time, coupled with disagreements among owners over its future, helped seal Nakagin's fate. The capsules, originally painted white, had become discoloured, and netting had to be installed to keep dislodged rust fragments from falling on to the street. There was concern about the large quantities of asbestos inside

the building, which no longer met Japan's strict earthquake-resistance regulations.

After the management company and capsule owners agreed to sell the plot, work began last April to remove the asbestos, rip out the pods' interiors and demolish the building.



Tatsuyuki Maeda owned 15 pods and was determined to save some of the capsules. Photograph: The Guardian

“I have an office nearby, so I went out and took some photos when they started taking it apart,” Maeda, who owned 15 of the pods, said. “We weren’t able to save all of the capsules, but we were determined to spare at least some of them.”

The 55-year-old had already started making plans to secure the tower's architectural legacy after conceding that the 13-storey building would not survive in its original form. He leased some of his pods and conducted guided tours to raise money.

Built in 1972, Nakagin was an architectural curiosity tucked away in a corner of the city's Ginza district – an asymmetric stack of 140 identical concrete boxes that became home to a community of artists and designers,

and ordinary tenants who could not face long weekday commutes home to the suburbs.

From the outside, the capsules resembled giant washing machines, complete with a single circular window and a blind that fanned out to shield their occupants from the glare of the city lights. Each 10-sq metre space came with a unit bathroom, a Sony Trinitron TV, a reel-to-reel tape player and a rotary dial phone.

The tower was an early example of metabolism, an avant garde architectural movement formed in Japan in the late 1950s whose disciples viewed buildings as organisms that could be adapted or removed over time. For Kurokawa and his fellow metabolists, architecture needed to accommodate the radical changes Japan was undergoing during its postwar economic and cultural transformation.



Pods saved from the dismantled Nakagin Capsule Tower are restored at a warehouse near Tokyo. Photograph: Tatsuyuki Maeda

Maeda and other members of the nonprofit Nakagin Capsule Tower preservation and regeneration project saved 23 capsules, which now sit in a warehouse in Chiba prefecture, near Tokyo.

Fourteen are being restored to their original state, complete with the electric appliances and unit bath – although not all of the retro gadgets are in working order – while the remaining nine are being stripped down to their basic structure, giving prospective owners a blank canvas on which to design a new interior.

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Maeda expects some of the restored units to appear in hotel and company lobbies and museums, although talks with potential owners are still in the early stages. He has also received inquiries from Asia, Europe and the US, but would say only that an agreement had been reached with an entity in Germany.

“And at some point next year it will be possible to see one of these pods in its original state somewhere in Japan,” he said, adding that restoration work is now in the final stages.

Nakagin in its original form gained legions of admirers from around the world, featured in films and as a backdrop to fashion shoots, and became a must-see for tourists intrigued by a building whose appeal only increased as it grew more incongruous with its surroundings.



The interior of one of the restored pods from Nakagin Capsule Tower.
Photograph: Tatsuyuki Maeda

Nakagin Capsule Tower is no longer, but Maeda is confident the restoration project honours the spirit of its creator. “Kurokawa intended for the capsules to adapt and change over time, depending on the environment, and if you think about it, this is exactly what is happening,” he said.

If the project succeeds, the reborn pods will be scattered across the world, as attractions in museums and corporate lobbies or as holiday accommodations. Maeda may even save one for himself. “If one of the pods is left, then I could see myself putting it in a forest, or even inside my house,” he said. “But if that’s not possible, I’ll be happy just to be able to watch over them.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/06/legacy-japan-nakagin-capsule-tower-lives-on-restored-pods>

US Capitol attack

‘All I did was testify’: Republican who defied Trump will get presidential medal

Rusty Bowers is one of 12 people who took risks to protect US democracy who will be honored on anniversary of January 6



Rusty Bowers was unseated from Arizona house of representatives by his own party for standing up to Trump. Photograph: Olivier Tournon/AFP/Getty Images

[*Ed Pilkington*](#) in New York

[@edpilkington](#)

Fri 6 Jan 2023 04.00 EST Last modified on Fri 6 Jan 2023 10.31 EST

Rusty Bowers, the former top Republican in Arizona's house of representatives who stood up to Donald Trump's attempts to overturn the

2020 presidential election and was punished for it by being unseated by his own party, is to receive America's second-highest civilian honor on Friday.

Bowers will be among 12 people who will be awarded the Presidential Citizens Medal by Joe Biden at the White House at a ceremony to mark the second anniversary of the 6 January 2021 insurrection at the US Capitol. It will be the first time that the president has presented [the honor](#), which is reserved for those who have "performed exemplary deeds of service for their country or their fellow citizens".

All 12 took exceptional personal risks to protect US democracy against Trump's onslaught. Many are law enforcement officers who confronted the Capitol rioters, others are election workers and officials in key battleground states who refused to be bullied into subverting the outcome of the presidential race.

Several of the recipients paid a huge personal price for their actions. [Brian Sicknick](#) will receive the presidential medal posthumously – he died the day after the insurrection having suffered a stroke; a medical examiner later found he died from natural causes, while noting that the events of January 6 had "played a role in his condition".

Bowers' award, first reported by the [Deseret News](#), came after he refused effectively to ignore the will of Arizona's 3.4 million voters and switch victory from Biden to Trump. As a result, he incurred the wrath of Trump, who endorsed a rival candidate in last year's Republican primary elections.

David Farnsworth, the Trump-backed opponent, went on to defeat Bowers and usher him out of the Arizona legislature. Farnsworth is an avid proponent of the lie that the 2020 election was stolen from Trump, going so far as to tell voters that the White House had been [satanically snatched](#) by the "devil himself".

Ahead of Friday's ceremony, Bowers described the news of his award as "something of a shock". He said that though some of his detractors were likely to denounce his call to the White House a political stunt, he thought it

was designed to “create unity and put behind us the division of the past. I’m certainly in favor of that, no matter what.”

He added: “I don’t think this is to stir up division, it’s to honor those who stood up and did their job as best they could. And that’s kind of what America is about.”

Last June, Bowers testified before the House committee investigating the January 6 insurrection. He told the hearing that shortly after the November 2020 election he had received a phone call personally from Trump, who asked him to take the state’s 11 electoral college votes away from Biden and hand them to him. Bowers replied: “Look, you’re asking me to do something that is counter to my oath ... I will not do it.”

In an [interview with the Guardian](#) from his desert ranch outside Phoenix in August, Bowers characterized the plot to overturn the election as fascism. “Taking away the fundamental right to vote, the idea that the legislature could nullify your election, that’s not conservative. That’s fascist. And I’m not a fascist,” he said.

Among the other recipients at Friday’s medal presentation will be [Eugene Goodman](#), the Capitol police officer who drew angry rioters away from the Senate chambers where lawmakers were hiding in fear. Jocelyn Benson, who in the role of Michigan’s top election official fended off a virulent campaign of misinformation during the presidential vote count, will also be honored.

Bowers was demure about the role he played to scupper Trump’s anti-democratic ambitions. “All I did was testify before the commission and do my own thing at home, go through my own little trials,” he said.

He was heartened that all of the election-denier candidates endorsed by Trump who stood in statewide races last November had been defeated. They included [Kari Lake](#) who lost in the Arizona governor’s election and [Mark Finchem](#), a state lawmaker who was present at the Capitol on January 6, who failed to become the state’s top election official.

“I’m very happy that they were so strongly defeated,” Bowers said. “The outcome to me is illuminative.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/jan/06/arizona-republican-defied-trump-overturn-election-presidential-medal>

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Spain

British collector of Russian art saves Málaga museum from possible closure

Jenny Green offers to exhibit her private collection at Museo Ruso, a Russian art museum



The Museo Ruso is also hosting the exhibition *For Sale*, a study of exile by the Ukrainian couple Ilya and Emilia Kabakov. Photograph: Francis Gonzalez/Sopa Images/Rex/Shutterstock

[Stephen Burgen](#) in Barcelona

Fri 6 Jan 2023 01.00 EST Last modified on Fri 6 Jan 2023 13.47 EST

A Russian art museum in Málaga has been saved from possible closure by a British enthusiast after she offered to exhibit her private collection of 76 works by Russian artists.

The works, dating from 1876 to 1980, belong to Jenny Green, who began collecting Russian art 20 years ago. In the 1960s Green was one of a group

of people behind *Granny Takes a Trip*, the trend-setting Kings Road boutique in London.

It is the first time the collection has gone on public display and includes works by Venetsianov, Ivanov, Aivazovsky, Repin, Serov, Bakst, Benois, Kandinsky, Serebriakova, Larionov, Goncharova, Chelischev and Essaian.

“With the exception of seven small works, this represents my entire collection,” Green said at the inauguration of the exhibition, which runs until 5 June.

As well as the Green collection, the Museo Ruso is hosting the exhibition *For Sale*, a study of exile by the Ukrainian couple Ilya and Emilia Kabakov.

The Museo Ruso, which is housed in a former tobacco factory, was founded in 2015 and is essentially the Spanish wing of the Russian State Museum in St Petersburg, and its first European offshoot.

The museum’s permanent and temporary exhibitions draw on the St Petersburg institution’s vast collection of more than 400,000 works. The Museo Ruso had mounted 40 exhibitions and had attracted 750,000 visitors before the Russian invasion of Ukraine threw the project into jeopardy.

When the war broke out, the museum had four exhibitions open: *War and Peace in Russian Art*, the Russian Vanguards, Mayakovsky, Artist and Poet and Dostoevsky on his bicentennial.

The museum initially hoped they could mothball the works but it soon became clear this was not tenable and the art was returned to Russia in early May.

Shortly afterwards the museum put on a Picasso exhibition but has struggled to keep going.

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José María Luna, the museum's director, says that as its relationship with the St Petersburg museum has been "interrupted", the future lies in private and public collections such as Green's.

"Our commitment to bring Russian art to Málaga is unchanged and we now need to find another way of doing it," Luna said. "Russian culture isn't responsible for what's happening. Cancelling Russian culture doesn't solve anything. Malevich and Tchaikovsky aren't to blame for this situation and we will continue to work with culture as a bridge between people.

"We're working with collections in [Spain](#) and Europe to cover our requirements in 2023 and, if necessary, in 2024. Our relationship with the St Petersburg is suspended but we have a contract until 2025 so we'll have to wait and see what happens."

In recent years Málaga, long seen by many merely as a entry point to the Costa del Sol, has refashioned itself as a cultural destination. As well as a museum of contemporary art and one dedicated to Picasso, who was himself a *malagueño*, there is an offshoot of the Centre Pompidou and the Museo Carmen Thyssen Málaga.

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Headlines tuesday 3 january 2023

- [Rail strikes Deal to stop UK strikes ‘in touching distance’, says Network Rail](#)
- [Live Transport secretary admits proposed legislation won’t offer solution to current rail strikes](#)
- [Trains Most UK services out of action as five days of strikes begin](#)
- [Live Network Rail boss claims strikes deal within ‘touching distance’](#)

Rail strikes

No 10 optimistic that deal to end rail strikes can soon be reached

With fresh talks expected this week, source says rail row is public sector dispute most likely to be resolved first

- [UK strike calendar: service stoppages in January.](#)



A deserted Paddington Station in London on Tuesday as rail strike action continues. Photograph: Ben Cawthra/LNP

[Jessica Elgot](#), [Peter Walker](#) and [Joanna Partridge](#)

Tue 3 Jan 2023 10.52 ESTFirst published on Tue 3 Jan 2023 03.47 EST

Downing Street has expressed optimism that a solution to the current wave of rail strikes could be imminent, after the chief negotiator for Network Rail said a deal was “in touching distance”.

Fresh talks over the dispute, in which drivers and other staff were staging the first of five consecutive days of [national rail strikes](#) on Tuesday, were expected this week, a No 10 source said.

While issues remained to be sorted, it was viewed as the public sector dispute most likely to be resolved first, the source added.

Earlier, Tim Shoveller, Network Rail's chief negotiator, suggested the pay offer for rail staff would not be improved, but claimed better communication about the deal would begin to win over union members.

Shoveller said "we only need 2,000 people who voted no last time to change their vote and the deal will pass". He told BBC Radio 4's Today programme on Tuesday: "Some members are coming back to work, and we are seeing increasing numbers come back to work, but that's not the way to resolve the problem or the dispute."

"The way to resolve that dispute is through an agreement and what we're saying to the RMT is that it's very clear from the referendum that they held – they did it very quickly, it was only open for a few days – that actually that was rushed, and it didn't allow and give time for people to ask genuine questions there are associated with the reform elements of this deal," he added.

"So, what we're saying to the RMT is that we know which areas had been misunderstood by some of our staff, their members, and we want to make sure that we can work with the RMT now to make clarifications where there's been misunderstanding and put the deal out again."

Members of the Rail, Maritime and [Transport](#) (RMT) union at Network Rail and 14 train operators are striking for two 48-hour periods, starting on Tuesday and again from Friday.

With signalling staff among the 40,000 [RMT](#) members on strike, much of the railway in Wales, Scotland and less populous regions of England will not run at all, while service frequencies will typically be reduced to one train an hour on major routes.

There is still no timetable for the government's plans to pass a law to make public sector strikes more difficult, for example by imposing statutory minimum service standards for railways.

No 10 had originally hoped to provide information on this before Christmas, but this is now not likely even this week, with officials still examining the complexities of the issue.

“We certainly want these new powers to be brought in as soon as possible,” Rishi Sunak's official spokesperson said. “While I don't have a specific timescale for you, we recognise the urgency of this and are working as such.”

In advance of the latest strikes, rail passengers had been advised to travel only if necessary.

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Network Rail said only about 20% of trains were running on Tuesday, while any trains that were running were scheduled between 7.30am and 6.30pm. The second day of the first 48-hour strike of the week will take place on Wednesday.

The general secretaries of both Aslef, which has called strike action for Thursday, and the RMT said there was still a wide gulf between members and employers, as well as with the government.

The Aslef general secretary, Mick Whelan, told the PA Media news agency the union was “in it for the long haul”, adding: “They expect train drivers at

these companies to take a real-terms pay cut – to work just as hard for considerably less – when inflation is running at north of 14%.”

Mick Lynch, the RMT general secretary, also blamed the government for blocking a settlement, saying there was “an unprecedented level of ministerial interference”.

“We have worked with the rail industry to reach successful negotiated settlements ever since privatisation in 1993, and we have achieved deals across the network in 2021 and 2022 where the Department for [Transport](#) has no involvement.

“Yet in this dispute, there is an unprecedented level of ministerial interference, which is hamstringing rail employers from being able to negotiate a package of measures with us, so we can settle this dispute.”

The transport secretary, Mark Harper, denied the government had blocked any path to a settlement. Harper told Sky News: “There is a fair and reasonable pay offer on the table. There is not a bottomless pit of taxpayers’ money here. Taxpayers have put a huge amount of investment into the rail industry over the last few years when it was hit with a huge impact from the pandemic when people weren’t travelling.”

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[Politics live with Andrew Sparrow](#)Politics

No 10 says NHS is getting ‘funding it needs’ and refuses to accept service is ‘in crisis’ – as it happened

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[Rail transport](#)

Most UK train services out of action as five days of strikes begin

Network Rail advises people to travel only if absolutely necessary and to check online for updates



An information sheet at Kings Cross station on Monday advising passengers on the dates of industrial action. Photograph: Isabel Infantes/AFP/Getty Images

[Gwyn Topham](#) *Transport correspondent*

[@GwynTopham](#)

Tue 3 Jan 2023 00.00 EST Last modified on Fri 6 Jan 2023 09.45 EST

The first of five consecutive days of national rail strikes have begun, closing much of Britain's rail network and leaving only a skeleton service for commuters on urban and intercity lines.

Passengers were being urged to attempt to travel only if necessary, with about 20% of trains expected to run and scheduled hours of operation cut back to between 7.30am and 6.30pm.

Members of the Rail, Maritime and [Transport](#) union at Network Rail and 14 train operators are striking for two 48-hour periods, starting on Tuesday and again from Friday.

With signalling staff among the 40,000 [RMT](#) members on strike, much of the railway in Wales, Scotland and less populous regions of England will not run at all, while service frequencies will typically be reduced to one train an hour on major routes.

Meanwhile, train drivers in the [Aslef union will strike](#) for 24 hours on the intervening day. The Aslef action on Thursday will spell even more disruption, with no trains at all across some of the 15 operators where drivers are on strike, including Southeastern, Thameslink, Avanti and TransPennine Express.

Network Rail has advised people to travel only if absolutely necessary throughout the week and to check online for updates on when services will run.

This week's strikes come after three weeks of industrial action that severely disrupted the railway over the festive period, including an overtime ban that ended on Monday night that hit certain train operators hard.

Rishi Sunak's anti-strike laws may be illegal, says RMT chief – video

The latest action comes with no immediate resolution in sight to the long-running row over pay, jobs and working conditions on the railway. Unions claimed on Monday that rail companies [were “in despair” over the government’s handling of the pay dispute](#), with the Treasury now effectively controlling what settlement can be made.

Mick Lynch, the RMT general secretary, [said there had been “radio silence”](#) from the government since a [meeting in mid-December](#).

He added: “They keep saying that they’re facilitating a deal. And I think it’s absolutely the opposite to that.

“The executives who run the industry day on day are in despair at what the government is making them say in these talks.”

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The Department for Transport rejected Lynch’s claims, saying the rail minister had remained in regular contact with all parties and the government had taken significant steps to enable a deal.

A spokesperson said: “Unions should step back from this strike action so we can start 2023 by ending this damaging dispute.”

The Rail Delivery Group, which represents train operators, apologised to passengers for what it called “unnecessary and damaging disruption”, warning that the dispute would only be resolved by agreeing reforms to working arrangements.

A landslide on the west coast main line has added to disruption for passengers travelling to and from Scotland. Services will not operate north of Carlisle to Glasgow until at least Thursday while engineers tackle the damage.

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[Business live](#)Business

RMT chief threatens rail strikes could continue beyond May – as it happened

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2023.01.03 - Spotlight

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52 acts of kindness: how to spread joy in every week of 2023



Planting the seeds of happiness. Illustration: Marcos Montiel at Synergy/The Guardian

Whether fostering kittens, donating blood or delivering boxes of biscuits to striking workers, there has never been a better time to help out. And it will improve your life too



[Emma Beddington](#)

Tue 3 Jan 2023 01.00 EST Last modified on Thu 5 Jan 2023 01.37 EST

Navel-gazing is always a danger at this time of year – and not just to admire the results of a two-week assault on the fridge. Indoctrinated by “new year, new you” messaging, we fixate on self-optimisation: one hand dredging the Celebrations tub and the other searching online for “hot yoga near me” or “should I read Ulysses?”

But there is another way to be better: by doing something kind. This doesn’t mean giving money (welcome though that always is), it’s about giving your time, empathy, support and thought – finding ways to help the people around you.

To make this list of suggestions, I explored acts of kindness given and received, acutely needed and fondly remembered, with Guardian readers, charities, friends and family, marvelling at how much quietly industrious kindness goes on around us. I hope there is something for everyone: some require commitment; others need nothing more than the ability to boil a

kettle. But what all these acts have in common is that they will make you feel good: research shows that [being kind make us happier](#). So you can help others *and* feel better yourself all at once. You won't get that kind of win-win from a gym membership.

1. Give blood

Each donation can save up to three lives and you get free biscuits. Everyone eligible is welcome, but “we urgently need more blood donors of black heritage”, says Rob Knowles of NHS Blood and Transplant (they are more likely to be able to help the increasing number of patients with [sickle cell disease](#)). Sign up at [blood.co.uk](#), call 0300 1232323 or use the NHS Blood app. If you can't get an appointment immediately, don't worry: your donation will be vital whenever it's given. To donate quickly, the best appointment availability is at the 25 [permanent donor centres](#) across the UK.

2. Walk a dog

The Cinnamon Trust provides support for elderly and terminally ill people who need urgent help to walk their pets so they can keep them. Check the map at [cinnamon.org.uk](#), register as a volunteer and you will be ready when help is needed in your area.

3. Buy a Big Issue when you can – but also talk to your seller

Generally, [having a chat with someone on the streets](#) is a nice thing to do and often appreciated. It needn't be anything heavy: ask how their day is going and if there is anything they would like or need help with. Some people want to chat, some don't – just be respectful. If a homeless person tells you they are having difficulty accessing medical facilities or with other practical issues, the Big Issue suggests alerting [StreetLink](#), which connects rough sleepers with services they need.

4. Target your support for food banks

On top of the obvious non-perishable foods, the Trussell Trust says donations of toiletries, laundry and washing-up stuff, baby supplies and sanitary towels and tampons are always welcome. The best way to support food banks, though, is to find out what they need from day to day. I follow my local, [the Collective Sharehouse](#), on Instagram, where it posts requests for urgent help. Remember, you can donate time as well as goods: “Food banks are busier than ever and very grateful to anyone who can spare a few hours on a regular basis,” says Ellie Lambert of the Trussell Trust. Help can include picking up or unpacking corporate donations, delivering to most in-need clients and even assistance with social media.



Sugar water can work wonders for tired bees. Illustration: Marcos Montiel at Synergy/The Guardian

5. Bee prepared

Learn to revive a tired or struggling bee. If it's wet, put it in the sun; otherwise deposit it on a high-nectar flower such as buddleia or sunflower, wait a while and if that hasn't helped, offer a little sugar water (two tablespoons of white granulated sugar to one tablespoon of water, left on a spoon or in an eggcup).

6. Go guerrilla gardening

Inspired by the [Incredible Edibles](#) movement, create a “propaganda bed” – an easily accessible pot or bed planted with herbs and vegetables for people to help themselves. Label it so passersby know what’s what, and that it’s all free.

7. Give a coat to Calais

During winter, [Care4Calais](#) needs coats for refugees in northern France, where 2,000-plus sleep rough. If you have a warm coat in reasonable condition, find a drop off point and pass it on to someone who needs it.

8. Repair something

[Repair cafes](#) are booming and, as the BBC One series The Repair Shop shows, they can be a great source of joy. If you are handy with a sewing needle, bikes, carpentry, electricals or computers, your local repair cafe would almost certainly be delighted to have your help. If there isn’t one locally, why not start one?

9. Be a bin hero

Full? Take it out rather than leaving it for someone else in your home. Emptied? Take it in. It’s scientifically impossible to be anything other than thrilled when someone else deals with the bins.

10. Help prisoners with reading

About 50% of people in UK prisons struggle with reading. [The Shannon Trust](#) helps them to help one another throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland. “Our prison volunteers train and support prisoner mentors to work one-to-one with learners,” says Karen Ryan, director of prison delivery.

At the moment, the trust particularly needs volunteers in central and eastern England. There is training and support and you are accompanied on your first prison visits. “We know volunteering in a prison setting isn’t for everyone,” Ryan says, “but we also have roles in the community to help

people directly with learning or to help our area teams with administration and data collection.”



Green fingers can help the whole community. Illustration: Marcos Montiel at Synergy/The Guardian

11. Garden

You might know someone who could do with a hand with the heavy stuff. Otherwise consider helping [Groundwork's Green Aiders](#), which provides a one-off cleanup service for older, vulnerable and disabled people with overgrown gardens.

12. Take pictures

If you see someone in contortions, trying to take a selfie, offer to take a photo.

13. Be a Sense virtual buddy

[Sense](#), a charity for deafblind people and others with complex disabilities, organises volunteers to phone or video call disabled people to fight isolation and loneliness. Volunteers are supported for their first sessions and buddies

find stuff to do they both enjoy – cooking, craft, watching a film, playing games ...

14. Pay a compliment

“You’re looking nice,” is good. “You have great skin” or “I love your shoes” is better. Someone once told me I had “cute ears” and I treasured it for years.

15. Join a stem-cell donor registry

Only 30% of blood cancer patients find family donors, meaning more donors are needed, especially male and minority ethnic ones. Existing blood donors can ask to join the NHS register during their next donation. Blood cancer charities [DKMS](#) and [Anthony Nolan](#) also have their own registers. Check online if you are eligible to donate, order a free cheek swab kit, swab and return. You will be added to the register and contacted if there’s a match.

16. Make a mixtape

Give someone a curated Spotify or YouTube playlist of stuff you think they would like.

17. Volunteer in a shelter

Francesca helps out at [Hackney winter night shelter](#) in east London. “Our role is to create a welcoming space for guests,” she says. “We volunteer in three-hour shifts and it’s mainly cooking breakfasts or meals, having a chat, keeping the place tidy etc. The support the guests get is brilliant, and the lively and lovely community of volunteers do a lot in terms of fundraising. It is really important to us that we are able to help out, and in our local community.”

18. Become a trustee

All charities need trustees and many struggle to find them. Whatever your skill set, you almost certainly have something to contribute to a local charity.

It's rarely a major time commitment – a few hours every few months at most – and a great way to get more involved in your community. Ask around or check the vacancies at reachvolunteering.org.uk.

19. Be the office secret Santa all year round

Leave a box of biscuits or a cake in the kitchen, or put bars of chocolate on your colleagues' desks anonymously, then secretly enjoy the happy buzz it creates.



Sick critters need your help! Illustration: Marcos Montiel at Synergy/The Guardian

20. Be an animal ambulance

RSPCA animal rescue volunteers collect sick, injured or orphaned birds and small mammals and take them to vets, rehabilitation or wildlife centres, and help out with other animal transport jobs. “It’s a unique opportunity to help animals,” says Lucy Bailey of the RSPCA. Volunteers need to have access to a vehicle and a smartphone – all other kit and training is provided. Find out more at rspca.org.uk.

21. Hit the apps

Apps and sites such as Next Door, Buy Nothing, Freecycle and Olio are easy ways to give away stuff you don't need but others in your area might. People also post requests for things they need, or for other assistance: lifts, gardening help, local recommendations ... It's enormously satisfying when you can help out.

22. Foster an animal

Paula fostered cats for several years. "We had to spend a lot of time building trust and gently playing," she says. "It could be tricky at times – blood was drawn! – but the breakthrough moments were lovely." It was sad when cats moved on, she says, but adds: "I still get photos of the cats in their new homes. I love to see them lounging, looked relaxed and in charge of the house."

To foster cats, dogs, or other animals for the [RSPCA](#), you need to be 18 and own your home, or have permission from your landlord to have pets, and be able to transport your foster animal to vet appointments.

23. Feed pickets

Strikers need solidarity to keep feeling positive: show yours with a box of biscuits or a round of hot drinks.

24. Answer phones at ChildLine

Children have had an especially tough few years, and four hours a week answering calls can make a huge difference. The recruitment process is quite lengthy and careful: there is training and assessment, followed by two observed shifts and one mentored one before potential volunteers find out if they are a good fit. It's worth it. "I was really nervous on my first shift, but also loved it, feeling good to be even a small part of being there for a young person wanting to talk," a recent recruit tells me. "There can be difficult and upsetting contacts, but volunteers are always supported by experienced supervisors. It's not all doom and gloom, and when a young person says:

‘Thanks for listening and not judging,’ or ‘I hadn’t thought of it like that’, I feel such a high.”

25. Help with reading in schools

Organisations such as [Schoolreaders](#) and [Beanstalk](#) match volunteers with schools to listen to children reading, usually focused in areas with high literacy needs. You need to be 18 or over with a good grasp of English. If travelling is tricky, you can provide reading support online by volunteering with [Bookmark](#).

26. Give old tools a new home

The charity Tools With a Mission needs used tools, which it reconditions and sends to the developing world to help people develop skills and livelihoods. Check the list of what is needed at twam.uk.



Make a new friend over the phone. Illustration: Marcos Montiel at Synergy/The Guardian

27. Chat to an older person

[Age UK's telephone befriending service](#) will match you with an older person who would enjoy a 30-minute chat once a week.

28. Write a postcard

Find some postcards – you probably have a pile lying around somewhere – and write to people you haven't spoken to for a while. Tell them you are thinking of them, share a memory or thank them for something they did for you.

29. Become a mental-health first aider

Given the number of hours most of us spend at work, many mental health crises occur there. Knowing there is someone available who can offer confidential support can make all the difference, so ask your employer if you can train as a [workplace mental health first aider](#).

30. Give as you shop

Sign up to [easyfundraising.org.uk](#) and whenever you shop online, many big companies (including major supermarkets, Amazon, eBay and Trainline) will donate a portion of your spend to charity. It doesn't cost you anything.

31. Clean up

Is a friend or acquaintance dealing with the pre- or post-move slog or just struggling to keep on top of things? Offer to help them declutter or clean while they get on with other tasks.

32. Be a professional mentor

Help out people new to your job, or wanting to get started. It doesn't have to be formal – a chat at the tea point and the offer of support can be huge – but there are also organisations that can match you up, such as [Arts Emergency](#), aimed at young people who want to work in the arts, and [Meet a Mentor](#) in the tech sector.

33. Or mentor a child

Become a “Big” for [Big Brother Big Sister](#) and spend time with a seven- to 12-year-old who could do with a supportive figure in their life once a week. Or, if you are in London, Manchester or Liverpool, the charity [Reach Out](#) needs after-school mentors for primary and secondary school pupils.

34. Be a gig buddy

As a gig buddy, you will accompany someone with autism or a learning disability to concerts or other fun events, making their experience smoother and less stressful than it might be otherwise. The project started in Brighton, but there are now lots of [Gig Buddy projects](#) around the UK.

35. Learn CPR

The British Heart Foundation estimates there are approximately 30,000 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests each year; knowing what to do if you encounter one can mean the difference between life and death. Take 15 minutes and do the BHF’s [free online training course](#).

36. Be a breastfeeding peer supporter

Just because it’s natural doesn’t mean breastfeeding is easy for all new mothers: encouragement and advice from someone who has been there can help. You can train to be a peer supporter with the [Breastfeeding Network](#).



Put your skills to good use. Illustration: Marcos Montiel at Synergy/The Guardian

37. Try tutoring

[Action Tutoring](#) works to close the attainment gap for disadvantaged children. “I’d wholeheartedly recommend applying,” says Laura, who volunteered. “My 10-year-old tutees were a delight – sparky and fun. I looked forward to seeing them every week, hearing their news and watching their skills and confidence grow. Best of all, I got an email at the end of the programme to let me know how they had got on in their Sats – they had aced them.” You will need a B grade at A-level in English or maths (or a relevant degree). Training and resources are provided and a helpful coordinator is just a text or phone call away.

38. Drive kindly

If you’re sure it’s safe, flash your lights or wave your hand at someone waiting to cross the road in front of you.

39. Use your language skills

Refugee charities often need volunteer interpreters. [Medical Justice](#), which works to ensure detainees' health rights are respected, needs people with a range of languages from Albanian to Vietnamese at immigration removal centres across the UK.

40. Buy coffee for a stranger

Many cafes offer a “pay it forward” system, where you can buy an extra coffee for someone (an especially good way to support homeless people). Alternatively, just pay for the person behind you without them knowing, then disappear, fairy godmother style.

41. Give text help

Shout (giveusashout.org) is a confidential text messaging service supporting children and adults in distress – not everyone is comfortable with making a phone call. Volunteers are trained and receive coaching and support. You only need to commit to one shift, usually two to four hours, from home each week.

42. Give plasma or platelets

If you are near Birmingham, Reading or Twickenham, you can donate plasma – vital for people with weakened immune systems and other conditions. Unlike blood, you can donate once a fortnight: see blood.co.uk.

Also consider donating platelets. “The NHS relies on a very small group of platelet donors to keep this special healing agent in good supply,” says Rob Knowles, of NHS Blood and Transplant. “Male blood donors with good veins who are happy to take a little longer when they donate typically graduate to platelet donations and our staff are always happy to talk to donors about making the switch.” [Existing type-A blood donors](#) are particularly in demand for platelets at the moment.

43. Litter pick

There are organised litter picks everywhere – a nice way to meet people in your community who are also enraged by rubbish – but there is nothing stopping you from heading out with a binbag and gloves. The humorist David Sedaris has picked so much litter that he had [a bin lorry named in his honour](#): that could be you.

44. Help asylum seekers to adapt

“We see people in our asylum system face incredible challenges in the face of hostile government policy. But we’re always heartened by the public’s seemingly limitless generosity and desire to help,” says Tim Naor Hilton, Refugee Action’s chief executive. “Volunteers are the lifeblood of Refugee Action. People can help our clients to access asylum support and accommodation to make sure they have food and a roof over their head, and mentor refugees to help them find work and support with English, among other opportunities.” Roles are posted at refugee-action.org.uk or sign up for volunteer alerts.

45. Look after delivery drivers

Ask delivery people if they would like a drink, or to use your loo – and tip food riders if you can.

46. Use your car for good

Assuage your climate guilt by [delivering meals on wheels](#), driving people to hospital appointments, picking up shoes for [Sal’s Shoes](#) (which sends shoes to children who need them), or dropping off donations for the hygiene charity [Beauty Banks](#). Or just text your neighbours when you are going to the dump in case they need to get rid of anything you could drop off.

47. Join a Dementia Adventure

[Dementia Adventure](#) organises supported holidays for people with dementia and their carers, giving them fun experiences and respite. Volunteers are essential to these events, to provide practical support and company.

48. Become a puppy socialiser

[Support Dogs](#) needs homes for future canine helpers for people with autism, epilepsy and other disabilities until the dogs start training at 14 months. [Guide Dogs for the Blind](#) and [Hearing Dogs](#) need puppy care, too.

49. Support your local library

Libraries are a lifeline all year, but in this winter of much bigger energy bills, they are doubling up as welcoming warm spaces. To keep doing this, they need help: ask what you can do at your library.

50. Be a digital coach

The relentless shift online has left many behind. Do you know someone who might need help with Google, setting up a smartphone or an email account, or making web-based payments?

51. Cook something

Message someone who might welcome a hot meal to say that you have made too much and could they take some off your hands – if you frame it as a favour to you, they may be more likely to say yes.

52. Take the public transport load off

It's old school, but giving a hand to carry a bag, find a trolley or lift a pushchair can instantly make someone's journey marginally less stressful. Offering to distract a toddler for a few seconds can feel more awkward, but when my kids were little that sometimes averted total meltdown (mine and theirs).

This article was amended on 4 January 2023 to correct the phone number for blood donations.

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[Television](#)

Stonehouse story ‘far more fascinating’ than TV drama suggests, relative says

Great-nephew of MP who faked death in 1974 says there was ‘psychological grooming’ by Czech spies but no honeytrap



John Stonehouse, pictured in August 1975, was sentenced at the Old Bailey to seven years in prison for fraud, theft and deception. Photograph: Getty Images

[Harriet Sherwood](#) *Arts and culture correspondent*

Tue 3 Jan 2023 01.00 EST Last modified on Thu 5 Jan 2023 01.38 EST

The true story of John Stonehouse’s entanglement with espionage and faked death was far more fascinating than the television drama airing this week, according to his great-nephew Julian Hayes.

Hayes, who has clear childhood memories of Stonehouse and the impact of his disappearance in 1974 on the family, said little of the dramatised version

was strictly factual. A honeytrap executed by the Czech secret services has been substituted for the real-life “slow insidious grooming” of the [Labour](#) MP for Wednesbury and Walsall North, he said.

“If you’d written the Stonehouse story as fiction, it would be completely unbelievable. There’s no way on earth that anybody would swallow it as a plot line. It’s a classic case of truth being stranger than fiction.”

Hayes, a lawyer, saw a preview of the first episode of the three-part drama and read the scripts as part of a consultation. “It says it’s based on a true story, and that’s really as far as it goes. Most of the peripheral characters are made up, and very little is factually correct,” he said.

At a meeting with the producers, he expressed “certain views” about the drama. “I don’t think it’s been changed dramatically,” he said.

The ITV show stars the real-life married couple Matthew Macfadyen as Stonehouse and Keeley Hawes as Barbara, who was married to the disgraced Labour MP and former cabinet minister at the time of his disappearance. The script was written by John Preston, whose credits include *A Very English Scandal*, about the Jeremy Thorpe affair, which became a TV drama starring Hugh Grant, and *The Dig*, about the archaeological site Sutton Hoo, which was made into a 2021 film starring Ralph Fiennes and Carey Mulligan.

Stonehouse was a member of Harold Wilson’s cabinet as aviation minister and postmaster general, but his career crashed when he was named in 1969 as an agent of the Czech secret service. His problems were compounded by worsening financial troubles and an affair with his secretary, Sheila Buckley.

After stealing the identities of two deceased men in his constituency to create fake passports, Stonehouse flew to Miami, checked into the Fontainebleau hotel and went for a swim, leaving a pile of clothes on the beach. After he failed to return, he was presumed drowned, leaving a wife and three children.



Keeley Hawes and Matthew Macfadyen play Barbara and John Stonehouse, with Emer Heatley as John's lover, Sheila Buckley, in ITV's *Stonehouse*. Photograph: ITV

Five weeks later, he was arrested in Australia, where he had been joined by his lover. Stonehouse was later sentenced at the Old Bailey to seven years in prison for fraud, theft and deception.

Hayes, whose biography of his great-uncle, *Stonehouse: Cabinet Minister, Fraudster, Spy*, was published in 2021, said the TV drama misrepresented how the politician became embroiled with the Czech secret services.

“The drama portrays a honeytrap, but in fact they psychologically groomed him over a period of time. There was no sex involved.

“A Czech agent befriended him and worked on him over lunches and dinners. If they'd said, ‘John, we'd like you to spy for us’, he'd have said no. But a slow insidious step-by-step persuasion to cooperate worked.

“He was not a spy in the sense of James Bond or the novels of John Le Carré. But he provided the Czechs with information and got a lot of money from them. He knew what he was doing.”

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Hayes said he pored over detailed files in Czech archives while researching his biography. “That’s why I’m quite certain that a honeytrap was never on the agenda,” he said. “They massaged his ego and gained his trust.”

Stonehouse’s daughter, Julia, dismissed the spy claims in her own book, *John Stonehouse, My Father*, published in 2021. “She puts his behaviour down to depression, breakdown and use of prescription drugs,” said Hayes.

“I fully understand and sympathise with why she’s made that case. But it doesn’t stand up to scrutiny – and it certainly wasn’t believed by the jury in his trial.”

Hayes was nine years old when Stonehouse faked his death. His father, Stonehouse’s nephew and business partner, later gave evidence against him in court.

“Stonehouse’s actions were the result of meticulous planning of the most premeditated nature – fake identities, false bank accounts and credit cards, taking money out of his businesses,” said Hayes. “He knew that his wife and children would believe he was dead. It was utterly callous and heartless.”

ITV said: “Based on years of extensive research, the writer John Preston dramatised the aspects that interested him most and has created a rich, colourful and poignant account of an unforgettable politician.”

Stonehouse is available on ITVX. A documentary, The Real Stonehouse, is on ITV1 at 9pm on 5 January

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Jake Wightman: ‘I’d never seen my dad break the third wall and say anything about me’

[Donald McRae](#)



Jake Wightman reflects on a year in which he rose from relative obscurity to win a world title and be included on the shortlist for Sports Personality of the Year. Photograph: Alicia Canter/The Guardian

The 1500m world champion on his father's commentary during his victory, Ingebrigtsen's reaction and why he hid his twin's running spikes at school



[@donaldgmcræ](#)

Tue 3 Jan 2023 03.00 EST Last modified on Thu 5 Jan 2023 01.37 EST

“I’m glad I just said: ‘Oh my God!’” Jake Wightman suggests as he remembers his reaction when he crossed the line [to win the 1500m](#) in a stunning result at the world championships five months ago. “Imagine if I’d chosen to say something a lot worse. In that moment you could say anything, couldn’t you? I could have said: ‘What the fuck?’ and that would have been seen again and again.”

Wightman laughs when I point out that he could have become a permanent meme. “Exactly. Maybe I should have.”

The 28-year-old [made the shortlist](#) for BBC Sports Personality of the Year and his victory was a fleeting sensation on social media because his father, Geoff, [was the stadium commentator](#) at the World Athletics Championships in Eugene, Oregon. Footage of Geoff standing up while he commentated on the final stages of the race with exemplary professionalism, until he raised his arms after Jake won, went viral. When he became aware that his face filled the giant screen Geoff said, with understated emotion: “I have to tell you why the camera is on me. That’s my son. I coach him. And he’s the world champion.”

It's not every day you call a race in which your son wins GOLD... At the Athletics World Championships no less! ☐ 😊

Stadium announcer Geoff Wightman was on the mic in Eugene to call Jake's 1500m triumph ☐ [#BBCAthletics](#) [#WAC2022](#)
pic.twitter.com/Jv8FizMKOd

— BBC Sport (@BBCSport) [July 20, 2022](#)

The achievement of Jake, especially in holding off the [challenge of Jakob Ingebrigtsen](#), Norway’s usually impregnable Olympic champion, might have earned even more attention if he had said something colourful and profane when winning. But Wightman is realistic about the limited reach of athletics

and more interested in trying to articulate his emotions in that giddy moment.

“It’s surreal,” he says. “In Tokyo I was gutted that I couldn’t turn back the clock and do it again but the race was done [after he finished a [disappointing 10th in the Olympic final](#) in August 2021]. At the worlds, it meant I’d done it and no one could change it. Those feelings are at opposite ends of the spectrum. One was complete disappointment and the other was shock and euphoria. The moment I had dreamed of had actually happened.”



Jake Wightman reacts with the words ‘Oh my God!’ on winning the 1500m at the World Athletics Championships. Photograph: Carmen Mandato/Getty Images

His father, in his role as coach, had sharpened Wightman’s winning mentality. “I said to my dad the day before the race that, ‘because of Tokyo, I really want to get a medal here’,” Wightman recalls. “In Tokyo, part of me blowing up was because I wanted to stay with the leaders to give myself a chance of winning the Olympics. But if I’d hung back I’d have had a better chance of a medal. I said: ‘I don’t want to end up trying to win this and get nothing.’ He was like: ‘Yeah, but how often do you stand on a global final start line and try to win the thing?’ We decided I was going to try.

“Before the race I said: ‘If I’m there at the bell, I’m going to try to get to the front before the last 200m and see if I can hold on.’ The chances are so slim but I felt good and when I went past them on the back stretch I knew it was going to be close. Jakob has never been put in that position so you have no idea how he’s going to react. He might be even stronger and breeze past you, but I knew I’d have given myself a good shot.”

Quick Guide

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Thank you for your feedback.

What did Ingebrigtsen say to him after the race? “He tried to explain what he should have done. I listened and said: ‘Yeah, maybe, but you didn’t.’ He got bad press for an interview when he said something like: ‘It’s never nice losing to someone inferior to you.’ He beat me a month before in Oslo, really badly, but the main thing was that I beat him in the world’s final. He was actually very good to me. He kept saying: ‘You ran well.’ I hope I gained some respect.”

Wightman smiles wryly: “He didn’t lose again the rest of the season and the worst thing is that I poked the bear and he’s never going to let me get into that situation again. So I have to get even better and keep finishing quick.”

Ingebrigtsen's aura was dented but, as Wightman remarks, "his strength is seen as arrogance but it's just 100% confidence he's going to win every race. That's what makes him so dangerous because every time he wins he gets even more confident. He doesn't have bad races so to beat him you have to be perfect and that's probably why he was a bit of a sore loser against me. I'm sure I'll race him again before the worlds [in Hungary next August] and that will be exciting."

Steve Cram won the same race in 1983, and Sebastian Coe retained his Olympic title a year later, but the British production line of great 1500m runners dried up until Wightman's surprising breakthrough. He believes the [legacy of doping is a significant factor](#) in the lack of success for British middle-distance runners during a period spanning almost 40 years. "The 1990s and 2000s were pretty tainted for Brits, especially in my event, and there was probably a lot of cheating. It became unattainable for Brits to be able to mix it with [runners who doped] in those eras."

Is doping still an issue in track and field? "Yes. I've not seen anything obvious but there're always rumours about athletes and normally there's no smoke without fire. But I bet my house on being clean and in Britain we have always been brought up to play by the rules. I think the main thing is you can still beat [the dopers], even though I've always looked at it with rose-tinted glasses and felt that people I race against are clean. But it's likely that they're not all clean."



Jake Wightman with Oliver Hoare of Australia after the Tokyo 1500m Olympic final in 2021. The Briton finished a disappointing 10th, Hoare 11th. Photograph: Joe Giddens/AAP

Asked if it is inevitable that some of the leading 1500m runners are doping, Wightman says: “Yes. I wouldn’t want to put a percentage on it, but there must be at least two or three of the top 25. That’s just the way the numbers in the sport work, like the amount of people that get banned. There’s also the sad reality that people who are cheating will go their whole career without being caught. The lucky thing for me is that I don’t know anyone who’s cheating – therefore I don’t have any resentment. You always have suspicions and there will always be cheating but, like I said, we can still beat anyone, clean or dirty.”

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Wightman is already locked into midwinter training. He is a little rueful when he says: “I always thought that, if I ever won the Olympics or worlds, I’d love a sabbatical year. But you can’t do that in this sport. That’s the worst bit because you’ve worked so hard to get to that point but you then have to work even harder the next year to push on. But that’s what I want to do so it’s definitely a different motivation.”

He is typically honest when he says: “I don’t enjoy the training but I enjoy competing and trying to win. But to keep my hunger I train with guys that are very good at stuff that I’m not. It’s not a bad thing to get spanked by them. We did a hill session and this woman asked who we were. My mum said: ‘One of them won worlds in the summer.’ The lady was like: ‘Which one of you is world champion?’ When they pointed to me she said: ‘Oh, well done.’ But she’d just seen me running up this hill and finishing dead last. I’m now training with a group [of long-distance athletes] who can help make sure that next year is even better for me.”

His father remains his coach and they meet at least three times a week to work together. “At the worlds he was happy but as soon as I’d finished it, he was like: ‘Right, what’s next?’ So it’s now all about what can I do to win worlds again.”

The close bond between Wightman and his parents, both of whom were elite runners, was obvious at the worlds. Wightman admits he was moved because, “generally, my dad doesn’t show much emotion with my running. So to see that video that Kath [Merry, the former GB athlete] [filmed of him commentating](#) was really nice. I wouldn’t have known how he had reacted without seeing that. I know it was huge for him, both as a dad and a coach, to park that moment as the stadium announcer and be personal. I’d never seen him break the third wall and say anything about me as his son. The closest he’d get to it would be to crack a gag that I look like a milkman we once had.”

Wightman rolls his eyes. “I’m just so used to him commentating because he did it at our school race days. We also used to watch the British champs and sit with him in the commentary box. So when I started running at major championships I was so used to him commentating that it never seemed weird. It meant that I’ve never had a coach there because he’s always been working. So I’ve become very self-sufficient and it was also cool because, if I’d had a stinker, he wouldn’t even have seen it as he has to watch the front of the race. He’d have to ask me: ‘What happened, where did you come?’ I’d be like: ‘Good job you didn’t see it.’”



Jake Wightman takes a break from training at his home in south London. “I don’t enjoy the training but I enjoy competing and trying to win.”
Photograph: Alicia Canter/The Guardian

[His twin brother, Sam](#), used to be one of his closest rivals at school. Wightman remembers once nearly resorting to desperate lengths by hiding Sam’s spikes before they raced. His conscience won out and he returned them before his brother had even noticed. But he smiles when suggesting that Sam, who is an actor now, was similarly competitive when it came to school plays. “When we were in primary school I would never get a good part. One year the school play was The 12 Days of Christmas and the best part was the calling doves. There were four of them and then it went all the way down to the worst part, a piper, which got given to me. It was pretty

rubbish. Sam was one of the four calling birds and when they needed another they asked him: ‘Would Jake like to be a calling bird?’ I would have loved it but he said: ‘No.’”

Sam is staying over during the Christmas break and so Wightman calls him in to join our conversation. They are amusing and thoughtful company whether telling such anecdotes or reflecting on life as twins and the contrasting challenges of their different vocations. The brothers plan to start a podcast about being twins next year and, if their 10 minutes together with me is any guide, it will make for entertaining listening.

Wightman’s primary focus, of course, is to try to retain his world title and then chase Olympic gold in 2024. “To be Olympic champion is the one you dream of,” he says. “A sad thing is that the person on the street doesn’t have a clue what winning the worlds means. But everyone understands the Olympics. So it’s a much bigger deal and I’ve shown that I can beat the field I’ll face at the Olympics. That is the one thing that keeps my motivation so high.”

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The age of extinctionFarming

Three's a crowd: how farmers are cutting out the supermarkets

CrowdFarming network provides a one-stop shop to bring fresh produce to the customer's door



Sergio Quijada Domínguez: 'Normal distributors added a lot to the price.'
Photograph: Courtesy of CrowdFarming

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[Stephen Burgen](#) in Barcelona

Tue 3 Jan 2023 02.01 EST Last modified on Thu 5 Jan 2023 01.39 EST

Giving up police work to grow passion fruit might be considered an unconventional career move, but that is what Sergio Quijada Domínguez did when a hereditary heart condition forced him to retire at the age of 32 after 14 years in Spain's Guardia Civil.

Quijada, who has about 1,500 plants on his farm near Vélez-Málaga in southern Spain, found he was good at growing passion fruit – what he lacked was the knowhow to sell them.

“It was the tool I was missing,” he says. “I had my product and I wanted to sell it direct to the consumer but I had no way of doing that and normal distributors added a lot to the price.”

It was the man who delivered his cardboard packing cases who suggested he approach [CrowdFarming](#), a one-stop shop to handle administration and logistics and link customers directly with farmers.

CrowdFarming was founded in 2017 by orange farmer Gonzalo Úrculo and his brother Gabriel, who wanted to get a fair price for their produce by

cutting out the middleman. The site now hosts 182 farms in 12 countries with 500,000 consumers.

“In the conventional system, the supermarket decides the final selling price based on what the consumer is willing to pay,” says Gonzalo Úrculo. “This determines what supermarkets pay to their suppliers, which in turn have to deal with other intermediaries. At the very end of the chain we find farmers, for whom it’s a take-it-or-leave-it negotiation as they have no bargaining power and time is not on their side.”



Gonzalo and Gabriel Úrculo: ‘Our oranges are still cheaper than the average price for organic oranges in the countries we sell to.’ Photograph: Courtesy of CrowdFarming

He adds that by the time you buy an orange from a supermarket in northern [Europe](#) it has been travelling or been in storage for at least three weeks. But with CrowdFarming, in return for a direct relationship with the grower, the customer gets a better, fresher and often cheaper product.

“We only pick oranges when they’re wanted,” he says. “You send in your order, the next day we pick them and they’re with you within three days. Plus, I earn five times what I would on the open market. That said, our

oranges are still cheaper than the average price for organic oranges in the countries we sell to.”

Within three years of setting up the CrowdFarming website, Úrculo was able to quit his day job and concentrate on running the brothers’ organic orange farm in Valencia.

Their customers, mostly from northern Europe, like to visit the farm and when disease forced the brothers to replant 10,000 trees, someone came up with the idea of asking customers to adopt them. Within a year, the trees had all been paid for. Across the platform, 188,842 trees, plants or fields have been adopted.

Kelly Go worked with CrowdFarming right from the start when she set up her Auro Chocolate business in the Philippines. She buys cocoa beans from a series of cooperatives and carries out the fermentation and drying process before going on to make chocolate.

“We pay farmers between 30-50% above the commodity market price,” says Go. “Compared to a west African farmer, our farmers are earning almost double. We also pay for their certification as organic farmers. Once they’re certified they get an additional premium. We also run training programmes and help farmers to enter competitions in order to gain more recognition.”

Auro produces about a tonne of chocolate a day and sells about 70% of it in the Philippines. In common with others on the CrowdFarming platform, her biggest international client is Germany, where demand for organically produced goods is high.

In Cammarata, in central Sicily, Nicola De Gregorio uses ancient grain varieties to produce his Fastuchera handmade pasta. The grain harvested from the traditional Sicilian tumminia and russulidda varieties is milled and the pasta dried in the traditional way over the course of several days, unlike conventional pasta which is dried quickly, at high temperatures.

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De Gregorio joined the CrowdFarming platform in 2019 and says “it helped me get through Covid by having a direct relationship with clients”.

Most of Fastuchera’s customers are in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, and De Gregorio says they often drop by to visit the farm, especially those who have adopted wheatfields.

“People are prepared to pay more because they know they are supporting a form of agriculture that minimises environmental impact and where the emphasis is on quality,” he says.



Nicola De Gregorio: ‘People are prepared to pay more for quality.’
Photograph: Enzo Fratalia/Courtesy of CrowdFarming

Sustainable farming is something Quijada – who sells his passion fruit mainly to customers in Belgium, France and Germany – also values and he

says the platform shares that philosophy.

As well as facilitating contact between growers and consumers, CrowdFarming minimises environmental impact by keeping transportation to a minimum.

“Of course, I can’t compete with Colombia or Vietnam where passion fruit grow wild, but Europe is big – big enough to buy all the passion fruits or avocados or mangoes that we grow in Spain,” says Quijada.

In the traditional supply chain, farmers sell to intermediaries, who transport the produce to their storage depots and then sell the products to a supermarket chain, which distributes them to local stores. Then the consumer has to travel to the supermarket. CrowdFarming ships direct from the farmer to the consumer and the platform ensures that different orders to the same destination are grouped together so trucks are always full.

The system is a win-win for producers and consumers and for the environment, says Úrculo. “Buying food directly from farmers is the most powerful everyday act available to anyone to create a positive social and environmental impact,” he says.

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2023.01.03 - Opinion

- Britain's transport system is a creaking misery – and an easy win for Keir Starmer
- What would you do to support the NHS? My mother gave up her festive tippie
- It's a papal version of Succession: at Benedict XVI's funeral, the plotting will begin
- Teaching philosophy in a children's prison has shown me the meaning of anger

creaking infrastructure, staff shortages and a daily dose of long delays and routine cancellations. For those of us who commute between northern cities by train, getting to work in decent time has become a game of chance. Others have become used to missing medical appointments and elderly relatives becoming isolated.

It's time Labour made a bold stance on transport, as part of its commitment to levelling up and transitioning to net zero. There is plenty of evidence to lay bare the regional inequality in transport spending. We know that if the north had received the same transport investment as London in the decade between 2009 and 2019, it would have received [£86bn more](#) than it did.

And yet transport is usually the area of investment where politicians feel most comfortable. Within government, the transport models that sit behind spending decisions are considered the “gold standard”, reassuring ministers that investment will result in economic returns. Investing in transport is an opportunity for some visible “hard hat” progress, and even the [Treasury agrees](#) that efficient transport networks are the backbone of any economy. Investing in transport pays for itself – [Transport for the North](#) estimates that £70bn of investment in the north's [strategic transport plan](#) could contribute an additional £100bn in economic growth.

But it turns out that nothing has been certain in politics in 2022. Plans for HS2 and a full commitment to Northern Powerhouse Rail – comprising a new line from Liverpool through Bradford to Hull – have become political footballs, [thrown and dropped](#) by successive prime ministers.

To break the current cycle of transport misery, Labour first must publicly commit to the principle that regional growth is our route back to national growth. The alternative is a dated economic narrative that supports spending in the places that are already more productive, like the south-east of England. As we've seen, this overheats the housing market, increases congestion and pollution thanks to more cars on the road, and will not fairly or sustainably change our country's economic fortunes. Transport is a key driver of regional growth, and better transport would help communities in the north prosper.

The next step for Labour would be to supercharge the work of their people already in power. The party has so far shied away from institutionalising the full force of its [metro mayors](#) across the country. At the gift of the government of the day, metro mayors are more often provided with capital budgets for transport, but less often provided with revenue to help reduce public transport fares. Capital investments pay for building or maintaining assets, while revenue spending is for day-to-day expenditure.



A Northern train at Stockport station in November. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

Despite this, there has been some progress at the local level already. Metro mayors, including Andy Burnham in Greater Manchester, introduced a [£2 cap on single bus journeys](#) earlier this year. Downing Street has now [followed suit](#). Labour should support metro mayors and local transport authorities by providing them with greater flexibility to choose between capital and revenue spend, depending on local priorities, and financially support them to be [bolder on reduced fares](#) on an ongoing basis, including daily tickets caps. Encouraging the public back on to public transport is also critical for reaching net zero goals.

Labour must also get behind bus franchising at the local level – which would enable metro mayors to regulate a fragmented privatised system – and

facilitate the rollout of the same approach in areas that don't have a metro mayor. Where providers are failing, be it bus or rail, [Labour](#) must be clear that there will be no dodging of fines, no bonuses, and that contracts will be at risk.

For large-scale inter-city transport, the suggestion for Labour is simple. Commit to the proposed plans for HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail in full to increase connectivity and capacity across the north. This would be a critical way of boosting both private and additional public investment in the north. The [“red wall” voters](#) who are losing trust in the government's attempts to level up will no doubt take note, too.

The dreaded train fare rises will kick in in March. Against a backdrop of fundamentally flawed train services, unaffordable bus fares and “performance” bonuses for the companies entrusted with running our public infrastructure, fare rises will be hard to stomach for those of us living and working in the north.

A simple backbone of infrastructure stretching from north to south and east to west should be the basic starting point. Following through on promises to invest, paying hardworking staff properly, and prioritising passengers above profit are all necessary and possible. If Labour wants to jump ahead on levelling up and prioritise plans on net zero, getting our basic transport infrastructure right has surely got to be the first step.

- Zoë Billingham is the director of the thinktank IPPR North

[OpinionNHS](#)

What would you do to support the NHS? My mother gave up her festive tippie

[Zoe Williams](#)



From refusing a whisky to not having her cataracts done, my mother's quality of life has been irrevocably reduced by the party that has whittled away our health service



When did a drink among friends become a risk too far? Photograph: Krisanapong Detraphiphat/Getty Images

Tue 3 Jan 2023 02.00 EST Last modified on Thu 5 Jan 2023 01.39 EST

It was the very tail end of the holiday season, and I was trying to make my mother drink whisky, partly – no, sorry, entirely – because I bought it for her and I wanted to drink it. While I am intensely relaxed about drinking alone, I still have a faint cultural taboo about drinking someone else's present in front of them. I should have also bought her a jigsaw or something.

She wouldn't, because she didn't want to fall over and end up in A&E. God knows I don't want her to end up there, either, but whisky the way she drinks it – in minuscule amounts, topped up with boiling water like a Lemsip – could no more topple a person over than a gusty wind. I came at this point forcefully, from many different directions, but she wouldn't budge and we resolved it by finding other whisky for me to drink that was a present from someone else.

The list of things she won't do because she doesn't want to put additional pressure on the [NHS](#) also includes: having her cataracts done; getting a duck out of an oven; using sharp knives.

The entirely human-made crisis in the health service has reduced her quality of life by, conservatively, about 85%, and she is at its very periphery, a person who hasn't even had to use it. Track inwards through the concentric circles – people with chronic conditions, people with accident-prone small children (which is all small children), people in high-density housing during a flu season, people who have to be in A&E because they work there – and the national stress level is too intense to wrap your head around.

This is all part of the Tory gameplan, people used to say: reduce the NHS to a state of unworkability, then shrug and say, “Well, plainly it doesn't work.” It sounded devilish cunning at the beginning of their ill-begotten rule, but, as it reaches its finale, sensible people are coming to a different, more obvious, conclusion: it's broken because they broke it. We don't need to give up on socialised health care. We need to give up on Conservative governments.

- Zoe Williams is a Guardian columnist
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[OpinionCatholicism](#)

It's a papal version of Succession: at Benedict XVI's funeral, the plotting will begin

[Catherine Pepinster](#)

Cardinals are already thinking about a successor to Pope Francis – and the conservative faction may aspire to someone more traditional



‘There are some in the Roman Catholic church who would dearly love another pope to be elected very soon.’ Benedict XVI (left) and Pope Francis in 2015. Photograph: L’Osservatore Romano/EPA

Tue 3 Jan 2023 03.00 ESTLast modified on Tue 3 Jan 2023 14.33 EST

Airlines usually upgrade cardinals to first class and offer them champagne. But when the leaders of the Roman Catholic church fly into Rome’s Fiumicino airport this week for the funeral of the [former pope Benedict XVI](#), they may well forgo the fizz as a sign of their mourning. It’s hard to

imagine, though, that they will refrain from engaging in the whispers and the politicking that is so typical of a gathering of top Catholic prelates. The funeral will be a time to remember and mourn Benedict – but the plotting that will take place may resemble an episode of [Succession](#).

Benedict was a renowned theologian and an enforcer of Catholic doctrine who earned the nickname “God’s rottweiler” for his pursuit of those he thought errant. He was a hero to conservative Catholics, but he will be most remembered for his dramatic resignation in 2013 – the first pope in 600 years to quit rather than die in office. He pleaded physical frailty. “Having before God examined my conscience over and over, I have come to the certain knowledge that my strength, due to the burdens of age, is no longer suitable for properly administering the Petrine office,” he wrote, but he lasted almost another 10 years before dying at the age of 95 on New Year’s Eve.

When a pope dies in office, cardinals come from across the globe to bury him and elect his successor. This time, of course, there is no need to do so. There is already a pope – Francis, the man picked in 2013 to succeed him. But when he leads Benedict’s funeral on 5 January, the cardinals may well wonder if they will be back in Rome soon for another conclave. At 86, Francis himself is already physically frail. He lost part of a lung when young, had bowel surgery in 2021 and since May has used a wheelchair in public. He recently quipped that a wheelchair was not an issue for a pope – “One governs with the head, not the knee” – but also revealed that he had a signed resignation letter, deposited with the Vatican’s secretary of state, that could be accepted if he became incapacitated.

There are some in the Roman Catholic church who would dearly love another pope to be elected very soon. While Francis and Benedict might not have been quite the buddies they appeared to become in the humorous Netflix account of their relationship, 2019’s *The Two Popes*, they did manage a cordial engagement. But that cordiality is not shared by everyone.

Certain followers of Benedict who asserted that all Catholics should be utterly loyal to a pope when he sat on the throne of Peter have shown no such fidelity to Francis, and have constantly criticised his efforts at reform.

They particularly objected to his reversal of Benedict's relaxation on the use of the old Latin rite mass, which had effectively been banned from the 1960s, and were horrified by Francis's acceptance of indigenous culture blending into Catholic ritual. Matters [reached a head in 2019](#) when Francis called a synod in Rome on the Amazon region, and agreed statues of the Pachamama, a figure described as both a native fertility image and Our Lady of the Amazon, could be displayed during mass. Two arch-conservative men took the statues and threw them in the Tiber river, saying "they do not belong in a Catholic church".

These are extreme examples of the divisions in the Roman Catholic church, divisions that can lead to healthy dialogue over the importance of both tradition and change, or at least an evolution of theology. In other cases they become toxic.

Benedict will be remembered for striving to pull the Roman Catholic church back towards tradition and even the restoration of discarded ritual, such as the old Latin mass. He will also be remembered for his condemnation of what he called the "dictatorship of relativism", in which definitive values are abandoned and individuals focus on satisfying their own desires.

Francis has opted for reform, striving to make the Roman Catholic church a more inclusive place that engages the laity more fully in its life. The tensions between these two notions of the church will be at the heart of any discussions about the future of a faith shared by billions around the globe.

The official line of the Roman Catholic church is that when the cardinals enter the conclave to elect a new pope, the Holy Spirit guides them in prayer to find the right candidate. He certainly gets a helping hand: there are plenty of prelates keen to ensure their man is chosen. As well as the conclave itself, there are formal gatherings before it, where issues of the day are discussed. But behind closed doors there are other sessions, too, where lobbying goes on.

In 2005, when John Paul II died, the conservatives were well-organised and encouraged the voting members of the College of Cardinals – those under 80 – to pick Joseph Ratzinger, who took the name [Pope Benedict XVI](#). When Benedict quit eight years later, the liberals were better organised. One group

they targeted were the cardinals from developing countries. A reception was held for Commonwealth cardinals in the first week of March 2013, in the British embassy to the Holy See, where Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, the then archbishop of Westminster, addressed them. He spoke about his good friend Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio of Buenos Aires, advocating that the Argentinian become pope. On 13 March, the man who took as his papal name Francis stood on the balcony of St Peter's Basilica, and joked the cardinals had gone to the ends of the Earth to find the new pope. They had picked Bergoglio.

Who will the cardinals elect next time? We Catholics in the pew, whether conservatives or progressives, have to accept that cardinals are as human as the rest of us, and not averse to plotting. But maybe we should offer a prayer that the Holy Spirit may, on the next occasion, help them find someone who could be what a pope always used to be – a unifying figure.

This week, with Benedict's funeral, the world's attention will be on what is happening at the Vatican. But the Catholic church is so much more than that. At its best, it is not only the provider of spiritual comfort, but of vital services to people in need across the world. It runs schools and hospitals in developing countries and helps to lift people out of poverty. That needs to be the cardinals' focus, not plotting like politicians over the future of the papacy.

- Catherine Pepinster is a former editor of the Tablet and the author of *The Keys and the Kingdom: The British and the Papacy*

[Opinion](#) Prisons and probation

Teaching philosophy in a children's prison has shown me the meaning of anger

[Andy West](#)



The arguments against imprisoning children are well established, yet still we lock up those who have been failed



A prisoner mopping his cell in a young offender's institution in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire. Photograph: Andrew Aitchison/Corbis/Getty Images

Mon 2 Jan 2023 06.45 ESTLast modified on Thu 5 Jan 2023 01.37 EST

One morning when I was 14, I met my older brother as he came out of prison. His frame was more filled-out than normal, after a few months of regular meals. We walked into town and he told me he was serious about not going back inside this time. An hour later, on the high street, the police stopped us and searched him. I knew my brother didn't want me to protest to the officers. If I did, the police might target me too. Even if they didn't, I would just be left scolded by my own futile indignation. I let my anger sink and waited for it to be over.

For the past six years [I've taught philosophy in prison](#). My presence there also sometimes requires tact with officers. I recently had to smooth things over with a guard because some of my students had laughed at him for not being able to pronounce "philosophy". I wanted to make sure he would still unlock the men in time for the start of my class the next week.

This summer I started teaching in a [prison for children](#) aged 15 to 17. The glass in the windows is an inch thicker than it is in adult prisons, and the chairs are weighted so they cannot be thrown across the room. Children's

prisons are among some of the [most violent](#), though I don't want to focus on the gruesome details – it only bludgeons the reader into apathy. [Many of the children](#) are Black or from a minority background, grew up in poverty or in care, have high levels of special educational needs, and have been excluded from school. It's painful to see children who have been failed so many times in their early life be disposed of once they themselves fail.

We discuss subjects like identity, freedom and nature. As we talk, a 15-year-old with scars down his inner forearm flicks through a newspaper looking for images of women in bikinis. Another boy, who won't have any sexual contact with a woman until he is out in seven years, throws homophobic insults at the boy next to him.

[The arguments](#) against imprisoning children are well established, yet our government ignores them in favour of policies that play to the rightwing press. In 2020 Boris Johnson made it easier to [try children as adults](#). I'm 36, and one of my students, Ivan, is 18. By the time he finishes his sentence, he will be a year older than I am now. In some sessions he passionately disagrees with everything everyone says, wildly contradicting himself in the process. On other days he's mute, and has a faraway look in his eyes. He hasn't got enough years behind him to be able to scale the sentence that is ahead of him.

On my way home from children's prison, I keep remembering things such as when I first moved out of home into a place where I got to be myself, or a relationship I had in my 20s that taught me kindness. Ivan won't be allowed to have these experiences. The system demands his personal growth and yet stunts it at the same time. It's bitterly unfair.

But what do I do with my outrage before something as towering as prison? When I see that both the Tories and Labour are promising to be [tougher on crime](#), I get a familiar, sinking feeling. A few weeks ago, I asked my students in an adult prison what they thought about anger. There was a man in the group called Omar. He had a thick neck from the benchwork he had done in the gym, and a bubbling grey scar that spread up his throat. He was in his early 30s, and had begun serving his sentence when he was a teenager. He was where Ivan would be in 15 years' time.

“The ancient Roman philosopher called [Seneca](#) once give his brother advice about anger,” I said. “His brother had said to him that surely a good person should get angry at injustices.” Omar sniggered. I continued, “Seneca replied that anger is eager to punish. For that very reason, it’s ill-fitted for punishing.”

“Never allow yourself to get pissed off,” Omar said. “Last week the screws said in the morning they was about to unlock us, but they actually kept us banged up the entire day. The kid in the next cell was banging his door and screaming to be let out. He don’t stand a chance in here.”

“What do you do instead?”

“Have patience,” Omar said. “One day I won’t be in here. But the screws – they’ll have to keep coming here for years after I’ve left. They’re the ones who should be pissed off.”

“Isn’t it unfair that you were locked up all day?”

Omar shrugged. “It is what it is.”

I told myself “it is what it is”, when I was 14 and the police had stopped my brother again. It was a way of getting through it. For Omar, it still is. Typically, boys like Ivan will spend several years banging their cell door until they give up and yield to this mantra too. The truth is that moral anger about our prisons is a rare and fragile thing. Those unaffected by the system seldom have reason to feel it. Many in the system have to resign theirs. It has taken me decades to be able to claim my own. If you feel anger about our prison system then you’re feeling something precious. Do not let it go.

- Andy West is the author of [The Life Inside: A Memoir of Prison, Family and Philosophy](#).
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2023.01.03 - Around the world

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US Capitol attack

Trump aide Hope Hicks texted ‘we look like domestic terrorists’ on January 6

Text exchange between then communications chief and fellow White House aide reportedly reveals exasperation at Capitol riot



This exhibit from video released by the House January 6 select committee, shows Hope Hicks, during an interview. Photograph: AP

[Richard Luscombe](#)

[@richlusc](#)

Mon 2 Jan 2023 14.30 ESTLast modified on Thu 5 Jan 2023 01.39 EST

Hope Hicks, a former key ally of [Donald Trump](#), texted another White House aide “we all look like domestic terrorists now” as the then president’s supporters overran the US Capitol on 6 January 2021.

The fear was expressed in a message sent by Trump’s former communications director to Julie Radford, chief of staff to his daughter and

senior adviser, Ivanka Trump, on the afternoon of the deadly Capitol riot.

It is part of revelatory exchange between the pair released as supporting evidence by the January 6 House committee that investigated Trump's efforts to remain in office following his defeat by Joe Biden.

The panel [published its final report](#) last month accusing the single-term president of a "multi-part conspiracy" to thwart the will of the people and subvert democracy.

The biggest moments from the Jan 6 hearings – video

According [to reporting](#) on Monday by the Hill, Hicks and Radford engaged in an increasingly resigned conversation as the Trump-incited mob overwhelmed security and invaded the Capitol, while Trump himself chose to watch on television and ignore pleas from aides, including Hicks, to call an end to the violence.

"In one day he ended every future opportunity that doesn't include speaking engagements at the local proud boys chapter," Hicks texted to Radford, in an apparent reference to Trump and the violent rightwing group [the Proud Boys](#).

"Yup," Radford replied.

In a further message, Hicks wrote: "And all of us that didn't have jobs lined up will be perpetually unemployed," adding that "I'm so mad and upset."

"We all look like domestic terrorists now," she wrote.

"Oh yes I've been crying for an hour," Radford responded.

The exchange went on to discuss Alyssa Farah Griffin, Trump's director of strategic communications who resigned several weeks before the riot after the November 2020 election. Griffin, now a political commentator for CNN and co-host of ABC's The View, later told reporters she stood down because she "saw where this was heading".

Hicks wrote to Radford: “Not being dramatic, but we are all fucked. Alyssa looks like a genius.”

Radford was less complimentary about Stephanie Grisham, a former White House press secretary who became chief of staff to then first lady Melania Trump before resigning abruptly on the day of the riot.

Grisham’s resignation was “self-serving”, Radford opined, according to the Hill.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/jan/02/hope-hicks-january-6-domestic-terrorists>

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Movies

France's Cesar film awards ban anyone being investigated of sex crimes

The 'French Oscars' announced the change after it was revealed a prominent actor was being investigated for alleged rape



The Cesar Film Awards will not allow anyone being investigated on allegation of sexual misconduct at the 2023 ceremony Photograph: François Durand/Getty Images

Agence France-Presse

Mon 2 Jan 2023 19.52 ESTLast modified on Mon 2 Jan 2023 21.30 EST

The Cesar Awards, France's most prestigious film awards, has announced that anyone being investigated on allegations of sexual misconduct will be barred from its ceremony next month.

There were fears of protests at the event on 25 February after it was revealed that rising star Sofiane Bennacer was being investigated by police on two

allegations of rape and one of violence.

Bennacer, 25, who denies any wrongdoing, had been seen as an awards frontrunner for his part in *Les Amandiers* (Forever Young) about a sexually promiscuous group of drama students in the 1980s.

The decision by the Cesar awards – France’s equivalent of the Oscars – also follows [protests at the 2020 ceremony when Roman Polanski](#), convicted of raping a child in the 1970s, won best director, which triggered a major reorganisation of the Cesar Academy.

In a statement, the Academy said anyone facing a potential prison sentence for “violence, notably of (a) sexual or sexist nature” would be excluded from the coming ceremony.

“It has been decided not to highlight people who may have been put in question by the judiciary for acts of violence,” it said, adding that the step was being taken “out of respect for the victims”, even if they were only “presumed” victims.

Bennacer was dropped from the longlist of possible nominees in November after fresh allegations surfaced in the media.

The director of *Les Amandiers*, Valeria Bruni-Tedeschi, denounced the allegations against Bennacer as “a media lynching”.

She said on Instagram that the film’s producers were aware of allegations against him during the casting, “but I told them these rumours would not stop me and I couldn’t envision making the film without him.”

Her famous sister, singer and former French first lady Carla Bruni, said the treatment of Bennacer undermined the presumption of innocence, “one of the foundations of our democracy”.

The Cesar Academy said it was still debating whether people with sexual misconduct allegations and convictions should be banned entirely from future nominations and awards, with a decision due in the coming weeks.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2023/jan/03/frances-cesar-film-awards-ban-anyone-being-investigated-on-sex-crimes>

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[Israel](#)

Extreme-right Israeli minister visits al-Aqsa mosque compound

Move by Itamar Ben-Gvir angers Palestinians after Hamas warned such a step was a ‘red line’

Palestinians condemn far-right Israeli minister's visit to al-Aqsa – video report

Ben Lynfield in Jerusalem and agencies

Tue 3 Jan 2023 12.57 ESTFirst published on Tue 3 Jan 2023 03.12 EST

The extreme-right Israeli firebrand [Itamar Ben-Gvir](#) has visited Jerusalem’s sacred al-Aqsa mosque compound for the first time since becoming a minister, angering Palestinians who see the visit as a provocation.

“Our government will not surrender to the threats of Hamas,” Ben-Gvir said in a statement, after the Palestinian militant group had said such a move would be a “red line”.

Ben-Gvir’s visit on Tuesday came days after he took office as national security minister, a position that gives the religious hardliner significant powers over the police.

Seen by the Palestinian Authority as a “blatant and shameless provocation”, the visit could result in deadly violence and escalate tensions in the area.

Ben Gvir’s trip to the critically sensitive site drew concern from the US. White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said that anything that jeopardised the status quo of Jerusalem’s holy sites was “unacceptable”. Anticipating a backlash, an official from Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu’s, office briefed reporters that the country was committed to “strictly keeping the status quo”.

The compound, lying within the Israeli-annexed East Jerusalem, is administered by the Waqf Islamic affairs council, but with Israeli forces operating there and controlling access.

Under sensitive longstanding arrangements, Jews can visit but not pray at what they revere as their holiest site on which biblical temples stood, the second of which was destroyed by the Romans in AD70. Muslims cherish the compound as housing Islam's third-holiest shrine, al-Aqsa mosque, and have prayed there since the seventh century, including maintaining exclusive prayer rights there after Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem after the 1967 [six-day war](#).

Ben-Gvir has said this is “discriminatory” and Jews should be permitted to pray at the compound, while allowing Muslims to pray inside the mosque.

He was filmed touring the esplanade near the mosque with police and aides. After the minister left the compound on Tuesday morning, visitors arrived at the plaza and the situation remained quiet.

Ben-Gvir has visited al-Aqsa numerous times since entering parliament in April 2021, but his presence there as a senior minister carries far greater weight. A controversial visit in 2000 by the then opposition leader, Ariel Sharon, was one of the main triggers for the second Palestinian intifada, or uprising, which lasted until 2005.

The Israeli opposition leader, Yair Lapid, had opposed the visit and predicted it would lead to bloodshed.

On Monday, the Palestinian prime minister, Mohammad Shtayyeh, said Ben Gvir's planned trip was an attempt to turn the mosque “into a Jewish temple”.

The Hamas spokesperson Hazem Qassem called it a “crime” and vowed the site “will remain Palestinian, Arab, Islamic”. Hamas rules the Gaza Strip, and in [May 2021 an 11-day war](#) broke out in the territory between Palestinian militants and Israel after violence at al-Aqsa mosque.

The leader of Lebanon's militant Hezbollah movement, Hassan Nasrallah, said that changing the status quo at the al-Aqsa mosque could lead to an explosion in the region, not just inside [Palestinian territories](#).

Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the UAE also condemned the visit.

Palestinians have long said that Israel's goal is to infringe on Muslim prayer at the site and establish Jewish primacy in order to build a third temple. Israeli governments have traditionally denied this but Jordan's King Abdullah II, who has custodianship over Muslim and Christian sites in Jerusalem, has voiced concern and told the new government not to cross red lines.

Avi Dichter, an MP from Netanyahu's Likud party, on Monday backed Ben-Gvir's planned visit during an interview on Israeli radio. Israeli media reported that Netanyahu, who returned to power last Thursday as head of the most far-right coalition in Israeli history, had discussed the matter with Ben-Gvir on Monday.

Menachem Klein, a professor emeritus of political science at Bar-Ilan University and visiting fellow at the King's College London department of war studies, said the visit offered further proof that Netanyahu "doesn't care about international law and the advice of the Biden administration".

For years seen as a fringe figure, Ben-Gvir, the Jewish Power party leader, entered mainstream politics with the backing of Netanyahu. He has called for Palestinian citizens of Israeli deemed disloyal to the state to be expelled and for the annexation of the occupied West Bank.

Until a few years ago he had a portrait in his living room of Baruch Goldstein, who massacred 29 Palestinian worshippers at a Hebron mosque [in 1994](#).

Hani al-Masri, director of the Ramallah-based Masarat thinktank, said that public anger over a perceived growing Israeli threat to al-Aqsa mosque and the intended annexationist policies of the new Israeli government could force the Palestinian Authority to take a stronger stance against Israel. "If

there is escalation there could be a strong popular reaction,” he added, including “militarised resistance”.

“With a crazy, extremist [Israeli] government, there will be responses,” he said.

Under the new government of which Ben Gvir is a part, Israel is to carry out one of the largest expulsions of Palestinians since it occupied the West Bank in 1967 if residents do not agree to leave their homes in the Masafer Yatta area of the territory, Israeli and Palestinian officials have said.

The move, termed a “fast-track war crime” by the Israeli human rights group B’Tselem, was disclosed to Palestinians during a meeting of liaison officials from both sides, according to Nidal Younes, the head of the Masafer Yatta local council, as well as B’Tselem and another Palestinian source familiar with affairs in the area.

“We are talking about expulsion by force on a permanent basis. The Israelis said they would choose another place for the people. But our people will certainly refuse, it is impossible that they will leave their homes. The army will definitely have to use force and people will stay in their homes as long as they possibly can,” Younes said.

Younes said he did not know when the expulsion would be carried out, but B’Tselem said the Israelis had conveyed that the eviction notices could be issued within days.

In response to a query from the Guardian, the office of Israel’s Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (Cogat) confirmed late on Monday that the fate of the Masafer Yatta villagers had been discussed with Palestinian officials. It said Israeli officials had emphasised Israel’s view that the area in which 12 Palestinian herding hamlets were situated, housing more than 1,000 people, was strictly for use as an army training area, with no one but soldiers allowed.

Cogat referred to a supreme court decision from May last year that found that Palestinians were seasonal itinerants rather than residents, even though they traced their residency back many generations.

After that decision, which was condemned as illegal by Israeli and foreign rights groups, the previous government of Lapid and the then defence minister, Benny Gantz, increased pressure on the Palestinians to leave through demolitions of their buildings and the holding of live-fire military exercises around the villages.

The latest move comes shortly after the Netanyahu ally Bezalel Smotrich, of the Religious Zionist party, who has questioned the right of Arabs to be in the West Bank if they do not accept inferior status to Jews, took up his post as the minister overseeing Cogat.

This article was amended on 4 January 2023. Jordan's king is Abdullah II; a previous version referred to "King Hussein", who was the previous monarch.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/03/extreme-right-israel-minister-itamar-ben-gvir-visits-al-aqsa-mosque-compound>

[Australia news](#)

Two Britons among four killed in helicopter collision in Australia

Mid-air collision near Sea World on the Gold Coast also left three people critically injured

Footage shows aftermath of fatal helicopter crash on the Gold Coast in Australia – video

[*Jane Clinton*](#) and [*Jamie Grierson*](#)

Tue 3 Jan 2023 02.48 ESTFirst published on Mon 2 Jan 2023 16.53 EST

Two British people were among four killed after [two helicopters collided in mid-air](#) near a marine theme park on Australia's Gold Coast, it has been confirmed.

A UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) spokesperson said: “We are supporting the family of two British nationals who died in Australia and are in contact with the local authorities.”

Three other people were critically injured in the collision.

The [Courier-Mail](#) has named the UK couple as Ron and Diane Hughes, aged 65 and 57, from Liverpool, and a 36-year-old New South Wales involved woman as Vanessa Tadros, also known as Vanessa Geagea.



Diane and Ron Hughes Photograph: Facebook

7NEWS [reported](#) that the couple, who were married in August 2021, had travelled to the Gold Coast to visit Ron's daughter Jane Manns, her husband, Ben Manns, and their children.

“Our family is heartbroken and we are still trying to contact friends and family to let them know,” Jane and Ben Manns said in a statement. “Please respect our privacy at this devastating time.”

A cousin of Tadros posted on Twitter that she had “passed away too soon in this horrific tragedy”.

Guardian Australia has sought confirmation of the victims' names from Queensland police.

Australian Associated Press reported that the fourth person killed was the Sea World Helicopters chief pilot, Ashley Jenkinson. He died after the helicopter he was in careened upside down into a sandbank near the marine park. The four dead and three most seriously injured people were all passengers in the crashed helicopter.

The second aircraft landed safely, but five of the six people onboard suffered glass shrapnel wounds when the windscreen shattered. They were reported

to be receiving medical assistance.

Gary Worrell, Queensland state police acting inspector, said one helicopter appeared to have been taking off and the other landing when they collided near the Sea World theme park in Main Beach, a northern beach on the Gold Coast. The collision occurred at about 2pm local time on Monday when the park would have been crowded with people enjoying the summer break.

Jenkinson, a father who had instructed numerous novice pilots, was remembered as a “great mate” by Andy Taylor, who recalled the bond forged when the pair assisted victims of flooding in northern New South Wales in 2022.

“Today we lost one of the biggest legends, Ash Jenkinson, you were a gentleman!” he said. His colleague Penny Wilson said Jenkinson had a “golden heart”, “cheeky sense of humour” and was “always such a laugh to be around”.

Worrell said members of the public and police “tried to remove the people and they commenced first aid and tried to get those people to safety from an airframe that was upside down”. He added that people on “jetskis, family boaters, ordinary members of the public rushed to assist these people”.

Footage of the crash showed a helicopter shortly after takeoff being clipped by another helicopter flying over the water.

Earlier, Sea World Helicopters, a separate company from the theme park, expressed its condolences and said it was cooperating with the authorities handling the crash investigation. “We and the entire flying community are devastated by what has happened and our sincere condolences go to all those involved, and especially the loved ones and family of the deceased,” the statement said.

A witness named John told Melbourne radio station 3AW that patrons at Sea World heard the crash. He said staff at the theme park moved swiftly to close off areas closest to the crash.

“There was a massive, massive bang,” he said. “It was just huge. I’m not sure if it was the propellers or whatever hitting against each other. But there was this poor lady and her son near the helipad in tears.”

The Queensland premier, Annastacia Palaszczuk, said the crash was an “unthinkable tragedy”. “My deepest sympathies are with each of the families and everyone affected by this terrible accident,” she said.

The Australian Transport Safety Bureau chief commissioner, Angus Mitchell, said an investigation into the cause of the crash was under way.

Queensland ambulance service said earlier that 13 people were being assessed for injuries.

The Gold Coast region is at its busiest in January – the peak time for holidays in Australia’s summer.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/02/two-britons-among-four-killed-in-australia-helicopter-collision>

Pacific projectPapua New Guinea

Bodies left to decay outside overcrowded Papua New Guinea morgue, footage shows

Uncollected dead stored in shed with no air conditioning despite tropical heat will have to be buried in mass grave



Port Moresby general hospital. Photograph: ChildFund

Bethanie Harriman

Mon 2 Jan 2023 21.13 ESTLast modified on Thu 5 Jan 2023 01.37 EST

Footage of nearly a dozen bodies left to decay outside one of Papua New Guinea's major hospitals has highlighted the pressures on the country's health system and prompted calls for urgent reform.

The three-minute video shows 11 bodies on bunk beds and gurneys inside what appears to be a shed being used as a temporary mortuary. The building

has no proper air conditioning and the windows and doors are open to the elements. The bodies are left there for families to collect or until space frees up in the morgue.

The shocking video, shared publicly on a popular Facebook page, was filmed by an unidentified man between Christmas Day and New Year's Eve. In it, he explains in Pidgin how long the bodies had been left outside.

“Some of these bodies here, right now, have been left out here for four or five days now, it's now Christmas and New Year's period, they didn't just arrive, some of them have decayed,” he says.

The bodies are shown to be deteriorating rapidly due to the tropical weather.

As the man films, another body is carried in by family members.

In response to the video, the Port Moresby general hospital said in a statement that the mortuary could not take any more bodies. It said the morgue was extremely overcrowded largely due to relatives not picking up bodies in a timely manner.

It said there would be a mass burial next week and there were 20 bodies waiting to go into the morgue. The hospital said the government would try to address the issue in 2023.

Dr Kone Sobi, Port Moresby general hospital's director for medical services, said some bodies had not been collected because relatives could not afford either of the private funeral homes in the city. He said a mass burial was planned for Thursday.

The hospital last carried out a mass burial of unclaimed bodies in 2021 because the mortuary was full. The morgue, built 30 years ago, was initially meant to cater for 120 bodies but now handles about 200.

Port Moresby's deputy governor Dadi Toka Jnr said the public hospital needs a new mortuary facility.

“The size of the city has grown, so the next step here moving forward is to look at how we expand the morgue.”

“Discussions are being held as we speak, we are looking at options, some designs have been presented, so the announcements will be made in due course.”

There are three additional container refrigerators outside the main mortuary with a capacity of 62 bodies. The facility receives up to 20 bodies a day, the number increasing during the Covid-19 pandemic.

“The morgue is always full, the space for one body to be laid is packed with four or five,” said a former hospital worker who wanted to remain anonymous.

“It happens every time – once there is a death, the body is left out in the layout. If there is space then they are brought into the morgue.”

Many horrified Port Moresby residents have called for action from the country’s highest authorities.

The government and health minister have been contacted for comment.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/03/bodies-left-to-decay-outside-overcrowded-papua-new-guinea-morgue-footage-shows>

Headlines saturday 7 january 2023

- [US politics Kevin McCarthy wins House speaker bid after gruelling 15-vote saga](#)
- [UK Schoolgirl who faced terror charges is 'wake-up call about grooming'](#)
- ['Too little, too late' Sunak to hold emergency talks with NHS leaders over winter crisis](#)
- [Music Morrissey says Miley Cyrus album exit was nothing to do with his politics](#)
- [Live Russia-Ukraine war: Kyiv accuses Putin of breaking his own ceasefire](#)

[The Observer](#)[House of Representatives](#)

Kevin McCarthy wins House speaker bid after gruelling 15-vote saga

California Republican finally able to convince hard-right detractors after a week of negotiations and concessions

Kevin McCarthy wins US House speaker bid after gruelling, 15-vote saga – video

[Joan E Greve](#) and [Lauren Gambino](#) in Washington

Sat 7 Jan 2023 01.19 ESTFirst published on Sat 7 Jan 2023 00.39 EST

The Republican leader Kevin McCarthy was elected as speaker of the US [House of Representatives](#) in a dramatic late-night vote, after quelling a days-long revolt from a bloc of far-right conservatives to finally capture the gavel on a historic 15th attempt.

McCarthy's ascension to speaker came after 14 defeats and a string of concessions to ultraconservative lawmakers that would significantly weaken his power while strengthening their influence over the party's new House majority. After winning over most of the holdouts earlier on Friday, McCarthy withstood a surprise defeat on the 14th ballot later that evening and finally clinched the gavel on the next round with the slimmest majority, just 216 votes, in the early hours of Saturday morning.



Newly elected House speaker Kevin McCarthy hugs Republican Steve Scalise after the 15th round of voting. Photograph: Evelyn Hockstein/Reuters

The spectacle concluded in stunning fashion during the tense, late-night session on the House floor that erupted in shouting and finger pointing. A Republican lawmaker had to be physically restrained by a colleague. But the bitter speakership battle, the longest since 1859, ended shortly after, when the last remaining holdouts switched their votes to “present”, lowering the threshold and allowing McCarthy to secure the post.

The final tally was 216-212 with Democrats voting for their leader Hakeem Jeffries, and six Republican holdouts to McCarthy voting present.

A beaming McCarthy hugged members of his leadership team and allies who stood with him throughout the days-long saga. Cheers broke out in the chamber and the galleys above, where family members watched the vote unfold. Ascending to the speaker’s rostrum, he raised the gavel and gave it two vigorous thwacks. “That was easy, huh?” he said, eliciting laughs.

“My father always told me, it’s not how you start, it’s how you finish,” McCarthy continued, declaring, “Now, the hard work begins.”

House Democrats remained unified behind Jeffries, a congressman from New York, until the last ballot. Marking “a moment of transition” after four years of Democratic control of the House, Jeffries said Democrats would seek to work with [Republicans](#) where possible, but vowed to always put “American values over autocracy.”

McCarthy faces off with Republican lawmaker after 14th loss in US House speaker vote – video

Joe Biden congratulated McCarthy on winning the speakership and urged the new Republican House majority eager to challenge his administration with long-promised subpoenas and investigations to “govern responsibly.”

The protracted fight paralyzed the new Congress and exposed deep rifts within the House Republican conference that foreshadowed a rocky two years ahead for the newly elected speaker. The conflict marked the [first time in a century](#) that the House failed to choose a speaker on the first ballot, and only four other speakership elections in US history have required more than 12 votes.

“It’s been a long week,” Republican congressman Patrick McHenry conceded at the start of his speech nominating McCarthy for the speakership. “The president has called this process an embarrassment. Talking heads labeled this a chaos and a mess. And some would call it shambolic, even. But it’s called democracy.”



Mike Rogers, a Republican from Alabama, was restrained after yelling at Republican Matt Gaetz, who refused to vote for Kevin McCarthy in the 14th round. Photograph: Jim Lo Scalzo/EPA

When McCarthy finished speaking, he moved quickly to swear in the members and formally open the 118th Congress in the post-midnight hours. Among them was George Santos, the embattled New York Republican, who is facing multiple federal and local investigations as well as calls to resign after it was revealed that he lied repeatedly about aspects of his background during his election campaign.

Plans to vote on a new rules package that included many of the demands from McCarthy's opponents, were postponed until next week.

McCarthy had hoped to win the gavel on the 14th ballot, but he fell one vote short. When it became clear that McCarthy would not succeed, tensions erupted on the House floor.

McCarthy strode to the back of the chamber to confront congressman Matt Gaetz, of Florida and Lauren Boebert of Colorado, leaders of the anti-McCarthy coalition. At one point, congressman Mike Rogers, a Republican of Alabama, had to be physically restrained after appearing to lunge at Gaetz and a member shouted: "stay civil."

In the face of an entrenched opposition, McHenry moved to adjourn the chamber until Monday. But the negotiations abruptly shifted in McCarthy's favor, and Republicans quickly scuttled their plans and called for a 15th vote.

"I rise to say, wow," congressman Dean Phillips, a Democrat of Minnesota said, reacting to drama as he nominated Jeffries for speaker on the 15th ballot.

In a frenzied effort to end the intra-party stalemate, McCarthy and his allies spent days locked in late-night negotiations with the 20 hardline conservatives who opposed him on the first 11 ballots. Because of House Republicans' narrow majority, McCarthy could only afford to lose four votes if all sitting members cast a ballot for speaker. In exchange for their support, the holdout members demanded sweeping changes to chamber rules, as well as more representation on some of the most high-profile House committees.

After rounds of fruitless balloting, McCarthy's prospects brightened when the chamber reconvened on Friday. In quick succession, he converted 15 of the Republican defectors. Among them was Congressman Scott Perry, the chair of the House Freedom Caucus and a leader of the far-right rebellion, who said the camps had reached "the framework for an agreement" on many of the group's demands.



Matt Gaetz, left, and Kevin McCarthy speak after a failed round of voting on Friday. Photograph: Shawn Thew/EPA

Following an unsuccessful 12th and 13th ballot on Friday, Republicans voted to adjourn until later that evening, with only six Republicans still opposed to McCarthy's candidacy. McCarthy used that time to lobby the half-dozen remaining holdouts, eventually finding a way to break the impasse. Without votes to spare, the delay also allowed two McCarthy's allies, Ken Buck of Colorado and Wesley Hunt of Texas, time to return Washington to cast ballots for him.

Buck had missed earlier votes for health reasons, while Hunt was absent to be with his wife and newly born son. When Hunt and Buck cast their votes Friday night, Republicans applauded for them.

When the House returned late Friday evening, the mood among Republicans was jovial and McCarthy was buoyant. Even the House Chaplain, Margaret Kibben, whose prayers had become increasingly pointed, opened the session with a smile: "Dear God, we may be, at last, standing at the threshold of a new Congress."

Although McCarthy has successfully won the speakership, he now faces the considerable challenge of attempting to govern with an unruly conference

and a slim majority. The dynamics of the House Republican conference could make it much more difficult to advance must-pass legislation, such as a government spending package or a debt ceiling hike.

The rule changes requested by McCarthy's former detractors could also complicate his tenure as speaker. To win their support, McCarthy agreed to reinstate a policy that would allow a single member to call for a vote on ousting the sitting speaker. That rule could allow McCarthy's more skeptical supporters to remove him from his role if they clash over policy in the future, and the threat of such a maneuver will hang over the head of any sitting speaker.

Over the past four years, McCarthy has managed to maintain his position as House Republican leader in part by striving to keep the peace with far-right members of his conference. The impact of that strategy was reflected in the lengthy debate over the speakership.

One of the most vocal supporters of McCarthy's campaign for speaker was congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene, the Georgia Republican who was removed from her committee assignments over her extremist views. Moments after McCarthy secured the speakership, Greene rushed forward to take a selfie with him on the House floor.

As McCarthy ascends to the speakership, time will tell whether his concessions to far-right members will be enough to keep him in charge. If not, another fight for the gavel could soon be on the horizon.

Senate Majority leader Chuck Schumer, a Democrat of New York, said he was worried that McCarthy's concessions to the far-right flank of his party risk making the lower chamber ungovernable, and could lead to government shutdowns or a debt-default. "Speaker Kevin McCarthy's dream job could turn into a nightmare for the American people," Schumer said.

A Democratic-controlled Senate will restrain House Republicans' legislative ambitions. But in his remarks, McCarthy vowed to use both the "power of the purse" and the "power of the subpoena" to press a conservative agenda that Republicans hope will help deliver them the White House and Congress in 2024. Among the House's first acts would be a vote to repeal funding for

the Internal Revenue Service and a hearing at the southern border, McCarthy said, pledging to “hold the Swamp accountable – from the withdrawal from Afghanistan to the origins of Covid to the weaponization of the FBI.”

“It’s nighttime here in Washington,” McCarthy said in remarks from the rostrum, “but in some ways, it’s also a new beginning – a fresh start.”

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[UK news](#)

Schoolgirl who faced terror charges is ‘wake-up call about grooming’

Charges against Rhianan Rudd, then 15, were dropped after evidence proved she had been groomed online by rightwing extremists



Rhianan Rudd. The charity Exit Hate says it is seeing more children being groomed by rightwing extremists.

[Jessica Murray](#) *Midlands correspondent*

Sat 7 Jan 2023 02.00 ESTLast modified on Sat 7 Jan 2023 06.32 EST

Charities say the case of a UK teenager who became the youngest girl to be charged with terror offences after online grooming by rightwing extremists should be a “wake-up call” about the online vulnerability of children.

Rhianan Rudd, who was 15 when charged, took her own life at a Nottinghamshire children’s home in May last year, when she was 16.

The charges against her had by then been dropped after evidence proved she had been a victim of online grooming.

Nigel Bromage, the founder of the charity [Exit Hate](#), which supports people to move away from extremism, said it was seeing a growing number of children fall victim to online grooming by rightwing extremists.

“The youngest we’ve worked with is a nine-year-old boy who was being influenced via video games,” he said.

“Hearing about Rhianan’s story, we’re seeing that journey being replicated time and time again. Our hearts go out to the family affected, and it is definitely a wake-up call as to how vulnerable our young people are online.”

He added: “Teachers, families, we’ve all got to be able to have conversations with our young people about this, even if they are difficult and make us feel uncomfortable. Otherwise, we’re just opening the door to the extremists.”

Nick Lowles, the chief executive at Hope Not Hate, said Rhianan’s story was “sadly another case of how far-right extremism ruins lives”.

“In recent years, we’ve heard stories from parents of their children changing in front of their eyes after watching extreme content online,” he said.

“It’s vital that between schools, parents and the police, there is more joined up thinking on how to support children who are exposed to extreme content online and ensure our counter-extremism strategy isn’t just viewed through a law-and-order lens.”

Rhianan’s mother, Emily Carter, [told the BBC this week](#) that her daughter should have been treated “as a victim rather than a terrorist”, and described how her daughter took on extreme views “like a sponge”.

“She’s a child, an autistic child. She should have been treated as a child that had been groomed and sexually exploited,” she said, adding police should have dealt with the case “completely differently”.

At the age of 14, Rhianan, who lived in Derbyshire, was charged with the possession of instructions to make both firearms and explosives, and at the

time of her arrest she had gouged a swastika into her forehead, which she subsequently tried to erase.

She had been talking online to Christopher Cook, an American neo-Nazi who previously pleaded guilty to planning a terror attack on a US power grid.

Evidence also showed that she had been influenced by Dax Mallaburn, a former boyfriend of Rhianan's mother and a member of neo-Nazi group the Arizona Aryan Brotherhood.

Bromage said tech companies should step up, citing an example of a current project with Facebook that redirects people to the Exit Hate page when they search the name of certain rightwing extremists.

But he added there needed to be more awareness of some of the underlying causes that leave young people feeling "lost" and more likely to fall victim to groomers online.

"A lot of the young people we speak to at the moment struggle with identity, and how they can identify as white and English, or male," he said.

"We try and teach them how to protect and celebrate their identity in a way that is multicultural, in a way they don't have to worry about being called a racist because it's inclusive.

"We need to help educate people on what we actually can celebrate and what might cause offence."

Derbyshire police were contacted for comment, but declined while inquest proceedings into Rhianan's death are ongoing.

- *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](tel:1-800-273-8255). In Australia, the crisis support service Lifeline is 13 11 14. Other international helplines are listed at befrienders.org.*
-

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[NHS](#)

Rishi Sunak holds emergency talks with NHS leaders over winter crisis

Prime minister hosts rare weekend meeting but Labour says patients deserve more than ‘talking shop’



Rishi Sunak Hosts the NHS Recovery Forum. Photograph: Rory Arnold/No10 Downing Street

Guardian staff and agency

Sat 7 Jan 2023 06.08 ESTFirst published on Sat 7 Jan 2023 03.17 EST

Rishi Sunak is holding emergency talks with [NHS](#) and care leaders in an attempt to tackle the winter healthcare crisis in England.

The NHS Recovery Forum at No 10 on Saturday will focus on four key issues: social care and delayed discharge, urgent and emergency care, elective care and primary care.

A Downing Street spokesperson said the aim was “to help share knowledge and practical solutions so that we can tackle the most crucial challenges such as delayed discharge and emergency care”.

But Sunak has been warned that the rare weekend meeting is unlikely to reverse the NHS’s fortunes. Labour said patients deserved more than a “talking shop” and the Liberal Democrats said it was “too little, too late”.

Senior doctors say the NHS is on a knife-edge, with many A&E units struggling to keep up with demand and trusts and ambulance services declaring critical incidents.

Discharge rates fell to a new low in England last week, with only a third of those patients ready to be released from hospital actually leaving.

The meeting also comes amid ongoing strike action by nursing and ambulance workers over pay and conditions.

Health unions have been invited to meet the health secretary, Steve Barclay, on Monday to discuss pay for 2023-24 from April, but unions say it will not prevent further strike action planned for January.

The Royal College of Nursing general secretary, Pat Cullen, has urged the prime minister to “grasp the nettle and negotiate with nurses” over the current settlement to prevent planned strikes.

She told BBC Radio 4’s Today programme: “We’ll, of course, go to the meeting and make the case for nursing in all forums, but it’s sadly not what’s going to prevent strike action that’s planned for 10 days’ time.

“I have put out an olive branch to get us to the table, I’m asking the prime minister now to meet the RCN halfway. The ball is firmly in the prime minister’s court.”

The forum is expected to last much of the day and those attending include Barclay, the Treasury minister, John Glen, Cabinet Office minister Oliver Dowden and the chief executive officer of NHS England, Amanda Pritchard.

Matthew Taylor, the chief executive of the NHS Confederation, said there were “no silver bullets” to solving the crisis at hospitals and other care centres.

“This crisis has been a decade or more in the making and we are now paying the high price for years of inaction and managed decline,” he said. “Patients are experiencing delays that we haven’t seen for years.

“High levels of flu, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and rising Covid levels are exacerbating the problem but the cause is decades of under-investment in staffing, capital and the lack of a long-term solution to the capacity-crunch facing social care.”

As well as ministers, attendees were due to include chief executives and clinical leaders from NHS organisations, local areas and councils from across the country.

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A Downing Street spokesperson said: “As the prime minister made clear this week, easing the immediate pressures whilst also focusing on the long-term improvement of the NHS is one of his key promises.

“That’s why we’re bringing together the best minds from the health and care sectors to help share knowledge and practical solutions so that we can tackle the most crucial challenges such as delayed discharge and emergency care.

“We want to correct the unwarranted variation in NHS performance between local areas, because no matter where you live you should be able to access

quality healthcare.”

The shadow health secretary, Wes Streeting, described the meeting as a “talking shop”. He said: “After 13 years of mismanaging the NHS, this is the equivalent of the arsonists convening a forum with the fire brigade to put out the inferno they started. Patients deserve more than a talking shop.

“Clinical leaders and health experts have been sounding the alarm for months about the crisis the NHS is facing, so why has it taken so long for Rishi Sunak and Steve Barclay to decide to listen to them?”

Streeting said the £500m for delayed discharges promised by the government had “yet to reach the frontline and is now too late to make a difference this winter”.

The Liberal Democrat deputy leader, Daisy Cooper, said the meeting was “too little, too late”.

“Hundreds of people have been dying needlessly each week in the worst NHS crisis ever experienced in this country, whilst the prime minister sat on his hands,” she said.

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[Morrissey](#)

Morrissey says Miley Cyrus album exit was nothing to do with his politics

American withdrew after recording guest vocals on the Mancunian's yet-to-be-released new record



Morrissey and Miley Cyrus. She had recorded guest vocals for a song on Bonfire of Teenagers. Composite: Alamy/Getty

[Danya Hajjaji](#)

Fri 6 Jan 2023 19.25 EST Last modified on Sat 7 Jan 2023 06.32 EST

Morrissey has spoken out after [Miley Cyrus](#) dropped out of a guest spot on his upcoming album, denying the singer had done so over his political stances, which he said are “most certainly not far right”.

In a [lengthy statement](#) posted on Thursday, the former frontman of the Smiths also attacked “cancel vultures” and alleged the existence of a campaign to “put [him] out of circulation”.

Last month, Morrissey, 63, [announced](#) Cyrus had asked to be removed from his unreleased album Bonfire of Teenagers, which was expected to feature her backing vocals on a song titled I Am Veronica.

Cyrus's decision, he said, came when he parted ways with label Capitol Records.

In a new post shared to his website on Friday night, [Morrissey](#) said Cyrus, 30, decided against appearing on the album due to a private conflict unrelated to him.

“In truth, Miley has backed off for reasons unconnected to me, having had a major clash with a key figure in ‘the circle’,” he wrote, adding he would not divulge details about the “private fight”.

“Miley knew everything about me when she arrived to sing ‘I Am Veronica’ almost two years ago; she walked into the studio already singing the song,” the statement said.

“She volunteered. I did not ask her to get involved. Her professionalism was astounding, her vocals a joy to behold. Every minute that I spent with Miley was loving and funny.”

On politics, the singer denied he was far-right – a charge that arose after [controversial comments](#) on race and racism, as well as his support for now defunct far-right anti-Islam party For Britain.

“Although the left changed and deserted me many years ago, I am most certainly not far-right, and I have not ever met anyone who claims to be far-right,” he wrote.

“My politics are straightforward: I recognize realities. I am therefore sorry to report to some of you that I am absolutely not far-right.”

Morrissey criticised those he deemed to be “cancel vultures” who “only attack those of whom they are most jealous”.

He also mentioned four unnamed men in Britain with “prominent positions on social media” who he said initially led a campaign to “destroy my career”.

“At some point, each one of them had hopes of a candle-lit friendship with me, and this did not happen,” he said. “Their rage for attention then took a different turn. They want some form of Wikipedia mention as well as a future personal index reference in ‘Who Killed Morrissey?’”

As it stands, the future of Bonfire of Teenagers appears uncertain. A [November post](#) from Morrissey said it was no longer scheduled for a February 2023 release, and “[its] fate is exclusively in the hands of Capitol Records (Los Angeles.)”

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[Ukraine war live](#)[Ukraine](#)

Russia-Ukraine war, as it happened: Kyiv accuses Putin of breaking his own ceasefire

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- 'I've heard it all: she's a fraud, a liar, a thief' Jack Monroe on alcohol, addiction and answering her critics
- Blind date 'I fired half a baklava across the table, but I think I styled it out'
- 'It altered my entire worldview' Leading authors pick eight nonfiction books to change your mind
- 'I've turned my life around' Diet club users on their experiences

‘I’ve heard it all: she’s a fraud, a liar, a thief’: Jack Monroe on alcohol, addiction and answering her critics

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[Blind date](#)[Life and style](#)

Blind date: 'I fired half a baklava across the table, but I think I styled it out'



Composite: Graeme Robertson, Jill Mead

Alex, 27, product manager, meets Maeve, 27, medical student

Sat 7 Jan 2023 01.22 EST



Alex on Maeve

What were you hoping for?

Good company and good food.

First impressions?

Great – the classic “fancy seeing you here” opener got rid of any potential awkwardness.

What did you talk about?

Death row meals. Bad dates. Whether or not the restaurant staff thought we were food critics from the Guardian rather than on a date.

Most awkward moment?

Me firing half a baklava across the table, but I think I styled it out.

Good table manners?

Impeccable. She's clearly a seasoned Middle Eastern cuisine expert, we got a great selection of food.

Best thing about Maeve?

Great conversation and a real laugh. Also, the fact we had a 95% music taste match on our Spotify blend.

Would you introduce Maeve to your friends?

Absolutely. I think they'd get on well.

Describe Maeve in three words.

Confident, charismatic, Aussie.

What do you think Maeve made of you?

Hopefully good things – I think our mutual enjoyment of decaf coffee probably sealed the deal.

Did you go on somewhere?

We did – we had 1 ½ pints before the pub ran out of beer.

Q&A**Want to be in Blind date?**

Show

Blind date is Saturday's dating column: every week, two strangers are paired up for dinner and drinks, and then spill the beans to us, answering a set of questions. This runs, with a photograph we take of each dater before the date, in Saturday magazine (in the UK) and online at theguardian.com every Saturday. It's been running since 2009 – you can [read all about how we put it together here](#).

What questions will I be asked?

We ask about age, location, occupation, hobbies, interests and the type of person you are looking to meet. If you do not think these questions cover everything you would like to know, tell us what's on your mind.

Can I choose who I match with?

No, it's a blind date! But we do ask you a bit about your interests, preferences, etc – the more you tell us, the better the match is likely to be.

Can I pick the photograph?

No, but don't worry: we'll choose the nicest ones.

What personal details will appear?

Your first name, job and age.

How should I answer?

Honestly but respectfully. Be mindful of how it will read to your date, and that Blind date reaches a large audience, in print and online.

Will I see the other person's answers?

No. We may edit yours and theirs for a range of reasons, including length, and we may ask you for more details.

Will you find me The One?

We'll try! Marriage! Babies!

Can I do it in my home town?

Only if it's in the UK. Many of our applicants live in London, but we would love to hear from people living elsewhere.

How to apply

Email blind.date@theguardian.com

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.

And ... did you kiss?

Sadly not.

If you could change one thing about the evening what would it be?

Maybe me not sporting a Movember moustache for the date. But Maeve did say it looked good.

Marks out of 10?

We decided we weren't going to do ratings. But it was a great date so make of that what you will.

Would you meet again?

Hopefully. We discussed catching up after I get back from three weeks in Costa Rica.



Alex and Maeve on their date



Maeve on Alex

What were you hoping for?

Good hummus or a future husband.

First impressions?

Thank God he's here. Thank God we're not the only people in the restaurant. Thank God he looks like a nice guy.

What did you talk about?

The classics: life stories, travel stories, dating stories. The less classic: ideal Gail's bakery orders, the menu for the last meal on Earth, Alex being a guest at a dog-themed wedding.

Most awkward moment?

The waiting staff thought we were food critics reviewing the restaurant.

Good table manners?

Yes, but his baklava went flying.

Best thing about Alex?

He's not a classic tech bro. Well dressed, well read, well travelled. He can hike a mountain on minimal sleep and with only a can of Pringles.

Would you introduce Alex to your friends?

I think he could handle it.

Describe Alex in three words.

Loved the moustache.

What do you think Alex made of you?

We had a lot of things in common and he didn't want to go home after the starters, so hopefully that I was fun.

Did you go on somewhere?

To a pub nearby.

And ... did you kiss?

Got to save something for next time ...

If you could change one thing about the evening what would it be?

Taking a mouthful of the mystery table sauce that turned out to be pure chilli.

Marks out of 10?

You can't put a number on a good time.

Would you meet again?

We'll see. He might "find himself" on his trip to Costa Rica and not return.

Maeve and Alex ate at [Imad's Syrian Kitchen](#), London W1. Fancy a blind date? Email blind.date@theguardian.com

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**‘It altered my entire worldview’:
leading authors pick eight nonfiction
books to change your mind**



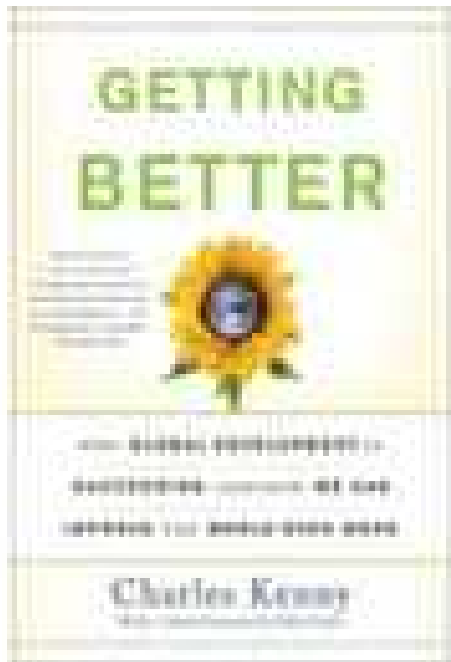
Illustration: Mark Long/The Guardian

Steven Pinker, Mary Beard, Rebecca Solnit and others reveal the books that made them see the world differently

Sat 7 Jan 2023 02.00 EST Last modified on Sat 7 Jan 2023 16.03 EST

Steven Pinker

Shortly after publishing my book *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, on the historical decline of violence, I attended a conference sponsored by a foreign policy magazine at which a journalist asked me: “What would it take to eliminate extreme poverty worldwide?” Thinking it was a trick question, I quipped: “Redefine ‘poverty’.” An eavesdropping economist said to me: “That was a cynical answer”, and recommended a short new book by the development expert Charles Kenny called **Getting Better**.



Though I already knew that war was in decline, especially wars between nation states, the book documented how every other measure of human wellbeing had increased over the decades: longevity, child mortality, infectious disease, malnutrition, democracy, literacy, basic education, and yes, extreme poverty. And it noted that the World Bank and the UN

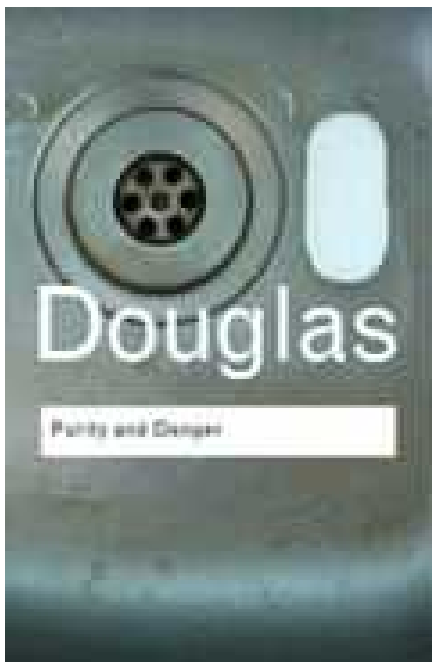
Sustainable Development goals had set the elimination of extreme poverty by 2030 as a feasible, albeit extraordinarily difficult, aspiration.

This lifted my view of history and the current state of the world to a higher level. The decline of violence was just one aspect of a historical process that we can legitimately call “progress” – not a romantic or utopian or naive ideal, but an empirical fact that we can see in graphs and numbers. It led me to ask what made this seemingly mystical process happen, and inspired me to write *Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress*.

Steven Pinker is Johnstone professor of psychology at Harvard University and the author, most recently, of Rationality: What It Is, Why It Seems Scarce, Why It Matters (Allen Lane)

Mary Beard

When I was starting to write my PhD thesis, it was Mary Douglas’s **Purity and Danger** that opened my eyes, and helped me see different things not just in Roman history but in the world around me too.



Its basic idea was to ask: “What counts as dirty (or polluted) in different cultures?” (Why is gravy on your tie “dirty” but on your potatoes not?) A large part of her answer to that was “ambiguity”: “dirty things” are often those that “fall between established categories”. And her key example was not gravy, but Jewish dietary rules, which she argued were based on precisely that kind of ambiguity (pigs, for example, are prohibited or polluted because they are animals with cloven hoofs but they do *not*, as most cloven hoofed animals do, chew the cud). She later questioned that idea herself and it’s probably wrong.

But it had already set me off on a new track. I had never before thought of asking that kind of question about the Romans. What did *they* think was dirty? And how different were they from us?

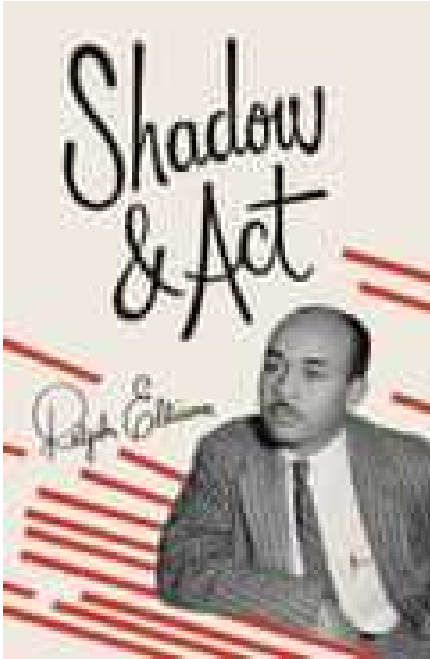
I am not sure that the answers I came up with were any more correct than those of Douglas herself. But her book showed me how to ask different questions – and it showed that a book doesn’t have to be right to be important.

Mary Beard is a classicist and author of books including SPQR: A History of Ancient Rome (Profile) and Twelve Caesars: Images of Power from the Ancient World to the Modern (Princeton).

Margo Jefferson

It was 1966 or 67 when I first read Ralph Ellison’s essay collection **Shadow and Act**. Those were fierce, tumultuous years and I was avidly reading Black literature across generations and genres: Richard Wright, James Baldwin, Paule Marshall, Gwendolyn Brooks, Amiri Baraka; poets from the Harlem renaissance to the Black Arts Movement. I’d been floored by the greatness of Ellison’s *Invisible Man*. But these essays showed another Ellison, a scrupulous explorer of America’s cultural landscape, finding new paths through the fraught territory of American history and art. Racial bigotries enhanced by intellectual fallacies. The ethos and aesthetics of jazz; the ethos and aesthetics of literature and folklore. He probed the ways – stark and subtle – in which Black and white traditions engage and intermingle with each other, how they clash and cohabit. He parsed the relations between group and personal identity. He probed large themes and

ideas, “the enigmas, the contradictions of character and culture”. And he never stopped pursuing “inflection, intonation, timbre and phrasings ... all those nuances of expression and attitude which reveal a culture”.



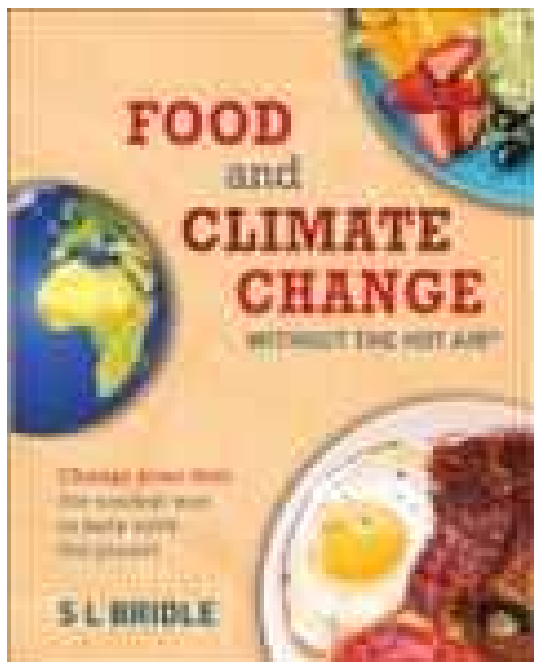
His precision was scrupulous and expressive. It won me over. And because it sharpened my mind, it gave me room to disagree with him. He made me want to be a more independent thinker. Reading him, I realised that even great novelists (and poets) needed to write criticism, that criticism lets them delineate and transmit passion, character and history in ways that fiction did not. For me this change of hierarchies was a change of mind and a change of heart.

Margo Jefferson is a Pulitzer prize-winning cultural critic and the author of books including Negroland (Pantheon) and Constructing a Nervous System (Granta).

Marcus du Sautoy

The planet is facing a climate emergency. We need to reduce carbon emissions. But what can I personally do to help? I often feel overwhelmed by the complexity of the issues.

It was reading Sarah Bridle's book **Food and Climate Change Without the Hot Air** that helped me understand a very important way that I really could contribute. Change my diet. As Bridle explains, this is the easiest way to help save the planet. Bridle's book is a follow up to David MacKay's equally wonderful book *Sustainable Energy – Without the Hot Air*. MacKay's mantra is "numbers not adjectives". I'm a numbers guy. I need things translated into numbers before I can make a decision about the best course of action. This is precisely the thesis of both books. It allows the reader to see and compare the impact of a change of behaviour.



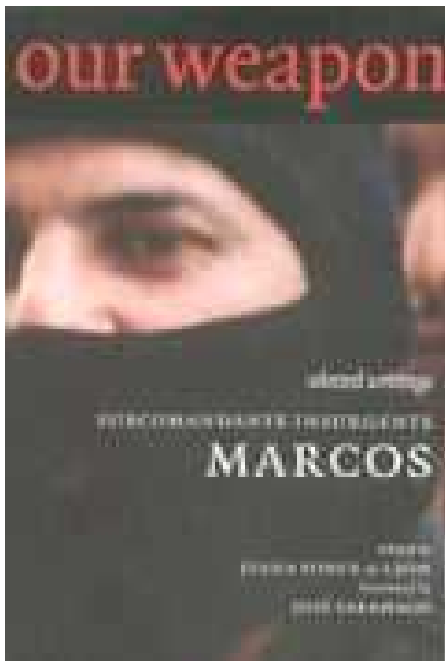
To see the effect through numbers that the production of meat and meat-related products has on the environment was a revelation. A quarter of the greenhouse-gas emissions that cause climate change comes from food. Just giving up food from cows could have a massive impact. Bridle's book changed how I eat. I am an aspiring vegan, which means I still can't resist cheese. But perhaps I don't need to be perfect. It just takes millions doing their bit imperfectly. More people reading this book might help.

Marcus du Sautoy is the Simonyi professor for the public understanding of science at the University of Oxford and author of Thinking Better: The Art of the Shortcut (4th Estate)

Rebecca Solnit

The language of politics can shut down or open up possibilities, as I was reminded when I recently reread one of Doris Lessing's novels about her time in the Communist party in which party members speak to each other in stale and abstracted terms that obfuscate, distort and most of all bore.

The lingering impact of this kind of political language is part of why the Zapatistas' sudden appearance on the world stage, with their uprising on 1 January 1994, and the battles they fought with language, were so astonishing and exciting for me and to many others. "Thousands of indigenous, armed with truth and fire, with shame and dignity, shook the country awake from its sweet dream of modernity," Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos wrote shortly thereafter, in a piece titled *The Long Journey from Despair to Hope*, which is collected in **Our Word Is Our Weapon: Selected Writings**, a gorgeous English-language compilation edited by Juana Ponce de León and published in 2001. I have drawn inspiration from it ever since.



Marcos was a non-Indigenous Mexican leftist who had gone to Chiapas to lead the Indigenous communities in revolution, only to find that it was they who were to lead him, in reconceiving what revolution was and its goals could be. There was hope, ferocity and brilliance in his words for the next

dozen years or so, but also playfulness, humor, vivid imagery, emotional immediacy and metaphors drawn from the natural world.

Poetry and politics are often treated as entirely separate matters; part of Marcos's genius was to see that there was no great politic without poetry.

*Rebecca Solnit is a Guardian US columnist. Her most recent books are *Recollections of My Nonexistence* and *Orwell's Roses* (Granta).*

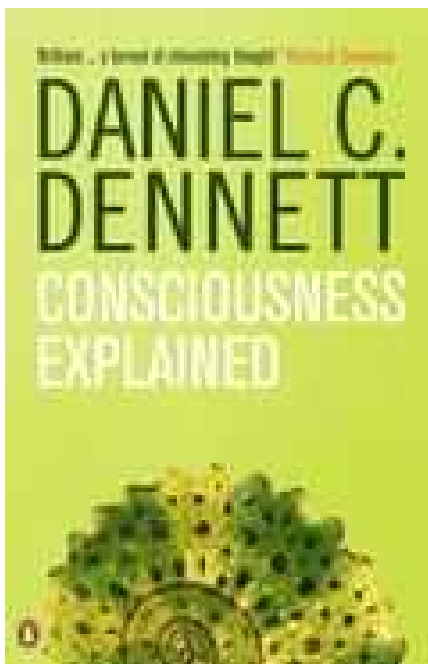


Illustration: Mark Long/The Guardian

Jim Al-Khalili

As a scientist I have spent most of my life wading through dry academic textbooks. But I also have a passion for popular science. Often such books will be on subjects I just wish to know more about, but I also have to read outside my expertise as preparation for interviewing a guest on The Life Scientific on Radio 4. However, I cannot think of any book that has had a bigger impact on my thinking than **Consciousness Explained** by the American philosopher Daniel Dennett. In this popular account of the origins of consciousness, Dennett offers an explanation of how it arises from interactions between the physical and cognitive processes in the brain. He writes in an extremely persuasive way and without recourse to any woo or

pseudoscientific mysticism. I remember feeling that, for the first time, I might be able to understand what it means to be conscious and self-aware from a reductionist, scientific perspective. This was about 30 years ago, and I know the science of consciousness studies has moved on since then. A number of critics of the book – both philosophers and neuroscientists – have argued that Dennett is denying the existence of subjective conscious states, while giving the appearance of a scientific explanation of them. But for me, at the time, it was a book that explained away one of the deepest mysteries of existence using logic and common sense. Whether right or wrong, it altered my entire worldview on the comprehensibility of reality.



Until I read this book my view was that the nature of consciousness was such an intractable problem that it wasn't something we were anywhere near being able to make sense of. While Dennett's approach is not likely to be the whole story – after all, the human brain is the most complex system in the known universe – it nevertheless blew me away that it was at least conceivable in principle to rationalise it.

Jim Al-Khalili is the University of Surrey's distinguished chair in theoretical physics, a broadcaster and author of books including The World According to Physics and The Joy of Science (Princeton).

Gaia Vince

No Logo by Naomi Klein didn't just change my mind, it hurled it into a different orbit, giving me an entirely new perspective on how the globalised world works. It emerged, a firebrand, straight into the turn-of-the-century's defining social movement, coming out in November 1999 during mass protests against the World Trade Organization, the so-called Battle of Seattle. I was in my 20s, navigating a landscape dominated by big brands, with opaque practices and unquestioned ubiquity in an increasingly deregulated neoliberal economy. Rampant consumerism, Klein revealed, was a deliberate global movement, driven by large multinational corporations with disturbing political power, perpetuating poverty, global injustice, environmental degradation and resource depletion. However, we little people also have extraordinary power: activists can take down Goliath brands, she showed through detailed, extraordinary reportage from the frontlines of a burgeoning "global justice" movement.



The book is smart, wry, perceptive and absolutely of its time – its effect was electrifying. In that pre-smartphone era when more people read books, No Logo was everywhere. Ironically, the book itself became a brand, an accessory to carry on dates, signifying that its possessor was socially conscious and eco aware. It was one of a handful of important books that

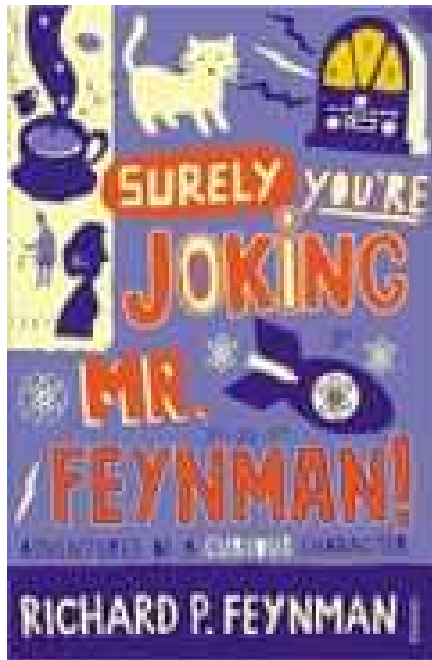
spurred a mental transition from seeing myself as an inhabitant of a fully formed world, to understanding that I was an interactive participant in a world that is constantly being created.

Gaia Vince is an author, journalist and broadcaster and an honorary senior research fellow at UCL's Anthropocene Institute. Her latest book is Transcendence: How Humans Evolved Through Fire, Language, Beauty and Time (Penguin).

Samanth Subramanian

Soon after I read “Surely You’re Joking, Mr Feynman!”, my interest in a career in the sciences died. This was not Richard Feynman’s fault. I was, at the time, immersed in a typical Indian high-school curriculum of physics, chemistry and mathematics: dense lessons that urged rote memorisation or brute practice. You solved problems for homework with the sole purpose of solving them in examinations. There was no better way to fall out of love with physics.

In those years, any interest that I retained in the subject was thanks to Feynman’s patchwork memoir. It is not, I should mention right away, a flawless book; Feynman is forever burnishing his eccentric genius, and his self-perceived rakishness borders on misogyny. But his inquisitiveness and his joy in pure thought shine through, and they captivated me at a time when my teachers were scrubbing all the charm out of science.



Here's an example. Feynman was never short of big, important problems to work on, but he was equally absorbed by small, seemingly inconsequential questions. Once, while at Princeton University, he watched an S-shaped water sprinkler turn on a pivot and wondered: Would the sprinkler turn clockwise or counter-clockwise if it was set up to take water in instead of spit it out? He could argue it either way, he found, so he prepared an experiment in the cyclotron to find out. It proved nothing, and a glass carboy exploded in the process. Feynman mentions the incident fleetingly, but there are so many more like it: little excursions of curiosity, reminders that science is, above all, lit by the pure delight of human inquiry. Feynman made sure I remained interested in science long after I left any academic dreams behind. *Samanth Subramanian is a journalist and author whose most recent book is A Dominant Character: The Radical Science and Restless Politics of JBS Haldane (Atlantic).*

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Diet club users on their experiences: 'I've turned my life around'



They offer a lot – but how to weight-loss plans measure up? Photograph: Brastock Images/Getty Images/iStockphoto

People who turned to services including the NHS and Weight Watchers reveal whether they worked – and how much it cost

- [Diet clubs: how much do they cost and what do they offer?](#)



[Donna Ferguson](#)

Sat 7 Jan 2023 03.00 EST Last modified on Sat 7 Jan 2023 08.03 EST

You were sure you would stick to them this year. But, seven days into January, your resolve is weakening and those new year resolutions you made to eat more healthily, get fit and lose weight this year are in danger of falling by the wayside.

If you need some help to stay on track, one tried-and-tested method is to follow a weight management programme. These typically reward you for cutting down on junk food, encourage you to increase the amount of exercise you do, and motivate you to try new recipes that are low in fat or calories. Most also seek to help you reframe your relationship with food.

But which offer the best value? And how do the perks and benefits compare?

Get help from the NHS or your local council

First, it is important to note that a weight-loss programme doesn't have to cost anything if you are overweight. Check your [body mass index \(BMI\)](#) to work this out.

If you have diabetes or high blood pressure and your BMI is greater than 30 (or 27.5 if you are from a black, Asian or other ethnic minority background), you can get [free online access to a programme](#) for 12 weeks via the NHS. Your GP or a local pharmacist will need to refer you. Their referrals will be triaged to determine the level of support people can access, from a digital-only plan to time with a “coach”, such as a dietician, who can offer more personalised support.

In your local area, the BMI eligibility criteria for support may be lower, and you may not need to have any medical conditions to qualify for [free help from your local council](#).

For example, in locations including [Essex](#), [West Sussex](#), [Derbyshire](#), [Cambridgeshire](#), [Haringey](#) and [Devon](#), you can currently join a local weight-loss programme if you are overweight – which typically means a BMI of more than 25 – even if you do not have any other medical conditions.

Google the name of your council and “weight loss” to see what is available where you live.

Even if you are not eligible for a funded place, the NHS offers various other free resources such as an online [12-week weight-management programme](#) and the [Weight Loss Plan app](#).



A weight-loss programme may not cost you anything. Photograph: Manusapon Kasosod/Getty Images

However, if you want individually tailored advice and one-to-one support from experts and peers, you may want to consider paying for a weight-loss programme yourself.

We decided to take an in-depth look at five programmes that meet the [National Institute for Health and Care Excellence](#) guidelines for a balanced and healthy lifestyle and are [listed on the NHS website](#). These are GetSlim, Man v Fat, Second Nature, Slimming World and WW (Weight Watchers).

At the time of writing, the prices of these plans varied from £13 a month to £45 a month. There are special offers on, however, making the cheapest £4 a month now (with the right promotional code).

So what do people who have used these programmes say about them, and did they think they offered value for money?

For some, they say it is the support and accountability – where you meet up face to face with your coach and other dieters – that makes all the difference.

‘You don’t want to ever let your team down’



Man v Fat helps subscribers lose weight through playing football in community and small-sided teams. Photograph: Richard Blaxall/Man v Fat

“I tried eating more healthily and doing more exercise by myself but there were never any repercussions for not doing it,” says Dan Andrews-Oxlade, 43, who weighed 114kg (18st) and had a clinically obese BMI of 36.5 when he joined Man v Fat just over a year ago and started playing football on a team with other overweight men.

Every week that he and another player lost weight, their team scored a bonus goal on top of their goals on the pitch.

He loved the team spirit and camaraderie of their games. “You don’t want to ever let your team down and that, for me, is the main driver of Man v Fat. I won’t have that cake because if I do, I’m going to let my team down.”

To date he has lost 32kg (5st) – 28% of his body weight – and is on the verge of achieving a healthy BMI. His teammates, who are also dieting, support him alongside their coach whenever he struggles, offering tips and advice in their WhatsApp group. “They have my back.”

He also rediscovered the joy he had felt as a child playing for his school football team, and joined a gym to improve his fitness. “When I first got on

a treadmill I couldn't run for longer than two minutes – and I thought I was going to die.”

He now goes running five times a week and has run two half-marathons in the last seven months. “I wouldn't have been able to do that if I didn't have the fitness I'd gained through Man v Fat.”

The programme has cost him almost £400 so far, money he considers well spent. “Don't tell them this but I'd pay twice as much.”

‘I didn't have to weigh my food much or measure it’



Carolann Hicks was Slimming World's woman of the year 2022. Photograph: Slimming World

Carolann Hicks, 41, says she liked how easy her diet was to follow. “I've got a family, and I didn't want to be cooking different meals for me versus everybody else.”

She [joined Slimming World in January 2020](#), when she weighed 146kg (23st) and her BMI was 53.

“I found I could make really small adjustments, like not having oil or using packet sauces, and buying leaner meat. I didn’t have to weigh my food much or measure it. On other diets I’d tried, that was such a chore.”

It was the emotional side of eating that I really struggled with

Carolann Hicks

After losing 80kg (12st 9lb) over two and a half years, she has maintained her current healthy weight for the last six months.

Like Andrews-Oxlade, she feels she could not have done it without the support and tips she received from other members in her group, and says she will never forget the warm welcome she got at her first meeting.

“It was the emotional side of eating that I really struggled with. In the past I’ve felt very alone in trying to lose weight. But at Slimming World, everybody just gets it. I’ve made friends for life.”

She gradually achieved all her Body Magic awards through exercise, and last year she and other group members completed a couch-to-5km running programme together. Now she runs three times a week and has signed up for the London Marathon this year. “It’s been quite a journey,” she says. But all the way through, she adds, the programme encouraged her to set small, realistic goals. “My targets were always achievable.”

She recommends staying for the entire meeting every week, starting every day afresh, reading the magazine, listening to the podcast, trying the recipes and making the most of the app. “You’re paying for a service – use it all.”

She estimates her weight loss has cost her about £500, which she thinks is a bargain. “I’ve totally turned my life around.”

‘I didn’t pay anything – it was paid for by the NHS’

When Emma Grayson, 60, joined Second Nature last May, she weighed 17st and had a BMI of 34. She was referred to the programme, which usually

costs at least £33 a month, online and joined for free. “I didn’t pay anything – it was paid for by the [NHS](#).”



Emma Grayson started keeping a ‘gratitude journal’. Photograph: Emma Grayson

Medical conditions mean she is forced to eat a highly restricted diet, so having free access to a dietician via Second Nature was “life-changing. She worked out what I needed, which was a lot more protein than I was eating.”

Learning about weight gain through the app helped her to understand that she would often comfort-eat when she was stressed: “Weight gain is never just about eating too much. It’s about when you eat, why you eat, how you eat and your entire approach to food.”

She started keeping a “gratitude journal”, which she found very helpful, and would message a fellow member of the website when she needed support on stressful days.

Taking the dietician’s advice also meant she had more energy and started sleeping better, enabling her to spend a good hour walking every day. So far she has lost 22kg (3.5st).

“It was thrilling seeing the weight dropping off. And yet, I wasn’t hungry.”

‘I decided I was not going to cheat’

Clare Barasly, 67, whose only income is her state pension, found GetSlim a couple of days after the Christmas of 2021. “They had an offer on where you could have the first three months for £12, and I thought: ‘Well, that’s a bargain.’” At the time she weighed 100kg (15st 10lb) and her BMI was 34. “I was morbidly obese.”

Offered a choice of diets, she decided to follow a “fasting revolution” plan that restricted her calorie intake by different amounts each day, on a four-week cycle. “I thought that sounded good because I could alternate the days with lower amounts of calories with the days that allowed more.” She also started walking two miles a day.



Clare Barasly says: ‘Jackfruit has a texture similar to pulled pork when it’s cooked but it’s very low in calories.’ Photograph: bhofack2/Getty Images/iStockphoto

Just over a year later, she is still on the diet and has lost 32kg (5st 2lb) so far. “I stuck rigidly to the plan. I decided I was not going to cheat.”

She used some of the recipes on the GetSlim website but also did some research and came up with her own, substituting jackfruit for meat on her

low-calorie days. “It has a texture similar to pulled pork when it’s cooked but it’s very low in calories.”

She found it helpful to be able to track the calories in her meals on the website, and healthy food choices started coming more naturally to her.

If she put on weight and tracked it on the website, an adviser would message her and guide her back on track.

Her BMI is now down to 23, and she frequently walks five miles a day. “It’s the first time I’ve been in a healthy weight range since before my daughter was born. She’s 38.”

‘I still get to have my treats – but in moderation’

For Chloe Wilson, 30, committing to paying about £80 for six months of premium WW (AKA Weight Watchers) membership motivated her to show up to the workshops every week and keep up with the plan. Knowing she would see her “really supportive” coach each week also made her take responsibility for her actions over the previous seven days.



Chloe Wilson chose WW because it says no food is off-limits. Photograph: Chloe Wilson

She weighed 108kg (17st) and had a BMI of 42 when she joined in April 2022. She chose WW because no food is off-limits, as long as she weighs, tracks and “pays” for it from her points budget. “I don’t feel restricted. I still get to have my treats – but in moderation.”

Being on the plan encouraged her to get fit, and she now exercises five or six times a week. So far she has lost 37kg (5st 12lb), and her WW membership has cost her about £130.

“If somebody had said to me last April: pay this amount of money and you’ll lose that amount of weight, I’d have snapped their hands off.”

Build your own weight-loss programme

The [Let’s Get Cooking](#) programme from the British Dietetic Association features lots of recipes, and you can filter them to show which ones have [under 500 calories a portion](#).

Using the [NHS Food Scanner app](#), you can scan barcodes to see how much sugar, saturated fat and salt is in your food and drink.

The free [NHS Couch to 5K](#) running plan teaches you to run 5km in nine weeks, while the [NHS Active 10 app](#) tracks your steps.

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[OpinionUS](#) politics

After Brexit and Trump, rightwing populists cling to power – but the truth is they can't govern

[Jonathan Freedland](#)



The farcical scenes among US Republicans have echoes in our Tory party. Both promise disruption, then deliver exactly that



House Republican leader Kevin McCarthy (second from right) with staffers during the ninth round of voting at the US Capitol in Washington, Thursday 5 January. Photograph: Jonathan Ernst/Reuters

Sat 7 Jan 2023 02.46 ESTFirst published on Fri 6 Jan 2023 11.23 EST

The US right has this week been staging a clown show that has had liberals in that country and beyond pulling up a chair and breaking out the popcorn. There has been a karmic pleasure in watching the Republicans who won control of the House of Representatives struggle to complete the most basic piece of business – [the election of a speaker](#) – but it's also been instructive, and not only to Americans. For it has confirmed the dirty little secret of that strain of rightwing populist politics that revels in what it calls disruption: it always ends in bitter factional fighting, chaos and paralysis. We in Britain should know, because Brexit has gone the exact same way.

Start with the karma that saw House Republicans gather two years to the day since they sought to prevent the peaceful transfer of power from one party to another: often overlooked in the anniversary recollections of 6 January 2021 is that, mere hours after rioters had stormed the US Capitol, a majority of Republican House members [voted](#) to do precisely as the rioters had demanded and overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election. Yet here were those same House Republicans on 6 January 2023, having prevented

the smooth transfer of power from one party to another – except this time, the party they were thwarting was their own.

It should have been straightforward. Republicans won a narrow majority in the House in November, which gave them the right to put one of their number in the speaker's chair. The trouble was, while most backed Kevin McCarthy, about 20 rebels did not. By Thursday night, they had gone through 11 rounds of voting – the [most since the civil war era](#) – without McCarthy or anyone else winning a majority. The result: deadlock that was only broken after yet more voting rounds on Friday night, and into Saturday.

It was a study in incompetence. A party asks the electorate to give them power; they get it and then freeze, unable to take even the first step towards using it. There was no clear political logic to the stalemate. The rebels are devotees of Donald Trump, but McCarthy himself is a tireless Trump sycophant – patronised by the former president as “my Kevin” – who begged for and won the backing of the orange one. The pro-Trump rebels were divided among themselves: [one rebuked Trump](#) for sticking with McCarthy, while another [voted to make Trump himself speaker](#).

It's telling that the rebels' demands were not on policy but on procedure, seeking rule changes or committee seats that would give them more power. Otherwise, they couldn't really say what they wanted. They succeeded in getting [metal detectors removed](#) from the entrance to the chamber, so now people can walk on to the floor of the House carrying a gun, but apart from that, and their hunger to start investigating Democrats, including Joe Biden's son Hunter, nothing.

All this has significance for the year ahead in US politics. For one thing, it's yet more evidence of the diminishing strength of Trump among Republican leaders, if not yet among the party faithful. For another, if [Republicans](#) cannot make a relatively easy decision like this one, how are they going to make the tough but necessary choices that are coming – such as authorising the spending, and debt, required to keep the US government functioning?



Prime Minister Rishi Sunak speaking during prime minister's questions, Wednesday 30 November. Photograph: UK Parliament/Jessica Taylor/PA

But its meaning goes far wider. For what's been on display this week, in especially florid form, is a strain of politics that has infected many democracies, including our own. Its key feature is its delight in disruption, in promising to upend the system. That was the thrust of the twin movements of 2016, Trump and [Brexit](#). Both promised to sweep away the elites, the experts, the orthodoxy – whether in Washington DC or Brussels. They were new movements, but they were drawing on deep roots. Four decades ago both Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher cast themselves as radicals daring to shake off the dead hand of the government.

So we can hardly be surprised that those who railed against government should be so bad at it. They promised disruption, and that's what they've delivered. In the US it was the chaos of Trump himself, and now a House of mini-Trumps that can't tie its own shoelaces. In the UK, it looks different: we have a prime minister in [Rishi Sunak](#) whose pitch is technocratic competence. But that should not conceal two things.

First, the post-2016 Tory party delivered just as much parliamentary turmoil and intra-party division as McCarthy and co served up this week. Whether it was the Commons gridlock of the two years preceding the 2019 election or

the psychodrama of the three years after it, Brexit-era Conservatism has proved every bit as unhinged as Trump-era Republicanism. When it comes to burn-it-all-down politics, the Republicans' craziest wing are mere novices compared with a master arsonist such as Liz Truss. The US and UK are simply at different points in the cycle.

Second, even with Sunak in charge, and though painted in less vivid colours, Brexit-era Toryism is just as paralysed as its sister movement in the US. The [five-point plan](#) unveiled in the PM's new year address consisted mostly of the basics of state administration – growing the economy, managing inflation – rather than anything amounting to a political programme.

And that's chiefly because his party, like the Republicans, cannot agree among themselves. Consider how much Sunak has had to drop, under pressure from assorted rebels. Whether it was reform of the planning system, the manifesto commitment to [build 300,000 new houses a year](#) or the perennial pledge to grasp the nettle of social care, Sunak has had to back away from tasks that are essential for the wellbeing of the country. True, he has avoided the farcical scenes that played out this week on Capitol Hill, but that's only because he has preferred to preserve the veneer of unity than to force a whole slew of issues. The result is a prime minister who cannot propose much more than [extra maths lessons](#) lest he lose the fractious, restive coalition that keeps him in office.

None of this is coincidence. It's in the nature of the rightwing populist project, in Britain, the US and across the globe. Brexit is the exemplar, a mission that worked with great potency as a campaign, as a slogan, but which could never translate into governing, because it was never about governing. It was about disrupting life, not organising it – or even acknowledging the trade-offs required to organise it. It offered the poetry of destruction, not the prose of competence.

The [Conservatives](#) are several stages further down this road than the Republicans, perhaps because their power has been uninterrupted throughout. But in both cases, and others, the shift is unmistakable. Once parties of the right saw themselves as the obvious custodians of state authority: the natural party of government. Now they are happier shaking

their fists at those they insist are really in charge. They are becoming the natural party of opposition.

Jonathan Freedland is a Guardian columnist

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[OpinionCycling](#)

How can Britain ever embrace cycling if our bikes keep getting stolen?

[Adam Becket](#)



Police have never taken cycle theft seriously – and the worst effects of this crime are felt by young and disadvantaged people

- Adam Becket is a senior writer for Cycling Weekly



‘Such is the fear I have of my pride and joy being stolen that I rarely, if ever, lock it up outside.’ Photograph: Ashvin Mehta / Dinodia Images/Alamy

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For most cyclists, bike theft feels like an inevitability. It’s just one of those risks that you are doomed to face any day you take your bike out. Such is the fear I have of my pride and joy being stolen – yes, I am one of those people who consider my bike to be my most important possession – that I rarely, if ever, lock it up outside. At home, it stays inside. At work, I take it into the building. If the bike is outside, I’m either on it or in close proximity to it.

It doesn’t seem to matter what kind of lock or preventive measure you use, or where you leave them, bikes – from a cheap, secondhand cycle to a top-of-the-range racer – can just go missing in an instant, with little recourse apart from claiming on insurance.

This easy crime, and the fear of it happening, is compounded by lack of action by the police. Analysis by the [Liberal Democrats](#), released earlier this week, shows that 90% of all bicycle theft cases reported to police in England and Wales over the past year were closed without a suspect even being identified, and just 1.7% resulted in someone being charged.

All my cycling group chats are regularly inundated with tales of woe from people who have had their prized bike taken. I have a friend who has had two different bikes stolen from their work lockup. I know people who have been robbed of their bike at knife-point.

Another friend had her bike taken from the 10ft pole it was locked to outside her house. The thieves convinced her neighbours to lend them a ladder on the pretence they had lost the key to their bike's lock and then lifted the whole thing clean over. It can be both that simple and that outlandish.

It is no surprise that theft seems to affect the [young and disadvantaged](#) the most, as they're the ones who are less likely to have a secure place to lock their bike – or indeed have any insurance. Included in the myriad problems of finding places to live that are affordable and livable is the difficulty of finding somewhere where you can leave a bike inside, or keep it out of harm's way.

There are problems across all of our creaking state, but bike theft has never been taken seriously, and it is not something that can be cured simply with better-funded police. The data was used by the Lib Dems to attack the Conservatives over police numbers and funding, yet the problem – and solution – goes beyond this, to culture, design and, ultimately, how we value an increasingly essential mode of transport.

Stealing a bike is a classic low-risk, high-reward crime. Imagine if other kinds of theft were treated with the same kind of indifference or acceptance by the victims. I don't go around thinking my laptop will be stolen in the same way as my bike. While [Home Office figures](#) show that in the year to March 2022 just 6.3% of robbery offences and 4.1% of thefts in England and Wales resulted in charges, it is demonstrably worse for bikes. There would be uproar if car crime was dealt with in a similar way, but because it is just a bicycle, it can seemingly just be brushed aside. Cars may be worth more on average, but I know lots of people whose bikes are worth more than their cars – or at least they value their bike more than their car. And, for many, bikes are a necessity, not a pastime.

Bike theft may be an easy crime to commit and get away with, but it is not victimless. Think of someone who relies on a bike to get to and from work: if their machine is stolen, there is a reasonable chance that they will not replace it. This could easily could become another person forced to rely on the inefficient bus networks in some parts of the country to commute.

Better bike racks, with CCTV and good lighting, would be a start, as would a requirement for large private businesses to have bike racks on their premises, rather than requiring people to lock up their prize possessions outside. However, a holistic approach is needed to change a situation where theft is treated with impunity or just ignored altogether.

In 2020, during the pandemic, Boris Johnson signalled his hopes for a “[golden age of cycling](#)”. Yet how can we ever get to such a point when people face the basic problem of bike theft seemingly at any moment? Forget the lack of proper infrastructure or the ridiculous culture wars around cycling for a minute, and consider how we are supposed to head towards an era of active travel and mass cycling if people don’t even have a bike.

- Adam Becket is a senior writer for [Cycling](#) Weekly

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[Prince Harry](#).

Martin Rowson on an acrimonious start to 2023 in the UK – cartoon

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[OpinionNHS](#)

Ministers could help the patients dying in NHS hospital corridors right now – they just choose not to

[Rachel Clarke](#)



Be under no illusion: the hundreds of avoidable deaths in the NHS every week are the result of political decisions

- Rachel Clarke is a palliative care doctor



‘The government’s actual response to the crisis gripping the NHS is a perverse inversion of everything it purports to hold dear.’ The health secretary, Steve Barclay, and chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, at No 10, December 2022. Photograph: Simon Dawson/No 10 Downing Street

Fri 6 Jan 2023 07.43 ESTLast modified on Fri 6 Jan 2023 13.21 EST

With NHS staff being forced to witness our patients [dying in corridors](#), in cupboards, on floors and in stranded ambulances, we can only thank our lucky stars that the country’s second most powerful politician is the man who last year published [Zero: Eliminating Unnecessary Deaths in a Post-Pandemic NHS](#).

Because the chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, cannot possibly stand back and permit these crisis conditions to continue, can he? He knows better than anyone – having written 320 pages on precisely this fact – that avoidable deaths are the very worst kinds of death, the ones that sicken families and clinicians to their core.



‘The blurb of Jeremy Hunt’s book, published only last May, rings out with moral righteousness.’ Photograph: Swift Press

Let’s remind ourselves of how strongly Hunt feels about this subject. The blurb of his book, published only last May, rings out with moral righteousness. “How many avoidable deaths are there in the [NHS](#) every week?” he asks. “150. What figure should we aim for? Zero. Mistakes happen. But nobody deserves to become a statistic in an NHS hospital. That’s why we need to aim for zero.”

He even offers a road map towards achieving that end that, unusually for a politician, centres on radical candour. Don’t lie. Don’t deflect. Don’t spin. Don’t cover up. Be honest and open about mistakes and failures because this is the first, essential step to fixing them.

To the collective despair of frontline staff, the government’s actual, as opposed to rhetorical, response to the humanitarian crisis [gripping the NHS](#) is a perverse inversion of everything the chancellor purports to hold dear.

First, Downing Street tried to ignore it. The day after the president of the Royal College of Emergency Medicine (RCEM), Adrian Boyle, estimated that between 300 and 500 people were [dying avoidable deaths](#) every week as

a result of the total collapse of emergency services, the health secretary, Steve Barclay, was chirpily tweeting about the [merits of parkrun](#).

Next, the government tried denial, with one of Rishi Sunak's spin doctors [flatly refusing to accept](#) the assertion that the NHS was in crisis. Perhaps to them, political spinning seems like a game. But as someone who has to hear the moans and face the anguish, I would say that attempting to dismiss real people's avoidable deaths – their actual, unnecessary experiences of misery, indignity and terminal suffering – is a form of dishonesty so stone-cold disgraceful it shouldn't come within a million miles of government.

Mercifully, for sheer no-nonsense, evidence-based pushback against the facile denials churned out by the government, Boyle and the RCEM vice-president Ian Higginson – both of whom are frontline emergency consultants – have been outstanding.

Take Higginson's [recent turn on Times Radio](#) immediately after the government's efforts to discredit those figures for avoidable deaths. The association between delayed inpatient admission and increased mortality is well established. [One study shows](#) that for every 82 patients whose inpatient bed transfer is delayed beyond six to eight hours from arrival in the emergency department, approximately one extra death occurs. So Higginson rightly condemned the unedifying “battle of machismo and denial going on” before politely posing the following – devastating – question: “Is there an acceptable number [of avoidable deaths] that our colleagues in NHS organisations and politicians are seeking? Or do we simply accept that right now patients are dying waiting for ambulances, in car parks, outside hospitals?... This is a real problem that affects real people every day of the week.”

Hunt, of course, has already provided the answer to Higginson's first question. Zero. Zero is the acceptable number of avoidable deaths in the NHS. So how – why – are we here yet again in the wretched situation of frontline staff trying to tell the truth about patient harm while political leaders with the power actually to do something about those harms focus instead on managing optics?

The government claims it has given the NHS all the funding it needs. It hasn't. [Sunak stated](#) in his new year speech this week that since September, “we’ve put half a billion pounds into what’s called early discharge, to help move people into the community this winter”. He hasn’t. Only £200m – 40% – of that emergency funding has actually been given to the NHS and local authorities. The remaining £300m has not materialised and will not be disbursed until, possibly, late January.

With [one in seven hospital beds](#) across England occupied by medically fit patients without the care packages they need to safely leave hospital, that is unforgivable. Because every bed space we can possibly release is quite literally a matter of life and death for the patients at home with [heart attacks and strokes](#) waiting for ambulances that never come.

Be under no illusions. If it wanted to, the government could reduce the avoidable death toll this minute. It could fund the block booking of care home beds – as it did during Covid – to discharge thousands of medically fit patients from hospitals. It could mobilise an emergency crisis force of volunteer carers to help support patients at home after discharge. It could end the insanity of the [pension trap](#) for senior doctors that forces consultants to cut back their hours unwillingly or else face punitive six-figure tax bills. Above all – if it cared about the endemic burnout and hopelessness that propels so many desperate staff these days into quitting the NHS they used to cherish – it could once, just once, break its 12-year obsession with curating NHS headlines, and tell the truth.

Because the chancellor is right. Nobody deserves to become a statistic in an NHS hospital. Yet through their collective inaction at a time when so many patients’ lives are actively imperilled, Hunt, Barclay and Sunak have all made it perfectly clear that when push comes to shove, only the right type of avoidable death really matters. The ones caused by political choices? Come on. Not only are those ones irrelevant, they don’t even exist at all.

- Rachel Clarke is a palliative care doctor and the author of *Breathtaking: Inside the NHS in a Time of Pandemic*

- ***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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Iran

Iran condemned for executing two men over alleged crimes during protests

Campaigners call for greater global action after deaths of Mohammad Mahdi Karami and Seyyed Mohammad Hosseini



Mohammad Mahdi Karami and Seyyed Mohammad Hosseini, in an image grab of footage from Iranian state TV. Photograph: IRINN/AFP/Getty Images

Agence France-Presse in Paris

Sat 7 Jan 2023 11.30 ESTFirst published on Sat 7 Jan 2023 02.05 EST

Iran drew international condemnation on Saturday after it executed two men for killing a paramilitary force member in November during protests sparked by the death in custody of a young woman.

The latest killings double the number executed so far in connection with the nationwide protests. Two men were [put to death in December](#), sparking

global outrage.

They also come in defiance of a campaign by international rights groups for the lives of the two men to be spared.

“Mohammad Mahdi Karami and Seyyed Mohammad Hosseini, the main perpetrators of the crime that led to the martyrdom of Ruhollah Ajamian, were hanged this morning,” judicial news agency Mizan Online reported on Saturday.

The UN human rights office decried the executions, which it said followed “unfair trials based on forced confessions”.

“We urge Iran to halt all executions,” it said on Twitter.

The British foreign minister, James Cleverly, condemned the executions and urged Iran to “immediately end the violence against its own people”.

“The execution of Mohammad Mahdi Karami and Seyed Mohammad Hosseini by the Iranian regime is abhorrent,” Cleverly said on Twitter. “The UK is strongly opposed to the death penalty in all circumstances.”

The US state department condemned “in the strongest terms” what it said were the “sham trials and execution” of the men.

“These executions are a key component of the regime’s effort to suppress protests,” state department spokesman Ned Price said on Twitter. “We continue to work with partners to pursue accountability for Iran’s brutal crackdown.”

Iran hanged the two men for allegedly killing a member of the security forces during nationwide protests that started after the death of 22-year-old Kurdish Iranian woman Mahsa Amini last September.

The European Union said it was “appalled” by the executions.

“This is yet another sign of the Iranian authorities’ violent repression of civilian demonstrations,” the spokesperson for the bloc’s foreign affairs chief, Josep Borrell, said, urging an immediate end to death sentences against protesters.

Iran’s court of first instance had sentenced the two men to death in early December, it said, and on Tuesday the supreme court upheld the death sentences, accusing them of killing Ajamian on 3 November.

The victim was a member of the Basij militia – linked to the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps – who died in Karaj, west of Tehran.

Prosecutors previously said the 27-year-old was stripped naked and killed by a group of mourners who had been paying tribute to a slain protester, Hadis Najafi.

Karami’s parents issued a video pleading for authorities to spare his life in December.

“I respectfully ask the judiciary, I beg you please, I ask you ... to remove the death penalty from my son’s case,” said Mashallah Karami.

He described his son as a former national karate team member and told Iranian media that a family lawyer had been unable to access his case file.

Karami was not allowed to have a final meeting with his family and had foregone food and water in protest, according to Mohamad Aghasi, whom relatives wanted to handle the case, in remarks on Twitter.

Mahmood Amiry-Moghaddam, the director of Oslo-based group Iran Human Rights, said both men “were subjected to torture, sentenced after sham trials ... without the minimum standards for due process”.

Nazanin Boniadi, a British actor of Iranian origin and an ambassador for Amnesty International in the UK, said on Twitter that the “political cost of Iran executions” must increase.

Campaigners have called for stronger international action after the latest executions.

The New York-based Center for Human Rights in Iran said foreign nations must withdraw their ambassadors from Iran and call for a moratorium on executions and state violence against peaceful dissent.

“We are mourning as a nation,” prominent US-based dissident Masih Alinejad said in a Twitter post. “Help us save others.”

Authorities have arrested thousands people in the wave of demonstrations that began with the death in custody of Amini, who had been arrested by morality police for allegedly breaching the strict dress code for women.

Since the beginning of the protest movement, courts have sentenced 14 people to death in connection with the demonstrations, according to an Agence France-Presse count based on official information.

Among those, four have been executed, two others have had their sentences confirmed by the supreme court, six are awaiting new trials and two others can appeal.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/07/iran-executes-two-men-over-alleged-crimes-during-protests-judiciary-says>

Romania

Andrew Tate arrest: Romanian authorities seize four more luxury cars

Fresh haul follows 11 cars already taken in investigation into social media influencer, who is due in court next week



Andrew Tate and Tristan Tate being escorted by police officers outside the headquarters of the Directorate for Investigating Organised Crime and Terrorism in Bucharest on 29 December. Photograph: Inquam Photos/Octav Ganea/Reuters

PA Media

Fri 6 Jan 2023 15.26 EST Last modified on Fri 6 Jan 2023 16.09 EST

Romanian authorities have seized four more luxury cars as part of an investigation into the controversial online influencer and misogynist Andrew Tate before a court appearance next week.

The 36-year-old former professional kickboxer, who has been banned from a number of social media platforms for misogynistic comments and hate speech, was detained along with his brother Tristan in the country last week as part of a human trafficking and rape investigation.

On Friday, an official said prosecutors investigating the case had seized another four vehicles on Thursday, after 11 cars were taken in raids.

At least seven of the seized cars are registered to the Tate brothers.

More than 10 properties or land owned by companies registered to them have also been seized, which would be used to pay for the investigation and pay damages to victims if they are convicted, Ramona Bolla, a spokesperson for Romania's Directorate for Investigating Organised Crime and Terrorism (Diicot), said.

A statement from the agency, which did not name the Tates, who grew up in Luton, Bedfordshire, said two British citizens and two Romanians were suspected of being part of a criminal group focused on human trafficking.

Andrew Tate escorted by Romanian police officers after raid – video

The Tate brothers have been under criminal investigation in Romania since April last year, and were arrested in Bucharest on 29 December on charges of human trafficking, rape and forming an organised crime group.

Days earlier, Tate engaged in a Twitter standoff with the climate activist Greta Thunberg, attempting to troll her by telling her about his large collection of emission-heavy cars. Thunberg responded by [implying](#) Tate had “small-dick energy”.

The Tate brothers are expected to appear in a Bucharest court next week to have their appeals heard against a judge's decision to extend their arrest warrants from 24 hours to 30 days, Diicot said.

The Tate brothers will also appeal against the seizure of some of their belongings.

Tate appeared to deny the accusations, suggesting after [his arrest](#) he had been captured by Matrix agents, a reference to beliefs based on the science-fiction film series.

According to Diicot, six injured people have been identified in relation to the investigation, one of whom is said to have been violently sexually assaulted in March.

Some of the suspects allegedly used the “loverboy” method of trafficking, which involves a man luring a victim into a relationship in order to sexually exploit them later.

The victims were transported and housed in buildings in Ilfov county, which surrounds Bucharest, where they were coerced into making pornographic content, it is alleged.

Diicot released a video of the raid showing guns, knives and money on display in one room.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/06/andrew-tate-arrest-romanian-authorities-seize-four-more-luxury-cars>

‘Happy to let it hang out’: budgie smugglers are back on Australian beaches

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2023/jan/07/happy-to-let-it-hang-out-budgie-smugglers-are-back-on-australian-beaches>

Newtown shooting

Alex Jones lawyer's license is suspended for releasing sensitive records

Norman Pattis cannot practice in Connecticut after releasing medical records of Sandy Hook families during Infowars host's trial



Alex Jones testified on 22 September 2022 at the Sandy Hook defamation damages trial in Waterbury, Connecticut. Photograph: Tyler Sizemore/AP

[Maya Yang](#)

Fri 6 Jan 2023 17.48 ESTLast modified on Fri 6 Jan 2023 18.28 EST

A judge has suspended the license of a lawyer who was representing Alex Jones when the attorney appeared to have accidentally released sensitive court records surrounding the defamation lawsuits after the [Sandy Hook school killings](#) that the notorious conspiracy theorist lost.

In a [court order](#) that she issued on Thursday, Connecticut judge Barbara Bellis suspended New Haven-based Norman Pattis from practicing law in the state for six months.

Bellis, who decried Pattis's actions as "inexcusable" and an "abject failure", wrote: "We cannot expect our system of justice or our attorneys to be perfect, but we can expect fundamental fairness and decency."

Pattis had sent out medical records pertaining to some of the families of those killed during the Sandy Hook attack, along with other information that was considered confidential, Bellis's ruling showed.

Despite Pattis's claim that the release of the records was an "inadvertent mistake", Bellis "flatly rejects" the claim. In her court order, she wrote that "there was no fairness or decency" in how Pattis handled "sensitive and personal information" at the center of a lawsuit in which the families of Sandy Hook victims accused Jones of using the shooting that killed 26 at the school to build his audience and make millions of dollars through his false claims that the tragedy was a hoax aimed at forcing the US to accept gun reform.

"At a basic level, attorneys must competently and appropriately handle the discovery of sensitive materials in civil cases. Otherwise, our civil system, in which discovery of sensitive information is customary and routine, would simply collapse," Bellis continued.

[An assistant of another attorney for Jones](#), in a related case in Texas, mistakenly sent their legal adversaries' Jones's text messages that contradicted sworn statements from Jones claiming he had nothing on his phone related to the deadly school shooting.

Rulings in the lawsuits against Jones in Texas, where he resides, and Connecticut, where the Sandy Hook attack occurred, have resulted in Jones being ordered to pay more than \$1bn in damages after he was found to have unduly inflicted anguish on victims' families, among other harm.

In a statement to the Associated Press, Pattis said he plans to challenge the order with a higher court, [writing](#): "We're looking forward to appellate

review.”

Pattis is currently representing a member of the rightwing extremist group Proud Boys in Washington DC who has been criminally charged with seditious conspiracy surrounding the violent January 6 riots that took place at the US Capitol exactly two years ago Friday.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/jan/06/alex-jones-lawyer-license-suspended-sensitive-records-release>

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Brexit

Brexit: thousands of Britons expelled from EU since end of transition period

More than 2,250 UK nationals ordered to leave bloc between January 2021 and September 2022

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



Demonstrators in Berlin hold an EU flag during a rally against attempts to force through a no-deal Brexit in 2019. Photograph: Hannibal Hanschke/Reuters

[Jon Henley](#) *Europe correspondent*

[@jonhenley](#)

Fri 6 Jan 2023 08.43 EST Last modified on Fri 6 Jan 2023 14.45 EST

More than 2,250 British citizens were ordered to leave EU member states between the end of the [Brexit](#) transition period and September last year,

according to figures from the bloc's statistical office.

Quarterly [data](#) published late last month by Eurostat shows a total of 2,285 UK nationals were expelled from 1 January 2021, when British citizens [lost their free movement rights](#) within the EU, until the third quarter of last year.

Experts cautioned that the data did not specify why people were ordered to leave so not all expulsions may have been related to residency rules, but said the figures amounted to “the starkest possible reminder” of the consequences of Brexit.

“British citizens are now third-country nationals in the EU and those who are not covered by the withdrawal agreement are subject to domestic immigration laws,” said Prof Michaela Benson of Lancaster University, who has co-led [several research projects](#) on post-Brexit migration, citizenship and identity.

The Eurostat data, [first reported by the Local](#), showed striking variations between EU member states, with Sweden accounting for nearly half (1,050) of all British citizens ordered to leave over the period and the Netherlands almost a third (615).

Malta told 115 UK nationals to leave its territory, France 95, Belgium 65, Denmark 40, Germany 25 and Austria 10, while some countries with large populations of British residents, including Spain, Portugal and Italy, reported no expulsion orders.

Benson said the contrasts most likely reflected domestic policy differences on immigration, registration requirements, and recording and reporting. “Denmark obviously has a notoriously tough approach to all immigration,” she said.

The Guardian has reported the cases of two British nationals, [Phil Russell](#) and [Will Hill](#), who were ordered to leave because they did not know until too late they had to apply to stay in Denmark after Brexit and their applications were a few days late.

Sweden and the Netherlands had particularly strict registration requirements processes even for EU nationals, while Spain is known to have [asked some UK nationals to leave](#) but has seemingly not reported it.

Jane Golding, co-chair of the [British in Europe group](#), said there were “worryingly high” numbers of orders to leave in some countries but the data did not distinguish between people who arrived after December 2020 and those resident before, who should in principle have rights under the Brexit withdrawal agreement.

“Without further information, we cannot tell whether there are withdrawal agreement implementation problems in some of those countries that need to be investigated,” Golding said.

Benson said some of those ordered to leave may also have found themselves “accidentally” in EU member states as a result, for example, of Covid lockdowns, while others could have been subject to judicial orders, for example after committing crimes.

Comparisons with previous years are not possible because British citizens were not classed as third-country nationals so the data is not available, but it seems likely many of those ordered to leave since January 2021 have fallen foul of post-Brexit residency rules.

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“We don’t know the precise reasons people were told to leave, so we should be cautious about drawing too many definitive conclusions,” Benson said.

“But this is the starkest possible reminder that 26 EU states – all bar Ireland – can exercise national immigration controls on UK citizens, and many are doing so. And that’s a consequence of Britain leaving the EU.”

Under the terms of the withdrawal agreement, UK citizens who were legally resident in one of the EU’s 27 member states at the end of the transition period on 31 December 2020 were eligible for permanent residence, protecting their basic rights.

Fourteen countries, including Spain, Germany, Portugal and Italy, opted for systems automatically conferring a new post-Brexit residence status on legally resident Britons, with no risk of losing rights if any administrative deadline is missed.

The remaining 13, however, required UK nationals to formally apply for their new post-Brexit residence status, with many setting cut-off dates.

Those who missed the deadline – many of whom have said they were not properly informed of their need to apply – as well as new arrivals since January 2021 are now subject to EU member states’ immigration, residency and visa laws for third-country nationals.

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Headlines thursday 5 january 2023

- [Exclusive Prince Harry details physical attack by brother William in new book](#)
- [Live Keir Starmer to promise 'completely new way of governing' in major speech](#)
- [Labour We will not open 'big government chequebook', Starmer to say](#)
- [Climate crisis UK average annual temperature tops 10C for first time](#)

[Books](#)

Prince Harry details physical attack by brother William in new book

Exclusive: Harry writes in new autobiography *Spare* that William ‘knocked me to the floor’ during confrontation in London in 2019



Harry and William in London in September, following the death of the Queen. The Guardian obtained a copy of Harry’s autobiography. Photograph: Reuters

[Martin Pengelly](#) in New York

[@MartinPengelly](#)

Wed 4 Jan 2023 19.03 ESTLast modified on Sat 7 Jan 2023 10.36 EST

In his [highly anticipated](#) autobiography, *Spare*, Prince Harry recounts what he says was a physical attack by his brother, William, now Prince of Wales, as their relationship fell apart over the younger prince’s marriage to the actor Meghan Markle.

Describing a confrontation at his London home in 2019, Harry says William called Meghan “difficult”, “rude” and “abrasive”, which Harry calls a “parrot[ing of] the press narrative” about his American wife.

The confrontation escalated, Harry writes, until William “grabbed me by the collar, ripping my necklace, and ... knocked me to the floor”.

The extraordinary scene, which Harry says resulted in visible injury to his back, is one of many in *Spare*, which will be published worldwide next week and is likely to spark a serious furore for the British royal family.

Amid stringent pre-launch security around the book, the Guardian obtained a copy.

The book’s title comes from an old saying in royal and aristocratic circles: that a first son is an heir to titles, power and fortune, and a second is therefore a spare, should anything happen to the first-born.

Spare is a remarkable volume, in which the altercation between the two princes forms a startling passage.

Harry writes that William wanted to talk about “the whole rolling catastrophe” of their relationship and struggles with the press. But when William arrived at Nottingham Cottage – where Harry was then living, in the grounds of Kensington Palace and known as “Nott Cott” – he was, Harry says, already “piping hot”.

After William complained about Meghan, Harry writes, Harry told him he was repeating the press narrative and that he expected better. But William, Harry says, was not being rational, leading to the two men shouting over each other.

Harry then accused his brother of acting like an heir, unable to understand why his younger brother was not content to be a spare.



Kate, William, Harry and Meghan at Windsor Castle in September following the death of the Queen. Photograph: Kirsty O'Connor/AFP/Getty Images

Insults were exchanged, before William claimed he was trying to help.

Harry said: “Are you serious? Help me? Sorry – is that what you call this? Helping me?”

That comment, Harry says, angered his brother, who swore while stepping towards him. Now scared, Harry writes, he went to the kitchen, his furious brother following.

Harry writes that he gave his brother a glass of water and said: “Willy, I can’t speak to you when you’re like this.”

He writes: “He set down the water, called me another name, then came at me. It all happened so fast. So very fast. He grabbed me by the collar, ripping my necklace, and he knocked me to the floor. I landed on the dog’s bowl, which cracked under my back, the pieces cutting into me. I lay there for a moment, dazed, then got to my feet and told him to get out.”

Harry writes that William urged him to hit back, citing fights they had as children. Harry says he refused to do so. William left, Harry says, then returned “looking regretful, and apologised”.

When William left again, his brother writes, he “turned and called back: ‘You don’t need to tell Meg about this.’”

“‘You mean that you attacked me?’”

“‘I didn’t attack you, Harold.’”

Harry says he didn’t immediately tell his wife – but did call his therapist.

When Meghan later noticed “scrapes and bruises” on his back, and he therefore told her of the attack, Harry says she “wasn’t that surprised, and wasn’t all that angry.

“She was terribly sad.”

Harry’s resentment of being the “spare” is the unifying theme of his book, through chapters on his childhood, his schooling, his career as a royal and in the British army, his relationship with his parents and brother and his life with Meghan through courtship, wedding and marriage to their own experience of parenthood.

Early on, Harry recounts the story of how his father, now King Charles, supposedly said to his wife, Princess Diana, on the day of Harry’s birth: “Wonderful! Now you’ve given me an heir and a spare – my work is done.”

Whether describing his memories and love for Diana, who was killed in a car crash in Paris in August 1997, or his similar love for his grandmother, Queen Elizabeth II, who died last year, Harry is unsparing in his recounting of intensely private scenes and conversations.

Harry met Meghan in 2016. They married [at Windsor Castle in 2018](#). As Duke and Duchess of Sussex, they began life as working royals but quickly drifted apart from the family and eventually embarked on a largely separate existence, moving to Canada and then California.

Their acrimonious split from the royal family has been the subject of endless press coverage, some of it steered themselves, including via a famous [interview with Oprah Winfrey](#) in 2021 that caused huge controversy on both sides of the Atlantic and around the world.

Subjects from that interview and [a recently released Netflix documentary](#), including a miscarriage suffered by Meghan and her thoughts of suicide, and suggestions of racism within royal circles, are covered extensively in Harry's book.

The book has been trailed and two interviews with Harry are due to be broadcast in the UK and US this weekend, on ITV1 and ITVM and CBS 60 Minutes. Both interviews are eagerly awaited, trailers and teasers reported on as news as speculation about what Harry has chosen to say in his book continues.

In a clip from the ITV interview, Harry said: "I would like to get my father back, I would like to have my brother back."

'I want my father and brother back': ITV releases trailer for interview with Prince Harry – video

Given the details recounted in his book, that might not seem immediately likely. Indeed one of Harry's most pertinent revelations of private conversations between the senior royals comes from the very front of his book.

Harry recounts an anguished meeting with Charles and William after the Windsor Castle [funeral of Prince Phillip](#), the queen's husband, in April 2021.

Charles, he says, stood between his warring sons, "looking up at our flushed faces".

"Please, boys," Harry quotes his father as saying. "Don't make my final years a misery."

- Spare by Prince Harry, The Duke of Sussex (Transworld, £28). To support The Guardian and Observer, order your copy at [guardianbookshop.com](https://www.guardianbookshop.com). Delivery charges may apply.

This article was amended on 6 January 2023. The interview will be shown on ITV1 and ITVM, not ITV News at Ten as an earlier version said.

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[Politics live with Andrew Sparrow](#)Politics

Tory plans for anti-strike law covering NHS and teachers ‘wrong and illegal’, says TUC – as it happened

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Labour

Labour will not open ‘big government chequebook’, Starmer to say

Party leader’s new year speech to promise ‘national renewal’ if elected but stress role of private sector too



Keir Starmer, pictured with the shadow chancellor, Rachel Reeves, will warn that ‘we won’t be able to spend our way out of [the Tories’] mess’ in his new year speech. Photograph: Stefan Rousseau/PA

[Kiran Stacey](#)

Wed 4 Jan 2023 17.30 ESTLast modified on Thu 5 Jan 2023 05.34 EST

Labour will not open the “big government chequebook” in an attempt to repair Britain’s faltering public services if it wins the next election, [Keir Starmer](#) will warn.

In a new year speech in London on Thursday, setting out his principles for government, the Labour leader will promise a “decade of national renewal”

if the party returns to government. But he will deny that the country's problems can be fixed by more spending, even as [doctors say the NHS is in crisis](#) and strikes bring a number of public services to their knees.

Starmer will say: "We can give people a sense of possibility again, show light at the end of the tunnel."

But he will add: "None of this should be taken as code for [Labour](#) getting its big government chequebook out again.

"Of course investment is required – I can see the damage the Tories have done to our public services as plainly as anyone. But we won't be able to spend our way out of their mess – it's not as easy as that. There is no substitute for a robust private sector, creating wealth in every community."

Starmer's speech comes a day after Rishi Sunak [set out his own vision](#) for Britain in a sprawling speech that touched on everything from graffiti to inflation to teaching maths in schools.

The prime minister promised to halve inflation this year, as well as to oversee an increase in growth and a decrease in national debt as a proportion of GDP. But he [has been criticised](#) for underplaying the problems plaguing the NHS, which doctors say could be causing [as many as 500 avoidable deaths](#) each week.

On Wednesday, Sunak [admitted waiting lists were too long](#), but rejected the suggestions that elective surgeries should be cancelled to bring them down.

Starmer will talk about the multiple crises facing the government as an "iceberg on the horizon", warning that the problems with public services are being exacerbated by short-term solutions from Westminster.

He will hint at plans to decentralise power, saying: "I call it 'sticking plaster politics'. This year, we're going to show how real change comes from unlocking the pride and purpose of Britain's communities."

"No more Westminster hoarding power, no more holding back this country's economic potential," he will add.

Starmer will also risk the anger of some of his MPs by speaking warmly about the idea of public-private partnerships, promising “a new approach to the power of government [that is] more relaxed about bringing in the expertise of public and private, business and union, town and city”.

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The words echo the message from his shadow health secretary, Wes Streeting, who [has suggested](#) using private health providers to bring down NHS waiting lists. But that idea has not proved popular with all the party’s MPs – on Wednesday, the shadow health minister Rosena Allin-Khan [repeatedly refused](#) to back the increased use of the private sector in the health service.

On Wednesday, Sunak set out five pledges against which he urged voters to judge him. Starmer has been more cautious about setting out specific promises, but on Thursday he will promise a Labour government would be “driven by clear, measurable objectives”.

He will add: “We will announce these missions in the coming weeks – our manifesto will be built around them. And they will be the driving force of the next Labour government.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2023/jan/04/labour-will-not-open-big-government-chequebook-starmer-to-say>.

Climate crisis

UK's record hot 2022 made 160 times more likely by climate crisis

Without global heating, such warm temperatures would be expected only once every five centuries, Met Office says



People cover themselves from the sun at Millennium Bridge during a heatwave, in London, Britain, July 18, 2022. Photograph: Maja Smiejkowska/Reuters

[Damian Carrington](#) *Environment editor*

[@dpcarrington](#)

Thu 5 Jan 2023 06.34 EST First published on Thu 5 Jan 2023 04.29 EST

The record-breaking heat in the UK in 2022 was made 160 times more likely by the climate crisis, indicating the dominant influence of human-caused global heating on Britain.

Last year has been confirmed as the UK's hottest on record, with the average annual temperature passing the 10C mark for the first time. Scientists at the [Met Office calculated](#) that such heat is now expected every three to four years. Without the greenhouse gases emitted by humanity, such a warm year would be expected only once every five centuries.

The 10.03C recorded in 2022 beat the previous record of 9.88C set in 2014, and is 0.89C above the average of the last three decades. All the UK nations set new record annual temperatures.

[2022 hottest year graph](#)

The world's longest instrumental record of temperature is the 364-year-long [Central England Temperature](#) and this also set a new high in 2022 of 11.1C.

Scientists were shocked in July when the daily [temperature record passed 40C](#) for the first time, obliterating the previous high of 38.7C. The hot summer led to [thousands of early deaths](#). A cold spell in December made little difference to the overall average annual temperature.

The scientists estimated the influence of global heating on the UK's record hot year by comparing the results of climate models reflecting today's high levels of carbon dioxide with models representing the pre-industrial period, when CO₂ levels were much lower.

'It's heartbreaking': ski slopes forced to close as Europe experiences record warm winter – video

Dr Nikos Christidis, a Met Office climate attribution scientist, said: “We calculated that by the end of the century, under a medium [future] emissions scenario, a UK average temperature of 10C could occur almost every year.”

[Guardian analysis](#) in August revealed how people across the world were losing their lives and livelihoods because of more deadly and more frequent heatwaves, floods, wildfires and droughts brought by the climate crisis.

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Dr Mark McCarthy, at the Met Office, said: “The UK surpassing an annual average temperature of 10C is a notable moment in our climatological history [and] comes as no surprise. Since 1884, all 10 years recording the highest annual temperature have occurred from 2003. It is clear from the observational record that human-induced global warming is already impacting the UK’s climate.” Nine of the 10 coldest years on record occurred more than a century ago, the Met Office data showed.

“Even with the influence of climate change we don’t expect every year to be the hottest on record from now on,” McCarthy said. “Natural variability of the UK climate means there will always be some variation year to year. However, looking at longer term trends it is easy to pick out the influence climate change is having over time.”

Prof Richard Allan, at the University of Reading, said: “Higher temperatures in the UK are contributing to more severe heatwaves, droughts and wildfires but also more intense rainfall events and flooding. These impacts will become progressively worse until global temperatures are stabilised by cutting global carbon emissions to net zero.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/jan/05/uk-average-annual-temperature-tops-10c-for-first-time>

2023.01.05 - Spotlight

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‘I’m not always nice’: Hugh Jackman on anger, vulnerability and the loss of his father

[Chris Godfrey](#)



Hugh Jackman at Venice film festival in September. Photograph: Simone Comi/ipa-agency.net/Shutterstock

X-Men made him a star; now *The Son* is giving him a shot at an Oscar. The actor talks about family, superheroes and the sexual misconduct claims against director Bryan Singer



Thu 5 Jan 2023 03.05 ESTFirst published on Thu 5 Jan 2023 01.00 EST

Hugh Jackman is feeling reflective. It's easy to understand why. In his latest film, *The Son*, he plays an absentee, workaholic father struggling to help his estranged and acutely depressed teenage son. The role changed Jackman, he says, "as a man, as an actor, as a father, as a husband". Such a part would inspire a period of introspection for most parents, let alone soon-to-be empty nesters such as Jackman, 54, and his wife, the actor and producer Deborra-Lee Furness (they have two children, Oscar and Ava). Also, towards the end of production, his father died.

"We were close," says Jackman. "Here's a great way to describe my relationship with my dad: we could go to Test cricket and be totally comfortable sitting together, and over a seven-hour Test we'd talk for 20 minutes." Jackman is speaking over a video call from the home of his publicist. He's relaxed and open, often undercutting serious emotional points with a punchline and a booming laugh.

"My mother left when I was eight, so my father raised us," he says. "He taught me really great values. He was never really interested in things like fame and money. He was always encouraging about education and treating people well and keeping your word." His father, Chris, would visit him on set, where he would sit quietly, doing his crossword or sudoku puzzles, occasionally glancing at Jackman to give him a thumbs up. "He saw everything I ever did. He never said a bad word about anything," says Jackman. "A lot of who I am today is because of him."

I am thin-skinned. But it's a strength as an actor. You need sensitivity

Jackman visited Chris in Australia shortly before filming for *The Son* started in London. His father had been living with Alzheimer's for 12 years and his health had been deteriorating. Jackman knew that it was probably goodbye. When Chris died, Jackman stayed in London to finish making *The Son*, partly because his father was the type to never miss a day's work and would have expected the same of his son, but also because the film helped him grieve.

“It was a film that was about vulnerability, that was about family, that was about generations and about how our past informs who we are today,” says Jackman. The Son explores the all-encompassing stranglehold of depression, tackling weighty themes such as the scars of divorce, generational trauma and severe mental illness. Taking on such an exposing role feels almost subversive for an actor more closely associated with comic-book blockbusters (he was X-Men’s Wolverine in nine films) and musical box office juggernauts such as The Greatest Showman and Les Misérables. But Jackman’s performance is assured; he has been nominated for a Golden Globe and is [an outside bet for an Oscar](#).



Hugh Jackman and Zen McGrath in The Son. Photograph: Rekha Garton/AP

Filming was intense, on set and off. As a result of the pandemic, Jackman hadn’t acted for a few years when he started filming and was still living in a Covid bubble with his family. “It was technically difficult. It was emotionally difficult. And I just sort of let go a little bit,” he says. “Stuff from my upbringing was coming up. My worries as a father.” He started experiencing sleepless nights. “That’s a new thing for me. I was thinking about it and dreaming about it. I was more of a hot mess in this than in anything I’ve ever done.”

But it was an enlightening experience, too. “I grew up in a large family with difficulties and some mental health issues,” he says. After doing the film, “I understood the complications around it and that I may have leapt to some judgments about certain people’s behaviours”. Now, he is “much less judgmental about it”. He started therapy during filming.

Jackman’s time on *The Son* also changed his perspective on parenting. “I thought my job was to project confidence and safety,” he says. “And there’s an element of that, I guess, that’s true. But I think now, particularly as they’re older ... being more open on my vulnerability, letting them in on what’s going on inside of me, is something I’ve learned and I would do it differently now.”



In *The Greatest Showman*, 2017. Photograph: 20th Century Fox/Niko Tavernise/Allstar

Is there anything else he would do differently? “I would have moved around less,” he says. “But I thought – Deb and I thought – at the time: I’m doing movies; the lesser of two evils is to have everyone together. I’m not 100% sure, but sometimes stability may have been more beneficial.” He would have been more selective when choosing roles, too. “There was a period where things were hitting for me and I felt like: I’ve got to take this

opportunity. But I look back now and I go: you could have just completely chilled out there and everything would have been fine.”

Jackman grew up in Sydney, the youngest of five siblings, with British parents who had emigrated in the 60s. It was a “busy” childhood. As a teenager Jackman was lanky (his nickname was Sticks), active and “generally the good boy”, bar a brief angsty period as a teenager when he would “tell teachers to F-off and all that”.

For a time, he was also very religious, like his parents, who were devout Christians. “I went to an all-boys school, so church was really handy, because it was where I got to meet girls. But I was genuinely really into it. And then my perspective broadened a bit by the time I was about 16.” He’s no longer religious, but describes himself as spiritual (“more of a universalist”).

I think there are some ways of being on set that would not happen now ... things have changed for the better

Jackman fell in love with the theatre during trips to visit his mother in England. He decided to go to acting school and planned to pay the tuition fee with an inheritance from his grandmother. He sought his father’s opinion. “He said: ‘I couldn’t think of a better way for you to use it, but I have some concerns.’ And I said: ‘You don’t think I’m good enough?’ And he said: ‘I think you’re good enough, but I think you’re too thin-skinned!’” He laughs.

“He’s right: I am thin-skinned.” He refuses to read reviews. “But it’s also a strength as an actor. Thin-skinned is sensitivity, which is something you need. And so I’m still learning to cope with it.”

After graduating from the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts in Perth (and turning down a role in *Neighbours*), he got his professional break on a prison drama, *Correlli*, where he met Furness, his co-star (they have been married since 1996). The show lasted just one season, but stage roles, including playing the lead in a West End production of *Oklahoma!*, put him on Hollywood’s radar.

Jackman was still a relative unknown when the director and producer [Bryan Singer](#) approached him about playing Wolverine in the first X-Men film. Back then, such a role was not the guarantee of stardom it would be now. But X-Men, released in 2000, was a phenomenal success. The franchise spawned 13 films, which grossed more than \$6bn globally and helped usher in the comic-book movie era.



As Wolverine in X-Men, 2000. Photograph: 20th Century Fox/Allstar

For all their success, the legacy of the early [X-Men](#) films has been called into question by allegations made against Singer. In recent years, he has been accused by multiple men (some minors at the time) of sexual misconduct, which Singer has categorically denied. Have these allegations tainted the way Jackman sees the films?

“You know, that’s a really, really complicated question,” he says. “There’s a lot of things at stake there. X-Men was the turning point, I believe, in terms of comic-book movies and I think there’s a lot to be proud of. And there’s certainly questions to be asked and I think they should be asked. But I guess I don’t know how to elegantly answer that. I think it’s complex and ultimately I look back with pride at what we’ve achieved and what momentum that started.”

[A Hollywood Reporter article](#) also detailed claims of an X-Men set where, “behind the scenes, crises raged, including drug use, tantrums and a writers’ feud”. Halle Berry, who was directed by Singer in three X-Men films, recently said of him: “Bryan’s not the easiest dude to work with. I mean, everybody’s heard the stories ...”

I like all the chaos of the stage and I can feel very calm within it

Do these reports chime with Jackman’s experience? “This was my first movie in America, you gotta understand; it was all so new to me,” he says. “I think it’s fair to say that ...” He pauses. “There are some stories, you know ... I think there are some ways of being on set that would not happen now. And I think that things have changed for the better.” It’s as much as he’s prepared to say on Singer. More generally, he says: “There’s way less tolerance for disrespectful, marginalising, bullying, any oppressive behaviour. There’s zero tolerance for it now and people will speak out, and I think that’s great.”

Although Jackman had originally intended to retire as Wolverine after 2017’s much-lauded Logan, in which the character was killed off, he announced earlier this year that he would be returning to the role in Deadpool 3, which also stars Ryan Reynolds, a close friend. He rebuts the idea that he has trouble letting go of his career-defining role. “No, I was OK,” he says. “I wasn’t tortured by it. When people would ask me [to reprise the role] – including Ryan, every five seconds – I was like: I’m done.” But he says he realised how much fun he would have doing a Deadpool movie: “I just wanted to do it and I felt it in my gut.” Plus, he adds: “I get to punch the shit out of Ryan Reynolds every day.”



Performing his concert The Man. The Music. The Show. in New York, 2019.
Photograph: Kevin Mazur/Getty Images for HJ

Jackman is a commercially viable leading man, capable of embracing camp theatricality (*Les Misérables*, *The Greatest Showman*) and collaborating with auteurs such as Darren Aronofsky (*The Fountain*), Christopher Nolan (*The Prestige*), Baz Luhrmann (*Australia*) and Denis Villeneuve (*Prisoners*). He's a reliable Broadway star (he's nearing the end of his production of [The Music Man](#)) and [his concert tour](#) was a critical and commercial success.

He is happiest, as an actor, on stage. He puts it down to his childhood: "I like all the chaos and I can feel very calm within it." He came to dancing later than he should have, after one of his older brothers put him off by suggesting it was for "poofs". But he rediscovered it (and his brother apologised) as a young adult. Did he carry any of those hang-ups with him or worry that his camper performances might discourage offers for more macho roles?

"Oh, no. I don't care about any of that," he says. "I think it's the silliest thing ever. It's crazy. I grew up at the time when the women danced on a dancefloor in a circle and the men stood on the outside with a beer and I was like: what are you guys doing over here? The women are all down there with

their handbags in the centre dancing around. I'm like: this is easy pickings, there's not one man on the dancefloor!"

Jackman has long enjoyed a reputation as one of Hollywood's nicest A-listers, to the extent that he has to deny it. "I'm not always nice," he says. "I've had my moments on set, for sure, when I haven't been nice. And I've behaved sometimes on set where I've yelled a bit or done something where I've been angry that I'm not proud of."

Once more, he looks to the lessons of his father. "I had a great example, particularly from my father, of always trying to be respectful. Everyone is trying their hardest. And my experience is if you turn up, you give everything, you act respectfully, then that's generally what you get from other people."

The Son is in UK cinemas from 17 February

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2023/jan/05/hugh-jackman-wolverine-father-the-son-x-men>

‘We can’t even get basic care done’: what it’s like doing 12-hour shifts on an understaffed NHS ward

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/jan/05/nhs-hospital-ward-understaffed-12-hour-shifts-we-cant-even-get-basic-care-done>

Crawley Town

Crypto chaos: how Crawley crumbled under owners' reckless leadership

The League Two club are in serious trouble thanks to an owner in the dugout, a 32-day managerial reign and a bizarre bonus



Preston Johnson, co-owner of Crawley Town, watching his team from the dugout during their defeat at Stevenage. Photograph: Jim Steele/Alamy

Will Unwin

Thu 5 Jan 2023 03.00 EST Last modified on Thu 5 Jan 2023 05.51 EST

The word “shambles” comes up a lot when you ask people about Crawley Town. They sit 20th in League Two, are looking for their third permanent manager of the season after [Matthew Etherington's exit](#) following 32 days in charge and have cast aside three of their senior players.

When Wagmi United, a cryptocurrency sports company, [bought the club in April](#) its co-founder, Preston Johnson, said: “We think the club can do better

and our fans deserve better.”

They finished in 12th last season, so clearly Wagmi United’s plans are not working out. There were moves to interact with fans, take on their opinions and potentially implement their ideas. The “crypto bros” Johnson and Eben Smith [wanted to do things differently](#) and build a “tight-knit community” of fans “stretching from West Sussex to anywhere in the world with an internet connection”. There was interest and excitement for fans in a new project starting in the fourth tier.

Quick Guide

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The highly respected Kevin Betsy was brought in from Arsenal to be the head coach in this exciting new era. He lasted four months. Lewis Young was put in charge for an interim period and thought he had done enough to secure the job but he too was replaced with Peterborough’s under-18s coach Matthew Etherington.

Johnson discussed how Etherington was a good fit with Wagmi because of his “appetite for risk” that he rather crassly associated with the former Stoke winger’s historic [gambling problems](#). Etherington was then deemed too

much of a risk and sacked after only three games in charge. “It has become clear to all involved parties that this partnership is not the right fit to carry the club forward and achieve our goals,” the club’s director of football and interim chief executive, Chris Galley, said.

Even though Etherington managed 32 days at Crawley, his time in charge was not without incident. He claimed he was not allowed to play striker Tom Nichols after the club agreed a fee with relegation rivals Gillingham. “I got told after training they had accepted an offer for me from another club and I couldn’t play any more,” Nichols said. His exit after his last game for the club on 22 November caused an outcry from fans.



Crawley co-owner Preston Johnson (centre) and interim manager Darren Byfield (right) watch the warm-up before Stevenage v Crawley Town in League Two. Photograph: James Boardman/Shutterstock

The summer was busy in the transfer market for Crawley as they tried to implement a stats-based recruitment policy. Last season’s top scorer in [League Two](#), Dominic Telford, arrived from Newport in a coup for the owners. It was an attractive offer for the striker who is now earning more than double what he was on at Newport, before bonuses. One financial incentive for Telford is to win the ball back in the opposition half, a bonus that is unusual in professional football.

Then there was the case of trying to sign a centre-back this summer who was offered a bonus per header as part of a proposed contract. Considering the stats show the player in question makes between 20 and 30 a game, it would have been a lucrative deal in the fourth tier but he opted to go elsewhere.

Recruitment also took a strange turn when the club announced it would scout a celebrity match taking place at the Valley, home of League One Charlton. Three YouTubers from Sidemen FC, who have a partnership with Wagmi, were granted trials at the club. “All three players will be further evaluated by coaches and staff during the session for possible inclusion in the team for the Red Devils’ upcoming FA Cup match against Accrington Stanley on 5 November,” Crawley said. None of them were signed.

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Since Etherington’s final game in charge on Boxing Day, a 2-1 defeat to Sutton, experienced players George Francomb, who is club captain, Tony Craig and Jake Hessenthaler have been left out of the squad. Francomb gave an honest assessment after the loss to Sutton, saying: “We have got to be stronger as a squad. The squad is light and the squad is not good enough and we need some help in January in my opinion. I feel sorry for the gaffer and Si [Simon Davies]. I feel sorry for the fans with the situation we are in.” He has not played since.



Matthew Etherington takes a first of what would turn out to be only a few training sessions at Crawley's training ground in Southwater. Photograph: James Boardman/Alamy

Etherington was replaced by the caretaker Darren Byfield, who was joined in the dugout for the [away defeat to Stevenage by the co-chairman Johnson](#). The opposition match announcer tweeted: "Tonight's highlight was Johnson asking the fourth official at half-time how subs work. Whilst sat on the bench. Good luck, Crawley fans." Johnson did not attend the next match at Newport.

The club's supporters' association has requested a meeting with the owners but Johnson replied in a statement that they cannot do so immediately while the club go through the process of "getting to the bottom of sensitive legal issues". "A conventional approach to ownership hasn't worked," it was announced when Wagmi bought the club. An unconventional approach is not working either.

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Global development

‘This is another revolution’: could legalisation of cannabis transform Mexico’s economy?

Despite frustrating legislative delays, farmers in Mexico are keen to start growing a crop that may be more profitable than rice, corn or sugar



‘This is another revolution.’ Farmer Isidro Cisneros with his cannabis produce at one of Mexico’s increasing number of marijuana-related events. Photograph: Mattha Busby/The Guardian

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[Mattha Busby](#) in *Puebla*

Thu 5 Jan 2023 02.45 EST Last modified on Fri 6 Jan 2023 07.28 EST

The pungent aroma of cannabis and the sound of dub music fill the air at a hacienda as about 150 smokers, users, growers, activists and business people gather for Mexico's second annual Toquefest.

In anticipation of the long-delayed [legalisation of cannabis](#) – after a number of supreme court decisions [decreed the right to cultivate](#) and deemed unconstitutional the ban on recreational use – the war on weed in Mexico is winding down and the festival is just one of 20 marijuana-related events being held [across the country](#).

Cannabis growers feel increasingly confident in going public and some farmers are switching crops to *la Santa Rosa*: a gram of which can be sold for more than several kilos of black beans.

“This is another revolution,” says Isidro Cisneros, a grower from the town of Cuautlixco in the state of Morelos where the Mexican revolutionary Emiliano Zapata was born. “It’s about land and freedom, and a plant that has

been criminalised for years without good reason. Growing cannabis, peasants can live and eat well.”

Communities are coming out of clandestine markets to say this is part of our economic development

Zara Snapp, Instituto RIA

Cisneros – who began growing cannabis [in 2022](#) – is part of the campaign group Plan Tetecala, which has gained [the support](#) of the state human rights commission.

One of many growers selling their products late last year at Toquefest in Puebla, two hours south-east of Mexico City, Cisneros says: “Farmers must have the liberty to plant what they want, and not only when the government or corporations say they can,” he adds. “Since the revolution, no one has helped us: now is the moment for us to help ourselves.”

Mexico’s president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, has [indicated his support](#) for legalisation as part of a wider push to dismantle prohibitionist policies but [has been criticised](#) for dragging his feet. Bills [have been passed](#) in both legislative chambers over the past two years but they have not agreed on the same version.



A legal market for cannabis in Mexico is estimated to be worth more than US\$3bn a year. Photograph: Mattha Busby/The Guardian

Campaigners allege that opposition from the armed forces could be holding up legislative success. In November, hacked documents from the defence ministry [revealed links](#) between elected officials and drug cartels, and influence of the military over civilian institutions. Activists also point to the removal of equity clauses in the drafts as evidence of corporate influence that, in the US, has contributed to high taxes and bureaucracy that effectively exclude small farmers.

Despite senior government figures indicating regulation [is a top priority](#) the domestic industry is developing apace in a mostly tolerated grey market free from an influx of foreign capital that could arrive if legalisation is passed without safeguards.

Communities in Michoacán, Chiapas, Oaxaca and Guerrero, among others, have said they want a share of the pie – with many landless farmers known as *campesinos* still earning near subsistence wages growing rice, corn and sugar.



Demonstrators in Mexico City calling for the legalisation of cannabis, which many producers see as an engine for economic growth. Photograph: Carlos

Ramírez/EPA

“Communities are coming out of clandestine markets to say ‘This is part of our economic development; it’s a way to provide a better future for our children,’” says Zara Snapp, the co-founder of drug policy reform thinktank Instituto RIA, who spoke at Toquefest.

“There are many more farmers who would like to switch crops to cannabis, though they are not yet ready to take that risk. But there’s still a legal vacuum, and folks are participating.”

More than 10 million people in Mexico are estimated to have [used cannabis](#). A legal market [could](#) be worth more than US\$3bn (£2.5bn) a year, and at least 101,000 hectares (250,000 acres) – primarily in the northern states of Sinaloa, Chihuahua, and Sonora – are [already used](#) for illegal production.

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Reports suggest there are now 800 cannabis producers across the state of Oaxaca alone. Photograph: Plan Tetecala

Last year, after protests in Oaxaca, the state's authorities decreed that people can smoke cannabis [in public](#).

Federal authorities also [granted twenty-six Indigenous communities](#) the right to cultivate cannabis on a small scale for medical use, which was legalised in 2017.

There are now reportedly about 800 producers across the state, though many were already growing cannabis and most, if not all, will be providing cannabis for recreational and medical use.

“Cannabis is an engine for economic growth,” says agronomist Daniel Ramírez López, who works with Oaxacan cannabis advocacy group Cooagro. “Indigenous people call cannabis *pipiltzintzintli*, giving it a sacred connection. Despite the serious bureaucratic obstacles due to a lack of initiative from the federal government, producers are organising so that they can carry out a legal economic activity that triggers development for all.”

Cannabis was introduced to Mexico – to be grown as hemp – more than 500 years ago by the Spanish conquistadores. It has been widely used, including

by Indigenous people, in tinctures to aid sleep and relieve pain. The anthem of the Mexican revolution, *La Cucaracha* (the cockroach), [charts the path](#) of a peasant army smoking cannabis as they march.

But during the US-led “war on drugs”, the army bombarded communities [with deadly chemicals](#) to destroy crops. As recently as December 2020, in Oaxaca, about 3,000 sq metres of cannabis crops were set alight by the army.

“Before, we used to run to the hill because we were afraid of the military,” farmer Juan Cruz López told [El Proceso](#). “They entered houses without a search warrant, detained whoever they found and took what little one had ... that no longer happens.”

Campesinos under cartel control face little hope of change, but Cisneros and his comrades hope full legalisation is on its way. “We are realising that it is possible to radically change the way of thinking about this plant,” he tells the crowd in Puebla. “We are in this fight and we hope we are going to win. It grew to cure us.”

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2023.01.05 - Opinion

- Fifa must provide hope by recognising exiled Afghanistan women's football team
- Rahul Gandhi is marching the entire length of India. I joined him to find out why
- Ice baths in January? Why science suggests we ditch all the self-flagellation
- Life in Happy Valley is grim – but there's nowhere I'd rather spend January

Women's football

Fifa must provide hope by recognising exiled Afghanistan women's football team

Khalida Popal and [Malala Yousafzai](#)

Football has to send a message to the Taliban that women belong at work, in the classroom and on the football pitch



Most of the Afghan women's team live in Australia and are determined to stay together. Photograph: Mike Owen/Getty Images

Thu 5 Jan 2023 03.17 EST Last modified on Thu 5 Jan 2023 17.43 EST

Now that teams, fans and sponsors have left Qatar, [Fifa](#) is turning its attention to the Women's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand in July. World football's governing body is hoping for a smoother event, where people can watch matches and "have a moment where we don't have to

think about this”, as its president, Gianni Infantino, said, referring to the uproar over human rights abuses and player protests in Doha.

Perhaps that’s why Fifa has so far ignored pleas from the Afghan women’s national team to officially recognise their players. Since August 2021, the athletes and coaches have been living as refugees after a harrowing escape from their country, where they feared they would be arrested or killed as members of a well-known women’s team in [Afghanistan](#).

They were right to be afraid. [The Taliban quickly forbade women and girls from playing sports](#) and, weeks after they came to power, reportedly beheaded a member of the national volleyball team. In November, they banned women from all gyms and parks, even those designated as single-sex spaces.

The Taliban’s war on women goes beyond sports and recreation. They have prohibited adolescent girls from going to school for more than a year and less than two weeks ago [kicked women out of all universities](#) across the country. A few days later, they decreed that [women were not allowed to work in local and international humanitarian organisations](#).

As the Taliban erases women from all public life, the Afghan women’s football team players remain symbols of courage and resistance for their country. [Most of the team now live in Australia](#), where they train for an uncertain future. After losing their homes, livelihoods, and many friends and relatives, the women are determined to keep their team together.

The trauma of their escape from Afghanistan and the struggle of adjusting to an unfamiliar country, learning a new language and finding jobs weigh on them. Players have experienced recurring nightmares, trouble sleeping and depression. On the pitch, however, they smile, shout and celebrate every goal with wild enthusiasm.

Quick Guide

What Fifa says

Show

A Fifa spokesperson said: “Fifa has been closely following the situation of the Afghan football community within the country and abroad, especially the situation of female players.

"The selection of players and teams representing a member association is considered as an internal affair of the member association. Therefore, FIFA does not have the right to officially recognise any team unless it is first recognised by the concerned member association.

However, Fifa will continue to monitor the situation very closely and remain in close contact with the Afghan Football Federation.”

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.

Though they’ve missed the qualification rounds for this year’s World Cup, the team hope to continue to develop their skills and one day play alongside the world’s best again. Most of all, they want to give hope to women and girls living under Afghanistan’s oppressive, patriarchal regime.

But without formal recognition from Fifa, the team cannot represent their country, compete in professional matches or receive the funding they need to support their players and staff. Despite filing multiple reports with Fifa detailing breaches to the organisation’s code of ethics and citing rules that should allow the women to play in exile, they have received no response.

For the past year, human rights advocates have been calling on world leaders to refuse to negotiate with the Taliban or recognise their government until they end their discrimination against women and let girls go back to school; many countries have agreed to these terms. Aid groups have been working in Afghanistan to support starving families in the midst of a massive humanitarian crisis and economic collapse. People around the world helped evacuate at-risk Afghans and opened their homes to refugees.

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Now, Fifa must use its power to send a message to the Taliban as well: women belong at work, in the classroom and on the football pitch. Afghanistan's female footballers love their sport and their country. They know what it means to Afghan girls and women living under the Taliban's oppression to see them in their kits, representing their home. They understand the diplomatic power of sports; that organisations such as Fifa can serve as a check on discrimination against women and defend equality for female athletes.

Fifa's code of ethics prohibits gender discrimination; its statutes proclaim that the organisation must "strive to promote the protection" of human rights. If it wants to set its own record straight, Fifa can start by recognising the Afghan women's national team.

Khalida Popal is the founder and former coach of the Afghanistan women's national football team. Malala Yousafzai is a Nobel Peace Prize laureate.

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[OpinionIndia](#)

Rahul Gandhi is marching the entire length of India. I joined him to find out why

[Mukulika Banerjee](#)

The scion of that most famous political dynasty wants to bring India ‘together’ after years of dangerous division



‘As Rahul Gandhi (right) has argued, the streets are the only arena left for India’s opposition.’ Photograph: EPA

Thu 5 Jan 2023 03.00 EST Last modified on Fri 6 Jan 2023 05.17 EST

How does an opposition politician seize the initiative in India, a vast and populous country with an increasingly authoritarian ruling party and state? [Rahul Gandhi](#) has an answer, and it involves a pair of trainers.

Bharat Jodo Yatra, a “journey bringing [India](#) together”, is the name of a long march that Gandhi, a prominent member of the Indian National Congress party, has been leading from the country’s southernmost tropical tip to its icy north. He has covered about 1,900 miles (3,000km) so far, walking 12-15 miles every day, with hundreds of others drawn from his party, as well as civil society members and celebrities. Thousands line the route wherever the march passes to catch a glimpse of the famous politician and to show support. Since anyone is allowed to join, I decided to tag along for two days.

My journey began as soon as I alighted at Sawai Madhopur train station in Rajasthan. A young doctor, one of the *yatris* (marchers), had come to town to collect medicines needed at the camp, but was stranded. As we chatted in the car, he said he was deeply worried about the direction the country was taking and wanted badly to be part of something positive. This was the gist of what many other people said to me. No lofty ideological statements, but simple motivations such as: “We can do better than hate.”

Why march? There is the historical resonance – Mahatma Gandhi famously marched against British rule in 1930; marching is part of the repertoire of Indian politics. But as Rahul Gandhi has argued, the real reason is that the streets are the only arena left for India’s opposition. That is, in an India where the Modi government has weaponised the police, courts, tax and other enforcement institutions to hound any critic; where big businesses compete to join the elite ranks of Modi’s billionaire cronies; and where the mainstream media have become a post-truth foghorn for government, marching en masse is the only way to make visible the fact that many disagree with the ruinous direction in which the government is taking India.

Predictably, the yatra has not been given attention by most of the mainstream media and many Indians away from its route, including in the international diaspora, do not even know it is happening.



‘The sight of Rahul Gandhi, unkempt beard and trainers, walking along surrounded by ordinary people makes for a compelling political image.’
Photograph: Noah Seelam/AFP/Getty Images

Each day began at 6am. In Rajasthan, in December, this meant it was pitch dark and bitterly cold. As we huddled in our shawls and jackets, our bodies warmed with the chants and slogans that began as soon as we set off. The first major break came at 10.30am at “camp”: here, hundreds of mattresses, quilts and pillows were laid out for the yatris to rest, with lunch served at an adjoining marquee at 12.

The whole operation was like the military campaign of a mammoth, non-violent army. The walk resumed again about 3pm, ending at the day’s finish point marked by a giant helium balloon you could spot a kilometre away. Women walked in crisp saris, men in the same clothes day after day – the variety of languages, backgrounds and temperaments was mind-boggling. It was a mini-India that seemed to be on the march. We all know this India exists, but rarely get to experience it first hand, all at once.

On the second day, I walked alongside Gandhi. As in earlier encounters, I found him to be courteous and cerebral, eager for a back and forth conversation. We debated the usefulness of western political thought in

furthering our understanding of Indian politics. It was possible to challenge him and disagree in a way you can't with most Indian politicians – certainly not with Narendra Modi, who refuses to engage even with press conferences. With Modi, Indian citizens are given the shock and awe strategy of lavish stage-managed events. In contrast, the sight of Rahul Gandhi, unkempt beard and trainers, walking along surrounded by ordinary people makes for a compelling political image.

It is true, however, that the Congress party's failure in recent years to win enough elections is also blamed on Gandhi. He has been accused of being a part-time politician, a reluctant and ineffective president of the party, dubbed "pappu" (a nickname for a young, naive boy) by his opponents. (Rahul is the son of former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi and grandson of former prime minister Indira Gandhi.)

In opposition, the party organisation had become increasingly moribund, its members demoralised. But the yatra, party workers say, has gone some way in addressing this. It has given the rank and file a sense of purpose, having organised this enormous roadshow, and suggests that the "pappu" label no longer fits. The Congress [lost the Gujarat elections](#) (in Modi's home state) during the yatra but this did not seem to dampen spirits. The hard work of winning hearts and minds remains to be done.

The last time a yatra caught the imagination, it was the BJP's LK Advani's *Rath Yatra* atop a modified Toyota SUV in the early 1990s. Traversing the country, the procession [left](#) violence in its wake and led eventually to the [destruction](#) of the 16th-century Babri mosque by Hindu mobs.

The current Indian government's ideology is built on its legacy. The yatris I walked with instead held up the image of an alternative India, one of compassion and solidarity. The question is which path the Indian population will choose to take?

- Dr Mukulika Banerjee is a professor at the London School of Economics
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[Opinion](#) **Health & wellbeing**

Ice baths in January? Why science suggests we ditch all the self-flagellation

[Joel Snape](#)



Many of my friends are leaping into wheelie bins full of ice cubes. I will be sticking to indulgence and easy living – and the research is on my side



Chill ... sitting in a plastic tub of ice is not a winter pursuit worth pursuing.
Photograph: Ali Haider/EPA-EFE/Shutterstock

Thu 5 Jan 2023 02.00 EST Last modified on Thu 5 Jan 2023 11.12 EST

Somehow, I've become the sort of person whose WhatsApp friends are planning a January ice bath challenge. The warning signs were all there: they have been going on about chlorine floaters and wireless thermometers for months, swapping pictures of their outdoor tubs and tipping each other off when B&Q has a flash sale on water butts. Now it has escalated: five minutes a day in the 12C glug is the prescription, with a 100 press-ups bonus round and no-booze rider for the genuine maniacs. In, I repeat, *January*.

Obviously, I won't be participating. First, I'm not convinced the science suggests I need 31 ice baths: yes, there's some evidence that they reduce inflammation, but that might be counterproductive if you are aiming to build muscle, as I frequently am. Research also suggests that targeted cold exposure might improve attention, mood and cognitive focus, and that if it's applied to your glabrous skin surfaces – a fancy word, as I've recently learned, for all the hairless areas – it might even improve your 5k time or bench press.

If I want to improve my life, I won't do it by disrupting the school run because I've gone full manatee

But if I'm going to be motivated to top up a wheelie bin with ice cubes and wince my way into it every morning, I need a bit less "statistically significant" and a bit more "instant Captain America". I want to silence any disapproving neighbours with a porpoise-like somersault out of the frosty water, not feel a bit less sleepy in the late afternoon. There are loads of things I could already be doing to get faster, more proven benefits – sleeping more, drinking more water, not staring at my phone the instant I wake up – and I'm not doing any of them. If I want to improve my life, that is where I should start, not by disrupting the school run because I've gone full manatee. Ice baths aren't a plaster on a gunshot wound, they are an MRI scan for a mild hangover.

Second, and maybe more importantly, I'm not convinced that this sort of self-flagellation, especially during the worst bit of the year, does anybody any good. There is research to suggest that we humans prefer "additive" solutions to "subtractive" ones – stabilisers over pedal-free balance bikes, productivity plans over streamlining, sticking extra bits on the Lego tower rather than taking them away – but, as far as I know, nobody has bothered to check whether we favour punitive solutions over pleasurable ones. It would be interesting because we do seem to gravitate to the former. Maybe it's because "no pain, no gain" rhymes better than "no strain, moderate gains over an appropriate period of time".

For example, I experimented with cold-water immersion in the form of a load of icy showers last summer. And it was fine! For a dozen mornings, I reduced the temperature, gritted my teeth, and blasted my glabrous and non-glabrous areas alike with cold, cold water. I definitely felt better afterwards, in the way you always feel better when you go from doing something horrible to doing something fine; and I might have been slightly more productive, thanks to being immediately and extremely awake. Cold-shower fans claim they can reduce anxiety, by nudging the autonomic nervous system into producing endorphins, and I certainly felt a bit calmer when I wasn't sluicing myself down with 10C water.

Then I read about the “default mode network”, a set of regions of the brain that kick in when we’re not distracted by our external surroundings, allowing thoughts and concepts to bump into each other and serendipitously combine. It’s this network that facilitates “shower thoughts”, those moments of creative connection that usually occur in the five minutes a day you’re not staring at a screen – and it’s that network I was switching off by turning every shower into an ordeal, blasting those little sparks straight out of my head like a prison warder turning a firehose on rioters.

So that is why I stopped having cold showers, and it is also why I won’t be taking ice baths in January. Instead, I plan a month of indulgently steamy soaks, where I can let my thoughts carom off each other while I wallow in 40C water like a hippo. Why not join me? If B&Q gets involved, this could be the start of something really special.

- Joel Snape is a writer and self-improvement enthusiast.

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[Opinion](#)Happy Valley.

Life in Happy Valley is grim – but there's nowhere I'd rather spend January

[Emma Brockes](#)



Sarah Lancashire is back in Sally Wainwright's stupendous series, and both are better than ever



Sarah Lancashire in Happy Valley. ‘Her face hits shades of incredulity that seem to expand the range of human expression.’ Photograph: Matt Squire/BBC/Lookout Point

Thu 5 Jan 2023 01.00 ESTLast modified on Thu 5 Jan 2023 14.43 EST

It has been almost seven years since we were last up Ripponden, in the BBC drama Happy Valley, and to judge by the [reception this week](#), you’d have thought it a return to paradise. As with the first two seasons, the opening episode of season three was a pitch-perfect combination of family and police drama. It was also a continuation of a set of incredibly grim themes that have brought us peculiar joy: in addition to the suicide, rape and murder of the first two seasons, here comes addiction, coercive control and another slightly rapey guy – not quite in the league of Tommy Lee Royce, but definitely not someone you would want to be married to.

The appeal of bleak things drives a large portion of the entertainment industry, but where Happy Valley thrives is in the refuge it offers from its own horror. A lot of this has to do with the warmth of the relationship between sergeant Catherine Cawood, played by [Sarah Lancashire](#), and Siobhan Finneran as her sister Clare, two actors of such extraordinary ability that you could strip out all the drama and pass a perfectly enjoyable hour watching them chat over tea. As it is, the juxtaposition of their humanity and

banter with the most hideous of storylines brings about a joy right up there with losing and then finding your wallet.

Part of the wildness of the praise attending the first episode this week – “stronger than ever” (Radio Times), “television’s greatest saga” (the Independent), “doesn’t get better than this” (the Telegraph) – is a simple case of relief. Most of us have been through the small but real letdown of watching a favourite TV show fall off a cliff. Season two of *Big Little Lies* was self-conscious to the point of parody. The last season of *Line of Duty* was a pale imitation of the original shows. Another of Sally Wainwright’s franchises, *Gentleman Jack*, was dropped last year by HBO after failing to find its feet. What if – real-life horror! – *Happy Valley* wasn’t as good as we thought it had been? Or, in the years since season two, had been outstripped by better shows?

We needn’t have worried. The pleasures of this very specific set of characters were there from the start, as was the deep satisfaction of returning to a well-built fictional world. Royce is a villain of the first order, but Wainwright’s greater skill, perhaps, is in creating the nebbishy guy whose small-time crookery spins out of control, sucking in his oblivious family.

A certain type of weak man has been a trope of Wainwright’s since *At Home With the Braithwaites*, and so it was this week in [Happy Valley](#), when a local pharmacist-turned-drug dealer wanders almost immediately out of his depth into the jaws of much bigger criminals. If it’s a combination of genres – the soothing rhythm of smalltown cops and concerns with the grisly realism of a big-city drama, or *Last of the Summer Wine* meets *The Wire* – it works to an unusual degree.

And one forgets how funny the show is. There’s an entire comic interlude in which Cawood tells her sister to do one at the suggestion she take up yoga after retirement. For those watching in the US, there is the added amusement – seven years later, I’m still laughing at the memory of this from season two – of trying to get Americans to pronounce “Sowerby Bridge” or decode the phrase “down at cafe that does us butties”. (When I ran this by an American in 2016, he looked fleetingly panicked before grabbing wildly on to the word “butt” and suggesting: “Is it something to do with his ass?”)

For all these comforts and thrills, the greatest delights of Happy Valley are, for me, the scenes in which Lancashire sizes up some horrible man – in this case, a sadistic PE teacher – who five episodes hence, we know, will get his comeuppance. Anticipation of future revenge; the cool assessment of a character who thinks his nature is fully concealed; the grumpiness of a heroine enraged at the mere suggestion someone might throw her a retirement do; and the sheer acting skill of Lancashire, whose face hits shades of incredulity that seem to expand the range of human expression. It's hard to think of a better way to spend January.

- Emma Brockes is a Guardian columnist

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2023.01.05 - Around the world

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US news

Mastermind of US college admission bribery scheme sentenced to 3.5 years

Rick Singer, 62, was handed the longest sentence in the sprawling scandal that shone a spotlight on the secretive system



William 'Rick' Singer was the kingpin of the nationwide college admissions cheating scheme. Photograph: Brian Snyder/Reuters

Associated Press

Wed 4 Jan 2023 21:15 EST Last modified on Thu 5 Jan 2023 09:05 EST

The mastermind of the nationwide college admissions bribery scheme that ensnared celebrities, prominent businesspeople and other parents who used their wealth and privilege to buy their kids' way into top-tier schools was sentenced to 3.5 years in prison on Wednesday.

The punishment for Rick Singer, 62, is the longest sentence handed down in the sprawling scandal that embarrassed some of the nation's most prestigious universities and put a spotlight on the secretive admissions system already seen as rigged in favor of the rich.

Prosecutors had sought six years behind bars, noting Singer's extensive cooperation that helped authorities unravel the entire scheme. Singer began secretly working with investigators in 2018 and recorded hundreds of phone calls and meetings that helped authorities build the case against dozens of parents, athletic coaches and others arrested in March 2019.

Those sent to prison for participating in the scheme include the Full House actor Lori Loughlin, her fashion designer husband Mossimo Giannulli, and the Desperate Housewives star Felicity Huffman. Coaches from schools including Yale, Stanford, Georgetown and UCLA admitted accepting bribes.

"The conduct in this case was something out of a Hollywood movie," [Massachusetts](#) US attorney Rachael Rollins told reporters after the sentencing.

Singer also was ordered to pay more than \$10m in restitution to the IRS and forfeit millions more in money and assets to the government. He was ordered to report to prison in February.

Although Singer's cooperation helped authorities secure the convictions of a slew of defendants, prosecutors noted that he also admitted to obstructing the investigation by tipping off several of his clients who were under government scrutiny. He was never called by the government as a witness in the cases that went to trial.

In seeking leniency for Singer, defense attorney Candice Fields told the judge that her client took great personal risk by wearing a wire to record meetings for investigators and "did whatever was necessary" to assist the government. Fields had requested three years of probation, or if the judge deemed prison time necessary, six months behind bars.

"The investigation only achieved the notoriety it did because dozens of influential and sometimes celebrity defendants were prosecuted" and that

only happened because of Singer, Fields said.

Singer apologized to his family, the schools he embarrassed in the public eye and the students he worked with over the years. He promised to spend the rest of his life working to make a positive impact in people's lives.

“My moral compass was warped by the lessons my father taught me about competition. I embraced his belief that embellishing or even lying to win was acceptable as long as there was victory. I should have known better,” he said.

Singer pleaded guilty in 2019 – on the same day the huge case became public – to charges including racketeering conspiracy and money laundering conspiracy. Dozens of others ultimately pleaded guilty to charges, while two parents were convicted at trial.

Authorities in Boston began investigating the scheme after an executive under scrutiny for an unrelated securities fraud scheme told investigators that a Yale soccer coach had offered to help his daughter get into the school in exchange for cash. The Yale coach led authorities to Singer, whose cooperation unraveled the entire scheme.

For years, Singer paid off entrance exam administrators or proctors to inflate students' test scores and bribed coaches to designate applicants as recruits in order to boost their chances of getting into the school.

Coaches in such sports as soccer, sailing and tennis took bribes to pretend to recruit students as athletes, regardless of their ability. Fake sports profiles were created to make students look like stars in sports they sometimes didn't even play. The bribes were typically funneled through Singer's sham charity, allowing some parents to disguise the payments as charitable donations and deduct the payments from their federal income taxes.

Singer took in more than \$25m from his clients, paid bribes totaling more than \$7m and used more than \$15m of his clients' money for his own benefit, according to prosecutors.

Assistant US attorney Stephen Frank told the judge that if she failed to impose a significant prison sentence, it would send a “devastating message that fraud pays and obstruction of justice pays”.

“This defendant was responsible for the most massive fraud ever perpetuated on the higher education system in the United States,” Frank said.

Before Singer, the toughest punishment had gone to the former Georgetown tennis coach Gordon Ernst, who got 2.5 years in prison for pocketing more than \$3m in bribes.

Punishments for the parents have ranged from probation to 15 months behind bars, although the parent who received that prison sentence remains free while he appeals his conviction.

One parent, who was not accused of working with Singer, was acquitted on all counts stemming from accusations that he bribed Ernst to get his daughter into the school. And a judge ordered a new trial for the former University of Southern [California](#) water polo coach Jovan Vavic, who was convicted of accepting bribes.

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‘I’m scared to think what Ethiopia will become’: Tigray war refugees fear return



Lemlen Abraha, a Tigrayan refugee, lives in a refugee camp in Sudan. Her husband and daughter have been missing since November 2020. Photograph: Tom Gardner

A fragile peace has been restored but for tens of thousands of displaced people who fled to Sudan there is no prospect of going home

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[Tom Gardner](#) and [Claire Wilmot](#) in *Um Rakuba, Sudan*

Thu 5 Jan 2023 01.00 EST Last modified on Thu 5 Jan 2023 06.00 EST

When she remembers the corpses on the asphalt, the bodies of her neighbours and of the boy who used to play with her children, Lemlen Abraha breaks down in tears.

“They just shot him,” she says of 14-year-old Kalayu Mebrahtom, killed by government soldiers in the first weeks of Ethiopia’s civil war and left to be buried by his grandmother. “I’d left my home to buy sugar – I saw it on the street, I saw it with my own eyes.”

Since the [war began two years ago](#), Lemlen has been living in a refugee camp in Sudan with two of her teenage children, and four others whose

parents are missing.

Lemlen's six-year-old daughter, Hiyab, and her husband, Fisseha – are still lost, separated in the chaos. When the Guardian met Lemlen in early December, weeks after a [peace deal](#) ostensibly had ended the war, she didn't know if they were alive or dead. She still doesn't.

A fragile peace process in Ethiopia's Tigray region, where war has left [an estimated more than half a million dead](#), is beginning to show dividends, raising hopes for a end to a conflict that counts [ethnic cleansing](#) and [human-made](#) famine among its horrors.

Yet in Sudan, near the border of Ethiopia and the disputed territory of what is officially called western Tigray, tens of thousands of refugees remain in limbo – unable, or too afraid, to return home.

Refugees – mostly ethnic Tigrayans from the Wolkait district of western Tigray, but also some from smaller ethnic groups such as the Kemant, Kunama and Irob – told the Guardian their land was still occupied by armed forces from Ethiopia's Amhara region or, in some cases, allied troops from neighbouring Eritrea.

Lemlen had found a piece of paper pinned to her door in the town of Baeker in western Tigray. Scrawled on it was a threat: all Tigrayans must leave the town or face the consequences. She reached [Sudan](#) in November 2020.

She says she has heard from her former neighbours in Amhara that her home has been occupied by newcomers, who have also started working her family's plot of land.



Amhara militia members walk through a rural area near the village of Dabat, 70km north-east of Gondar, Ethiopia. Photograph: Amanuel Sileshi/AFP/Getty Images

Human rights groups have described these patterns of dispossession and violence as ethnic cleansing. According to Amnesty and Human Rights Watch, Amhara militia and volunteer fighters known as Fanos, established Amhara government administration over the fertile agricultural territory between late 2020 and 2022. [Hundreds of thousands of Tigrayans](#) were expelled, and Amhara farmers resettled there.

If the international community protects the displaced people, Lemlen suggests, perhaps it would be safe for them to return. But she sees no imminent prospect of that.

The peace deal stated that the question of disputed territories – which include parts of south Tigray – should be settled through constitutional means, which may one day mean a referendum. But it set out no timeline.



Ethiopian army chief Berhanu Julia (left) shakes hands with Tigray rebel forces commander General Tadesse Worede during the signing of a peace deal in Nairobi on 12 November 2022. Photograph: Yasuyoshi Chiba/AFP/Getty Images

Eritrean troops, who have been implicated in some of the war's [worst atrocities](#), pose another challenge. The peace deal, signed in South Africa by the government of prime minister Abiy Ahmed and Tigray's leaders – the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) – made no mention of the Eritreans. But an [implementation roadmap](#) signed a few days later in Kenya specified that the gradual disarmament of Tigray's forces would take place alongside the “withdrawal of foreign and non-ENDF (federal military) forces from the region”.

In recent days, there have been [reports of Eritrean troops withdrawing](#) from some towns in Tigray. But as recently as December, according to minutes seen by the Guardian from a meeting of the Tigray Emergency Coordination Centre, a hub of UN agencies and NGOs, Eritrean troops continued to loot, kill, kidnap and rape. One refugee with relatives living near the town of Adwa told the Guardian his young cousin was killed by Eritrean forces in a nearby village in mid-December.

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Until Eritrea leaves, there will be no peace

Solomon, Tigrayan teacher

“Until [Eritrea](#) leaves, there will be no peace,” says Solomon, a Tigrayan teacher who fled Humera, a city near the Sudan and Eritrea borders, at the start of the war. On rare occasions when he has been able to reach friends and family in western Tigray, they have said the same thing – that until at least mid-December, Eritrean troops were stationed along key highways and migration routes, including those leading to Sudan. Aid workers confirmed these accounts, but it is unclear how many Eritrean troops remain today.

Elsewhere in Tigray, food aid and medical supplies [have been trickling in since November](#), staving off the worst of starvation. Phone lines and internet services, suspended during the war, are being [switched back on](#) sporadically, allowing communication with the outside world for the first time in many months. [Mekelle has been reconnected to the national grid](#) and [partial banking services have resumed in some towns](#).

“In Mekelle, [the phone] network is working,” a Tigrayan in Kenya told the Guardian by text message on 29 December. “I spoke with my family, I think they are OK.”



A police marching band plays at a street carnival in support of the peace deal between the Ethiopian federal government and Tigray forces, in Mekelle, Tigray, 26 November. Photograph: AP

On 28 December an [Ethiopian Airlines plane touched down in Mekelle, the first commercial flight in 18 months](#), effectively lifting the ban on movement in place since June 2021. The next day, Ethiopian [federal police arrived in Mekelle](#) to guard federal government facilities, a visible return to normality.

However, there remains a climate of uncertainty. Excitement over restored phone lines, for example, is tempered by fears of surveillance. “If you call, you put people in danger,” says Abeba, a refugee who fled western Tigray at the start of the war. Three refugees said friends or family members had disappeared shortly after receiving phone calls from Sudan. “If they [security forces] see someone receive a call from a Sudan number, [they] will be arrested,” she says.

Insecurity prevails in Ethiopia; as war has wound down in Tigray, it has [escalated](#) in Oromia, the largest region, which has seen drone strikes on civilians and [a string of gruesome inter-ethnic massacres](#). The Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), another armed group, is not part of the current peace deal. Nor are smaller ones linked to minorities such as the Gumuz, Agew or Kemant.

OLA fighters as well as Oromo security forces stand accused of killing civilians in Oromia; Amhara civilians continue to face [indiscriminate violence](#) in places where they are a minority. In recent months Amhara militias are also reported to have conducted raids and killings inside Oromia.

In the Amhara region meanwhile, violence continues against Kemant civilians by regional security forces and militias. Kemant refugees told the Guardian they would not return without security assurance, as most of their lands are now occupied. Irob and Kunama refugees, whose smaller populations live close to Eritrea, want guarantees regarding Eritrean troops along the border with Ethiopia.

UN officials say the current peace should be seen as a starting point; an opportunity to build confidence among Ethiopians before seeking to address some of the more contentious issues around disputed territories.



Women meet at a Tigrayan restaurant in Um Rakuba camp in Sudan. Many refugees have established small businesses in the camps. Photograph: Claire Wilmot

There is recognition that this will take time. Emebet, a 23-year-old university student, has tried to stop daydreaming about going home. She

learned from neighbours that her apartment in Humera, damaged by shelling at the start of the war, has been repaired and is being rented to newcomers.

In the straw hut she shares with her husband, Emebet has hung colourful drapes from the ceiling, trying to make the place homely. There is a small Sudanese flag in the corner of her makeshift kitchen – a tribute to the country that has offered them refuge.

“I’m scared to think about what Ethiopia will become,” says Emebet, referring to the deepening distrust between communities. She doubts whether refugees from western Tigray will ever return; if the peace holds, she thinks most of them will relocate elsewhere. “I don’t think we can ever go back.”

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[Papua New Guinea](#)

Airlines grounded across Papua New Guinea due to fuel shortage

The country's sole supplier of finished petroleum products has been unable to buy jet fuel due to a shortage of US dollars in the country



Air Niugini, Papua New Guinea's main airline, has been forced to ground all domestic flights. Photograph: Doug Steley C/Alamy

Bethanie Harriman

Thu 5 Jan 2023 01.33 EST Last modified on Thu 5 Jan 2023 02.33 EST

Thousands of airline passengers were stranded across [Papua New Guinea](#) as commercial airlines grounded planes after the country's sole supplier of finished petroleum products stopped providing jet fuel.

Puma Energy, the country's only fuel supplier, said the shortage in supply was due to a lack of foreign currency from the Central Bank of Papua New Guinea, used to buy fuel on the international markets.

There was chaos at the country's main domestic airport in Port Moresby, after all major airlines cancelled their scheduled domestic flights earlier on Thursday.

Hundreds of passengers were turned away from Jacksons International Airport in the capital city, prompting passengers to demand an intervention from prime minister James Marape.

"Our livelihood is being affected, just after new year," said Simdei Kamgu, who was supposed to be travelling to Kiunga, Western Province.

The prime minister, James Marape, said the situation had become a national security issue and asked the Bank of PNG and Puma Energy to solve the problem, saying the country was being held to ransom.

Papua New Guinea's largest airline, Air Niugini, released a statement on Wednesday, saying that all flights around the country would be cancelled because Puma Energy had suspended the supply of Jet A1 fuel to all airline companies.

"We have done everything possible to ensure that this situation did not occur and that we could continue to support the people of Papua New Guinea especially as they return from their Christmas holiday," said Air Niugini. "The airline can assure all our customers that we are completely up to date with our payments to Puma Energy."

Air Niugini warned that international flights could also be cancelled if the country's central bank failed to supply enough US dollars for the fuel supplier, Puma Energy, to buy jet fuel.

Papua New Guinea's rugged terrain and lack of interconnecting roads makes air travel the most efficient and reliable means of travel. The two largest cities, Port Moresby and Lae, are only connected by plane.

The country has only two major highways linking its interior highlands to the coast and three other highways linking smaller towns. There are no railroads and though there are shipping lines to transport cargo, there are no

options for people to travel far on sea. Even cargo is flown by air by companies like Air Niugini.

A dispute between the Bank of Papua New Guinea and Puma Energy has affected the ability of the energy company to buy fuel.

The Bank of PNG is yet to comment on the foreign exchange situation.

“It sends a worse message out over unreliability of services, both fuel and air services, potentially jeopardising important industries and service,” said Paul Barker from the country’s Institute of National Affairs.

PNG businesses have been struggling for over a decade to get the US dollars needed to pay their suppliers.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/05/airlines-grounded-across-papua-new-guinea-due-to-fuel-shortage>

US news

Alarm as US states pass ‘very concerning’ anti-homeless laws

Homelessness charities say wave of new bills unfairly targets people without housing as social-services funding is cut



An unhoused person in Los Angeles. Photograph: David Swanson/AFP/Getty Images

[Gloria Oladipo](#) in New York

[@gaoladipo](#)

Thu 5 Jan 2023 04.00 EST Last modified on Thu 5 Jan 2023 05.03 EST

Numerous anti-homeless laws are being passed across the US as funding for social services is widely reduced, raising welfare concerns among advocates for the unhoused.

In Missouri, a new state law that took effect on 1 January makes it a crime for any person to sleep on state property. For unhoused people, sleeping in

public parks or under city highways could mean up to \$750 in fines or 15 days in prison for multiple offenses.

Homelessness advocates have decried the law, claiming that it unfairly targets Missouri's homeless populations. The law was signed by Missouri's governor, Mike Parson, last June

"We are absolutely hearing that law enforcement is using this new law that's coming as reason to displace people already," said Sarah Owsley, advocacy director for the non-profit Empower Missouri, [to St Louis Public Radio](#), days before the law went into effect.

A swath of people opposed the Republican-backed measure, including Parson's appointed department of mental health director, Valerie Huhn, [reported the St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#).

"When people experiencing homelessness have criminal justice histories, it is difficult to find housing," wrote Huhn in a May 2022 letter to the governor's budget office, citing the law's criminal consequences.

As the law goes into effect, state funding for homeless services in Missouri [have decreased](#), as well as changes to other possible funding streams.

"We're going to see less money into the homeless services community over this length of time. And so that's very concerning, we're already an extremely underfunded resource," said Owsley.

Other cities and local municipalities in America have also passed measures targeting homeless individuals, through criminal consequences or forced hospitalization.

Cities across the country have seen a backlash to attempts by officials to remove homeless encampments or limit where unhoused people can camp.

In August, the Los Angeles city council voted to ban homeless encampments within 500ft of schools and daycares, an extension of the city's anti-camping law that has enabled police to sweep encampments, [reported Spectrum News](#) [1](#).

The ordinance passed as a federal program that moved homeless people into hotels during the Covid-19 pandemic ended.

“Enforcement of anti-camping ordinances ... only displaces people and makes it harder for trained outreach staff to establish trust again,” said Tyler Renner, a spokesperson for People Assisting the Homeless, [in a statement](#) on the vote.

Protesters marched through the downtown Chicago area in November to protest against the city’s announcement that donated winterized tents for homeless people had to be removed for street cleaning, [reported the Chicago Tribune](#). The city later confirmed that the tents did not have to be taken down, but could be moved.

Andy Robelo, founder of the non-profit Feeding People Through Plants, provided the tents and criticized the city’s treatment of homeless people.

“We’ve won this battle, but I want to win the war,” said Robledo to the Tribune. “The policy needs to change because we’re going to keep fighting these battles all over the city. It’s happening constantly. The way to fight is to get people housing.”

Under the New York mayor, Eric Adams, who is entering the second year of his four-year tenure, city officials [outlawed houseless people from sleeping](#) on the city’s subway system or riding the trains all night.

New York City police also increased arrests within the transit system, with over 400 people arrested for “being outstretched” last year, according to New York police department statistics, [reported Gothamist](#).

But the city’s budget passed in June cuts spending on homelessness services from \$2.8bn to \$2.4bn, with the drop in funding coming from a decrease in federal Covid-19 aid, [reported City Limits](#).

Adams has also ordered police and first responders to [hospitalize more unhoused people](#) that appear to be in a “psychiatric crisis”, even if the hospitalization is involuntary and a person does not pose a danger to themselves.

Other politicians have followed suit. Last September, California's Governor Gavin Newsom signed a law that would force people with certain mental health conditions to comply with treatment if first responders, family members, or others ask a judge, [reported the Associated Press](#).

Portland's mayor, Ted Wheeler, announced during a business forum last December that he supports lowering the threshold to involuntarily hospitalize unhoused people, [reported Oregon Public Broadcasting](#).

Advocates have [widely criticized](#) New York's involuntary hospitalization policy as ineffective and a civil rights violation.

"The mayor is playing fast and loose with the legal rights of New Yorkers and is not dedicating the resources necessary to address the mental health crises that affect our communities," said Donna Lieberman, executive director the New York Civil Liberties Union.

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[Turks and Caicos Islands](#)

Turks and Caicos under strain after 275 Haitian migrants recently detained

Governor says resources are stretched after three overloaded boats were intercepted between 23 December and 2 January



As of 3 January, 184 people had been repatriated to Haiti, said immigration director Sharlene Richards. Photograph: Royal TCI Police Force

Rebecca Bird

Thu 5 Jan 2023 04.30 EST Last modified on Thu 5 Jan 2023 14.01 EST

Authorities in the [Turks and Caicos Islands](#) (TCI) say that law enforcement and immigration resources have been put under strain after nearly 300 Haitian migrants were intercepted in the Caribbean territory's waters.

Three overloaded boats carrying 275 men, women and children were detained near the small self-governing British territory between 23 December and 2 January.

“With elongated maritime borders our resources are stretched because a small island state in the end will only have so much capacity or capability it can deploy,” said the TCI governor, Nigel Dakin.

The vessels had travelled more than 140 miles (226km) over several days from [Haiti](#), where escalating gang wars have driven a recent wave of emigration.

The boat’s passengers were given a medical examination before being taken to TCI’s detention centre where they were held for several days.

As of Tuesday, 3 January, 184 people had been repatriated to Haiti, the immigration director, Sharlene Richards, told the Guardian. She declined to say how many were seeking asylum.

Haiti, the most highly populated independent country in the [Caribbean](#) and the poorest in the western hemisphere, has for decades been plagued by violence, natural disasters and political instability.

But the country has plunged deeper into political and economic uncertainty amid fierce gang wars following the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in July 2021.

A [joint statement](#) from UN human rights organisations at the end of 2021 said the “complex social, economic, humanitarian and political situation” led to population movement.

It added that those seeking a better life abroad include unaccompanied and separated children, victims of trafficking, and survivors of gender-based violence.

Due to its proximity and standard of living, the TCI archipelago, an upmarket holiday hotspot in the northern Caribbean, has been a choice destination for many seeking a better life.

“Haiti bears down on TCI,” said Dakin, a UK-appointed official who is responsible for the territory’s internal and external security.

“Not deliberately – the Haitian people have no ill will towards us, quite the opposite. But they are 11 million and we are 50,000: 220 times our size.”

On the evening of [23 December](#), the Royal TCI police force marine branch intercepted the first boat off West Harbour Bluff following a detection report from the TCI’s radar station.

TCI regiment and immigration officers safely detained 52 people who were onboard the open wooden boat.

The [second boat](#), a trading vessel named Family Express, was intercepted on Christmas Day, carrying 95 people.

The US Department of Homeland Security and Homeland Security Investigations, which has agents temporarily based in the TCI, are supporting an investigation into the boat crossing.

In the [third incident](#), marine officers intercepted a Haitian boat two miles off South Dock early on 2 January.

At about 1am, they detained 128 people, including four women and a child.

In a statement following the Christmas Day arrival, immigration minister Arlington Musgrove said the TCI government retains a “clear zero-tolerance approach” to people smugglers.

He said law enforcement authorities will “continue to crack down, disrupt networks and prosecute persons involved in the smuggling of illegal migrants”.

In his [new year’s message](#) TCI’s premier, Washington Misick, spoke of an increased focus on immigration over the past few months and in the coming year.

“We have increased our aerial and sea surveillance to further harden our borders,” he said.

“A shiprider agreement with the Bahamas allows Turks and Caicos Islands’ personnel on Bahamian vessels to give us better surveillance of our

territorial waters.”

He added that the territory’s immigration laws will be amended in 2023.

“Anyone caught breaking the law will face stiffer penalties including the revocation of permanent residency certificates and status.”

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- [GPs People turning to DIY health treatment amid shortage of appointments](#)
- [Exclusive Ministers studying plans for UK child-specific terrorism orders](#)
- [Social care Crisis in England forces 1,200 children to move over Christmas](#)

[NHS](#)

Senior doctor warns of ‘unsafe and undignified’ care due to A&E delays

December set to be worst month on record for A&E waiting times as up to 500 people estimated to die each week due to delays



In November, 37,837 patients waited more than 12 hours in A&E to be admitted to hospital, according to figures from NHS England. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

[Robyn Vinter](#)

[@robynvinter](#)

Mon 2 Jan 2023 06.33 ESTFirst published on Mon 2 Jan 2023 04.23 EST

The deaths of an estimated 300 to 500 people each week caused by delays in emergency care is “not a short-term thing”, a senior doctor has said.

Ian Higginson, a vice-president of the Royal College of Emergency Medicine, warned about attempts to “discredit” figures estimating that as

many as [500 people are dying each week](#) because of the delays.

Official data will not be released until later this month but the organisation said it was expecting it to show December was the worst month on record for waiting times at accident and emergency departments, leading to what it described as “unsafe and undignified” care.

Speaking on BBC Radio 4’s Today programme on Monday, Higginson said the “appalling” waits could not be blamed on winter flu or Covid, as more than a dozen [NHS](#) trusts and ambulance services declared critical incidents over the festive period.

He said: “These are real figures and I worry that we’re going to hear attempts to spin and manipulate this data and discredit it. I think if we hear that, we’ve got to say no – that is spin. This is a real problem. It’s happening now in our emergency departments.

“What we’ve been hearing over the last few days is that the current problems are all due to Covid or they’re all due to flu, or that this is complex, you mustn’t jump to conclusions – all that sort of stuff.

“If you’re at the frontline, you know that this is a longstanding problem. This isn’t a short-term thing. The sort of things we’re seeing happen every winter, and it still seems to come as a surprise to the NHS. It gets worse every winter.”

Higginson said there was “really good evidence that has been accumulated over decades that long waits in emergency departments are associated with poor outcomes for patients”.

He also cited peer-reviewed research showing for every 82 patients that are delayed by more than six hours, there is one associated death.

In November, 37,837 patients waited more than 12 hours in A&E to be admitted to a hospital department, according to figures from NHS England.

This is an increase of almost 355% compared with the previous November, when an estimated 10,646 patients waited longer than 12 hours.

Last week, one in five ambulance patients in England [waited more than an hour](#) to be handed over to A&E teams. In Swindon, a patient was forced to wait on a trolley in A&E for 99 hours after arriving by ambulance at Great Western hospital while staff tried to find a bed.

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Higginson, who works as an emergency physician, said it was “heartbreaking” to have to deal with delays on the ground.

He said: “To see the look on my nursing staff’s faces when they are looking at another shift where there’s very few of them compared with the number of patients, to see the look on the young doctors’ faces when we ask them to go and treat patients in the back of the ambulance and to see the look on the patients’ faces when I go into the waiting room and apologise for the failures of the NHS, that they’re going to wait all night to be seen and days for a bed to be admitted to hospital – those are the things that are absolutely heartbreaking for me as a clinician.”

The Conservative MP Robert Halfon said the pressure on A&E departments was a “top priority” for the prime minister. He told the Today programme: “We’re increasing the NHS capacity by the equivalent of 7,000 beds, spending an extra £500m to speed up hospital discharge and improve capacity.”

He admitted more needed to be done but defended the government’s response.

“The government is putting a lot of funding and doing everything possible,” he said. “We know, of course, that many of these problems have been caused by the pandemic and the pressures on the NHS that we’ve seen over the past few years.”

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GPs

People in UK turning to DIY health treatment amid shortage of GP appointments

Lib Dems say face-to-face GP bookings ‘almost extinct’ in some areas as their survey shows a rise in self-prescribing



The research found that 11% of those surveyed had paid for care from a private medical service. Photograph: D Callcut/Alamy

[Denis Campbell](#) *Health policy editor*

Mon 2 Jan 2023 03.41 ESTFirst published on Sun 1 Jan 2023 19.01 EST

Almost one in four people have bought medicine online or at a pharmacy to treat their illness after failing to see a GP face to face, according to a UK survey underlining the rise of do-it-yourself treatment.

Nearly one in five (19%) have gone to A&E seeking urgent medical treatment for the same reason, the research commissioned by the Liberal Democrats shows.

One in six (16%) people agreed when asked by the pollsters Savanta ComRes if the difficulty of getting an in-person family doctor appointment meant they had “carried out medical treatment on yourself or asked somebody else who is not a medical professional to do so”.

The research – among 2,061 UK adults who were representative of the overall population – also found that 11% had paid for care from a private medical service. That is in line with a recent finding from the Office for National Statistics that [one in eight](#) Britons have either paid themselves for private treatment or used their medical insurance to access private-sector care as a direct result of the increasing difficulty patients face in accessing NHS services.

Ed Davey, the leader of the Liberal Democrats, said delays and difficulty in accessing GP appointments constituted a national scandal, and face-to-face GP appointments had become “almost extinct” in some areas of the country.

He said: “We now have the devastating situation where people are left treating themselves or even self-prescribing medication because they can’t see their local GP.”

He blamed years of neglect of the [NHS](#) by successive Conservative governments, especially ministers breaking promises to expand the GP workforce in England.

Dr Richard Van Mellaerts, the deputy chair of the British Medical Association’s GP committee in England, said: “While self-care and consulting other services such as pharmacies and NHS 111 will often be the right thing to do for many minor health conditions, it is worrying if patients feel forced into inappropriate courses of action because they are struggling to book an appointment for an issue that requires the attention of a GP or a member of practice staff.”

But he said the Lib Dems' call for patients to be given the right to see a GP within a week was "an impossible task" unless the decline in the number of family doctors was arrested.

Dr Margaret Ikpoh, vice-chair of the Royal College of [GPs](#), said: "We understand patients' distress and frustrations when they are unable to get a GP appointment, but we must not put the blame on hardworking GPs and their teams, who are doing their absolute best in extremely difficult circumstances to meet the healthcare needs of their patients."

Meanwhile, as many [as 500 people a week](#) may be dying because of delays in emergency care, the leader of Britain's A&E doctors has said.

Speaking to Times Radio, Dr Adrian Boyle, the president of the Royal College of Emergency Medicine, said a bad flu season was compounding systemic problems in the NHS and leading to hundreds of unnecessary deaths.

He said: "We need to be in a situation where we cannot just shrug our shoulders and say, 'This winter was terrible, let's do nothing until next winter.' We cannot continue like this – it is unsafe and it is undignified.

"What we're seeing now in terms of these long waits is being associated with increased mortality, and we think somewhere between 300 and 500 people are dying as a consequence of delays and problems with urgent and emergency care each week."

Responding to the Lib Dems' survey, a Department of [Health](#) spokesperson said: "We recognise the pressures GPs are under and are working to increase access for patients. Guidance is clear that GP practices must provide face-to-face appointments alongside remote consultations – and over two-thirds of appointments in November were face to face.

"As of September 2022, there are almost 2,300 more full-time-equivalent doctors working in general practice compared to September 2019. There are also record numbers in GP training, and since 2019 we have recruited over 21,000 additional staff into general practice."

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UK security and counter-terrorism

Ministers studying plans for UK child-specific terrorism orders

Exclusive: Official adviser recommends giving those arrested for low-level crimes a choice to accept help or face jail



There are concerns that tackling children with powerful terrorism laws stigmatises them when they are not yet fully mature. Photograph: Evgeniia Medvedeva/Alamy

[Vikram Dodd](#) *Police and crime correspondent*

Mon 2 Jan 2023 01.00 EST Last modified on Thu 5 Jan 2023 01.39 EST

New legal terrorism orders specifically for children should be brought in to tackle the growing numbers being arrested, the official adviser on terrorism law has told the government.

Ministers are studying plans that would result in children being compelled to accept help or face jail, devised by Jonathan Hall KC, the independent

reviewer of terrorism legislation.

The move comes as the number of children arrested [has increased](#), mainly for lower-level terrorism offences, such as sharing propaganda or downloading material. The rise has been fuelled by growing internet use and an increase in terrorist propaganda available online, with children as young as 13 [being arrested](#).

There are concerns that tackling such children with powerful terrorism laws stigmatises them when they are not yet fully mature. There is a growing belief among counter-terrorism officials that a section of those arrested, while clearly breaking terrorism laws, pose little threat of staging an attack.

Furthermore, their commitment to an ideological cause is not strong, with a substantial amount having mental health or other vulnerabilities that make them more susceptible to falling for terrorist propaganda.

The proposed new orders would carry legal force and, under them, children aged 17 or under who have been arrested for lower-level terrorism offences would be given a choice. They could either risk prosecution, imprisonment and a criminal record or accept stringent measures, Hall said.

Hall, whose role is to advise the government and parliament on terrorism laws, said: "I'm not talking about the most serious cases, where prosecution will usually remain the best option. But during the last three years there has been a slew of internet cases where the suspected terrorist conduct all relates to what children are saying or downloading online.

"There is a repeat pattern of particular offences, which I call documentary offences – instruction manuals, terrorist publications, encouragement – all internet-based, where there is no evidence of attack-planning. These offences were created at a time when there was a clearer link between words and violence, in the context of the IRA and al-Qaida. That link is less clear for children online."

Hall's proposals include monitoring software on their electronic devices to detect if they are accessing extremist material, limits on their use of devices,

and potentially limits on whom they could contact. They would also have to attend mentoring sessions in an attempt to divert them from any belief in violent extremism.

Under the plans being studied, breaching these conditions would in itself be an arrestable offence punishable by the courts. Complying with the conditions would avoid prosecution.

Figures from Counter Terrorism Policing show there has been a rapid growth of child terrorism suspects in England, Scotland and Wales.

In the year to September 2020, 4% of those arrested were aged under 18. But in the year to September 2022, 17% of terrorism-related arrests were people under 18. That equates to 32 arrests: 12 were suspected of extreme rightwing terrorism, 16 were suspected of Islamist extremism, and for four children the ideology could not be classified.

The [effects of lockdown](#), with schools closed and children in their bedrooms and searching online, was also thought to be a factor.

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Tim Jacques, the senior national coordinator for counter-terrorism, said: “The increase in young people featuring in our casework is clear, perhaps demonstrated most starkly by the arrest statistics. We have often talked about how the terrorist threat is evolving, and consequently our response needs to evolve. Our role is to keep people safe from terrorism and we must consider all legitimate options to make this happen.”

Police have warned that children from middle-class backgrounds are being [lured into extreme rightwing terrorism](#) with online content based on violent video games shaped to indoctrinate them. Statistics for Prevent, the official deradicalisation scheme, also show a growing number of young people being referred.

A [review of Prevent](#) by the former Charity Commission chair, William Shawcross, has been completed and has been with the home secretary, Suella Braverman, since September. Its publication has been repeatedly delayed amid concerns parts of it may libel groups or individuals, and with departments across government still trying to reach agreement on a response to its findings and recommendations. It is expected to be published early in the new year.

Recent studies find that both those at risk of radicalisation but yet to offend and those convicted and in jail for terrorism offences have significant levels of mental health challenges or other vulnerabilities. Last year, the Guardian revealed that [up to seven in 10 people referred to Prevent](#) may experience mental ill health or other vulnerabilities that could leave them susceptible to falling for propaganda from violent extremists. Those involved in Prevent believe such psychological problems are much more of a potential factor than first thought.

Hall said the most serious cases involving children should still lead to prosecutions, and said police were right to arrest children for lower-level terrorism offences. “Where there is a degree of uncertainty about the risk to the public, there will be no alternative to going through the door,” he said.

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[England](#)

England's care crisis forces 1,200 children to move over Christmas

Charity Become says 'shocking' numbers highlight need for stability and more funding for foster carers



Almost 80 looked-after children a day changed foster carer or children's home in the 2021 festive period. Photograph: Gareth Fuller/PA Media

[Helen Pidd](#)

Mon 2 Jan 2023 02.00 ESTLast modified on Thu 5 Jan 2023 01.38 EST

More than 1,200 children in care were uprooted and had to move placements over Christmas last year, figures from councils in [England](#) show.

The "shocking and upsetting" numbers, collated by the national care charity Become, showed that an average of 79 looked-after children had to change foster carer or children's home each day over the 2021-22 festive period.

Some had to move more than once, prompting particular upset at a time of year when children in care can feel especially lonely and unloved.

One young person told Become that Christmas “often reminds me that I don’t have a ‘normal’ family ... I am reminded of how different my experience of the world is from them.”

The charity said the figures showed the need for “urgent and ambitious action to ensure children in care are able to thrive”.

Freedom of information requests revealed 1,257 children in care moved homes between 18 December 2021 and 3 January 2022.

The data covers 144 of 151 local authorities in England. While some councils said they had not moved any children over the Christmas period, Kent moved 54 (3% of the county’s looked-after children), Brent in London moved 23 (6.7%) and Oldham in Greater Manchester moved 25 (4.6%).

Moving over Christmas can present practical challenges. While local authorities have staff supporting children in care over the festive period, regular services are less likely to be available. With schools closed, children do not have the same distractions and contact with their existing network of friends may be more limited, Become said in its [Home For Christmas](#) report.

Some local authorities reported a higher number of moves than children, meaning some children had been moved more than once during the festive period.

The instability faced at Christmas reflects the picture across the year. In 2021-22, 10% of children in the care system were moved three or more times (8,030 children in total), with almost one-third of children in care (31%) moved two or more times.

While there can be valid reasons for children being moved, moves can often be due to a lack of appropriate places, poor planning or unsuitable matching or places, Become said.

Katharine Sacks-Jones, the charity’s chief executive, said: “These statistics are as shocking as they are upsetting. For children and young people in care,

Christmas can already be a difficult and isolating time, without the family around them that many of us take for granted.

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“But to move young people at Christmas, when their friends are enjoying presents, family meals and the usual festive joys, delivers yet more isolation and uncertainty. Care-experienced children are being moved into unfamiliar surroundings, leaving behind relationships they have managed to build and into an environment they do not know.

“Become is calling on the government to take urgent and ambitious action to ensure children and young people in care have greater stability and the same opportunities as other children to thrive.”

She called on the government to announce a national commitment and target to reduce the number of moves children in the care system experience. Become also wants the government to fund more children’s homes in areas that need them and invest in recruiting more foster carers.

In 2021-22, there were 54,620 placement changes in England, an average of 150 per day, underscoring the instability and insecurity vulnerable young people face.

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So you decided to stop drinking? I did - and these are my year's lessons



‘What was the worst that could happen, I mused, if I had a glass of wine at dinner?’ Illustration: Natsumi Chikayasu/The Guardian

Abstaining from alcohol is increasingly being destigmatized as more of us consider a booze-free holiday

Maggie Doherty

Mon 2 Jan 2023 02.00 EST

At first, ankle deep, then wading deeper and deeper, a surge of waves crashed into my thighs as I braced against the tidal tug. My friends were on the beach, unfurling towels and applying sunscreen. I had no time for those chores. I wanted the ocean.

I had never been on a tropical island, let alone to the Caribbean. It was also my first sober vacation with my four best friends from college, a friendship tallying 20 years. I had quit drinking seven months earlier, when the days were short and dark. The season had felt like an appropriate match to confront a reckoning with alcohol that was decades in the making.

Now it was spring and I was thousands of miles from home, where snow still lingered in the high country. Although we were well past infamous antics from our college days, this joint 40th birthday celebration presented the potential for nostalgia-inspired fun and that usually included alcohol.

I was nervous before my trip and had confided in my husband. What was the worst that could happen, I mused, if I had a glass of wine at dinner? Would I feel out of place with my friends who had known me as the wild child – would they still like me? Would just one piña colada hurt?

Very few topics of conversation are off-limits among my friends and alcohol was no exception. It was a part of the pre-trip planning conversation, mixed into group text messages about coordinating flights and booking the hotel. My friends knew that I was no longer drinking, and Claire called me from the Dominican Republic, where she was now living with her family, to gauge my comfort level with staying at an all-inclusive resort and the readily available supply of alcohol.

Sobriety was enhancing my connection to my friends. There was no shortage of laughter or fun

If this call had taken place earlier in my recovery, I would have felt much more uncomfortable. Instead, I was grateful. Thanks to months of addiction-focused group therapy and a concerted effort to unravel the hold [alcohol use disorder](#) had on my life, I now felt less vulnerable discussing any potential triggers that would lead me to drinking. With my children squawking in the background, I told Claire that I appreciated her thoughtfulness. Claire ended the call with, “I’m so proud of you, Maggot.”

I snorted but it was a feigned annoyance. Claire’s invocation of my endearing yet antagonistic nickname from college made me feel so very normal. An affirmation-laced jest from someone who knew me for so long and so well.

For the most part, I could float on top of the waves of temptation during our island stay. Each morning I woke up early and walked on the beach, relishing the solitude and my beachcombing finds. If a few in our group opted to go to a bar for a beer after dinner, I didn’t object but I didn’t join them. I didn’t feel left out or slighted. One night we all decided to go out dancing, and I didn’t need a beer or shot to do so. Sobriety was enhancing my connection to my friends. There was no shortage of laughter or fun or inappropriate banter and the support my friends gave me aided my resolve.

Licensed professional counselor [Colleen Davis-Timms](#), who specializes in alcohol and addiction, agrees that a strong and accepting social network is an integral part of staying sober. “Sobriety won’t stick unless a person can find a social circle they connect with. If you feel isolated, you will not succeed in sobriety.”

Sobriety is having its moment. “Sober-curious” or “mindful drinking” are now familiar phrases; Sober October and Dry January are popular trends. Whereas problematic drinking used to be hushed or relegated to the edges of polite conversation, confined to anonymous meetings often held in church basements, abstaining from alcohol is increasingly destigmatized. But it still requires a willingness to go against the grain.

The country singer-songwriter Margo Price published an essay in [GQ](#) in March 2021 about her decision to quit drinking after one too many stressors

caused by the pandemic, including her canceled tours. Relying on alcohol to assuage the brunt of cyberbullying or the uncertainties of a musical career was no longer cutting it. She wrote that while she believed she was in control of her alcohol use and had the intention of taking a sustained break from drinking, after reading [Quit Like a Woman](#) by Holly Whitaker she decided to quit for good in January 2021.

Without alcohol and its drowning effects, parenting and work feel easier, and she's able to enjoy life more. For Price, sobriety was the “most rebellious thing” she'd ever done, a fully conscious rejection of the culture of alcohol.

Getting sober was an act of dissent for me as well, but with unintended consequences. When I decided to stop drinking, I felt like my identity was no longer stable. This isn't an uncommon response; Davis-Timms says that “sobriety becomes an identity shift.” Reassessing my life without alcohol went deeper than what I drank – it shot straight to my inner core.

Demand for alcoholic beverages is decreasing, especially among the Gen Z generation

The aspects of your personality that make you uncomfortable or incite pain don't simply disappear once you eliminate drinking. One of alcohol's big lies is that it blunts the pain. I would argue it only buries it until it mutates into a much more ugly monster. In my case, I used it to avoid feelings of not being enough and allowed intoxication to make me feel powerful, funny and emboldened.

There is the very human element of my personality that still seeks pleasure and wants to avoid pain, but with a clearer mind I can sit with my discomfort and meet confrontations with more patience and acceptance than I ever could in the past. Compassion for myself, previously a massive hurdle, is slowly unfurling and it extends to all other areas of my life.

Back in the Caribbean, I joined my friends on the lounge chairs beneath a palm tree after swimming. When they ordered a drink, I raised my hand and added, “Make mine a virgin.”

Those who choose to eschew drinking are helped by a new flood of alcohol-free beverages in grocery stores and mocktails on bar menus, which is what journalist and editor Julia Bainbridge covers. Her book [Good Drinks: Alcohol-Free Recipes for When You're Not Drinking for Whatever Reason](#), is a recipe collection celebrating innovation in non-alcoholic beverages.

Bainbridge is quick to point out that sober-curious culture and recovery are very different. It's important not to conflate the two.

“Perhaps the paradigm will shift to the point that this isn't a thing – drink, don't drink, whatever, no need for a label or dedicated dry month – but while I appreciate that some people are choosing a sober lifestyle, it's still important to remember that sobriety has likely been painful for those with substance use disorders,” she said.

This lack of distinction is what makes me a bit concerned whenever I read a glossy magazine boasting a headline such as “[has everyone stopped drinking?](#)” Trends generate much-needed conversation but also flatten nuance, and alcohol use disorder requires a comprehensive understanding and approach.



‘Offering good non-alcoholic drinks and normalizing the consumption of them in all social spaces is a good thing for those who want them.’

Photograph: Benoît Tessier/Reuters

Nonetheless, this cultural reckoning is affecting the alcohol industry. The demand for alcoholic beverages is [decreasing](#), especially among the Gen Z generation.

Bainbridge applauds the increased availability and diversity of alcohol-free beverages, but with a word of caution. “Offering good non-alcoholic drinks and normalizing the consumption of them in all social spaces is a good thing for those who want them, whatever their reasons,” she says. “But while the increasing availability of these drinks is helpful and it’s a joy, it’s not treatment. Those in need of treatment usually have to work hard to keep alcohol out of their lives and that work is ongoing.”

I’ve been a hesitant adopter of the alcohol-free beverage offerings because I wasn’t yet at a place where I felt like I could drink a non-alcoholic craft stout and not feel the urge to swap for its alcoholic counterpart. Different friends and acquaintances, out of a genuine desire to offer support but not always knowing how, have given me bottles of alcohol-free wine, beer and spirits. They mostly remain untouched in my fridge.

Although I’ve made it an entire year sober, I still feel uneasy around alcohol-like substitutes. Part of recovery’s difficult but redeeming work is understanding my boundaries, which were all too fluid and porous when I drank.

I don’t consider myself even remotely trendy, but my recovery journey alongside the sober-curious trend is simultaneously exciting (Margo Price and I are both rebels? Hell yes!) and worrisome. I do find it comforting to see there’s finally a deliberate, focused conversation on alcohol, a recalibration of its influence on our lives and health.

Unfortunately, there’s nothing trendy about the work recovery demands. This is a concern that Davis-Timms shared. “It’s a scary thing to say, ‘I’m a sober person’ versus ‘I’m trying out Sober October.’ The worrisome part of the trend is how trends come and go and I don’t want their sobriety journey to depend on that.”

My decision to quit drinking had nothing to do with Sober October. I had a very bad night of drinking and when I woke up, I realized that if I didn't get help, the relationships that I valued most in my life – with my husband, my two young children, my friends and family – wouldn't last.

Some days, I don't even think about alcohol. Other days are much harder and I crave a beer or that once-familiar big pour of wine when the world feels like too much. In those moments, I find that ultimate connection – the one with myself. I take a breath, recall those turquoise Caribbean waves and once again choose not to drink.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2023/jan/02/stop-drinking-alcohol-free-holiday-tips>

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[Borrowing & debt](#)

How to get a grip on your personal finances in the new year

It's been a tough year for millions of people, and 2023 is looking even worse. Here are some remedies to try



People with card debt could save hundreds of pounds, or even thousands, by transferring to another provider. Photograph: Georgii Boronin/Getty Images/iStockphoto



[Rupert Jones](#)

Mon 2 Jan 2023 03.00 EST Last modified on Thu 5 Jan 2023 01.39 EST

Are your finances feeling (even more) fragile as a result of Christmas spending? It's been a really tough year financially for millions of people, and with a recession looming, mortgage and rent costs rising and the energy price guarantee becoming less generous from April, 2023 looks set to be even more challenging.

If you are in serious financial difficulty, seek free advice from an organisation such as [StepChange](#) or [National Debtline](#) as soon as possible.

However, if your situation is not quite so precarious, there are things you can do to get your finances into better shape. Now is a good time to take stock and look at where you can take action.

Cut your credit card costs

Many people's plastic will have taken a pounding during the last few weeks, and some will have racked up a not inconsiderable credit card bill.

However, many individuals with credit and store card debt could save hundreds of pounds, or even thousands, by transferring these balances to another provider offering a better rate. In some cases you could pay no interest on your debts until well into 2025.

Some credit cards are offering interest-free deals lasting for more than two years

Balance transfers can be a very good way of saving money on existing debts. Your aim should be to have paid off all that you owe by the time the promotional period ends.

The weeks immediately after Christmas are typically the most popular for switching card balances. [Official industry data](#) shows that in January 2022, consumers made 682,000 transfers, with almost £1.4bn moved in the space of 31 days. The average amount transferred was just over £2,000.

Some credit cards are offering interest-free deals lasting for more than two years. The main benefit of a 0% balance transfer deal is that all of your monthly repayment goes towards clearing the outstanding balance, and therefore the debt can be cleared much more quickly – but you do need to be disciplined. Also be aware that there will often be a fee to pay, which is typically a small percentage of the amount of debt being moved.



The weeks immediately after Christmas are typically the most popular for switching card balances. Photograph: Andrew Matthews/PA

NatWest is offering 0% interest on balance transfers for 33 months where the fee is 2.9%. With this deal you have to earn at least £10,000 a year. Meanwhile, M&S Bank is offering 0% interest for 28 months (2.99% fee), while at Sainsbury's Bank it is 0% for up to 30 months with a fee of 2.89% or 4%.

Some providers have useful calculators on their sites that will quickly show you how much you might be able to save. For example, M&S Bank says someone transferring £2,000 from a card with a rate of 23.9% APR and who repays £80 each month could save £622 by switching to its plastic.

Get a better overdraft deal

Authorised overdrafts are designed for short-term borrowing but the costs can vary dramatically.

Many banks have overdraft calculators on their websites, so log on and compare what your bank charges versus what you would be charged if you took your custom elsewhere.

For example, borrowing £500 via an authorised overdraft over 30 days would cost a Barclays standard account holder £12.45, while for a standard NatWest customer it is £13.87. At Nationwide you would pay £13.99, at Lloyds it's £13.86, and at HSBC it would be £13.29. At the app-based bank Monzo, the cost would be £7.20, £10.58 or £13.72, depending on which of its three interest rates you pay.



Many banks have overdraft calculators on their websites. Photograph: Bloomberg/Getty Images

But can you switch your current account if you are overdrawn? The answer is [yes, says the Current Account Switch Service](#). However, you will need to agree any overdraft you require with your new bank. Alternatively, they may be able to provide facilities to help you pay off your existing overdraft.

Consider consolidating your debts

If you are juggling various costly debts such as store card and credit card borrowing, you may be able to save money by consolidating them into one cheaper personal loan, where the monthly repayments remain unchanged and the debt is guaranteed to be gone by the end of the term. This is not an answer for everyone but it will work for some people.

There are best-buy personal loan deals now available at less than 5%. For example, HSBC, First Direct, M&S Bank and the AA are all offering rates from 4.9% APR. However, quite often, only applicants with a decent credit record get these table-topping rates.

The structure of a loan, with set monthly repayments, will appeal to some. But before taking the plunge, think about whether you really need a loan, and if another product such as a credit card might suit you better.

All rates and details correct at time of writing.

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[Donald Trump](#)

2024 Veepstakes: who will Donald Trump choose as his running mate?

From familiar faces to breakout Republican stars, 10 contenders for Trump's vice-presidential pick for his third White House run



It is unlikely that Trump will pick former vice-president Mike Pence as his running mate. Photograph: Andrew Harnik/AP



[David Smith](#) in Washington

[@smithinamerica](#)

Mon 2 Jan 2023 02.00 EST Last modified on Thu 5 Jan 2023 01.37 EST

Donald Trump, the former US president, is making a third consecutive run for the White House. But there is a job vacancy this time: his running mate. No one thinks it will be former vice-president Mike Pence after the pair [fell out](#) over the 2020 election and [January 6](#) insurrection. Trump, a 76-year-old straight, white man who needs to broaden his appeal, might look to a person of colour, a woman or a young person for 2024 (or all of the above) – or he might not. Here are 10 potential contenders:

Tucker Carlson

The Fox News host turned up last summer in Iowa, which gets the first say in the Republican presidential nominating process, prompting speculation about his political ambitions. He is a Trump kindred spirit who goads liberals, appeases Russian president [Vladimir Putin](#) and promotes the far-right [“great replacement” theory](#), that western elites are importing immigrant voters to supplant white people. But Carlson would be sure to turn off moderates and independents.

Ron DeSantis



Ron DeSantis. Photograph: Amy Beth Bennett/AP

Some “Make America Great Again” voters torn between the authentic original and his upstart rival want to see them join forces on a dream Maga ticket. Florida governor DeSantis once made a campaign ad in which he read Trump’s book about getting rich, *The Art of the Deal*, to one of his children and encouraged them to “[build the wall](#)” along the US-Mexico border by stacking toy bricks. But Trump has now branded him “[Ron DeSanctimonious](#)” and the pair seem too similar to run together: less yin and yang than yin and yin.

Tulsi Gabbard

The former Democratic congresswoman and presidential candidate is attempting to launch a new career as a rightwing media personality. She campaigned for [election-denier Kari Lake](#) and other Republicans in the midterm elections. Her provocative challenges to western orthodoxy towards dictators such as Putin and Syria’s [Bashar al-Assad](#) are likely to strike a chord with Trump. He may also decide he needs a female running mate to make himself less toxic to [suburban women](#).

Marjorie Taylor Greene

The far-right congresswoman from Georgia [personifies the age of Trumpism](#) with racist, antisemitic and Islamophobic statements, indications of support for political violence and wild conspiracy theories such as the claim that a Jewish-controlled space laser started a California wildfire. She recently suggested that, if she had led the [January 6 attack](#) on the US Capitol, the mob would have been armed and victorious in its efforts to prevent [the certification](#) of Joe Biden's 2020 victory (she later claimed this was "sarcasm"). She has little experience but her pugnacious campaigning style is right up Trump's street.

Nikki Haley

The former South Carolina governor was Trump's first ambassador to the United Nations. She turned against him over the [January 6 insurrection](#) but, like many other Republicans, found it easy to forgive him. She also proved willing to campaign for Georgia Senate [nominee Herschel Walker](#) despite his glaring incompetence and scandals. Trump's campaign, meanwhile, might regard the daughter of Sikh immigrants from India as the perfect foil to charges of sexism and racism.

Kari Lake



Kari Lake. Photograph: Jim Urquhart/Reuters

She was [the breakout](#) Republican star of the midterms all the way until election day – when [she lost](#) the race for governor of Arizona. The charismatic former TV anchor was endorsed by Trump and found a way to repeat his election lies while sounding almost credible. Despite his distaste for losers, Trump has twice [welcomed Lake](#) to his Mar-a-Lago Club in Florida since her defeat. It would be no great surprise to hear him say she is straight from “central casting”.

Kristi Noem

The governor of South Dakota has become [another familiar face](#) on the conservative conference and media circuit, railing against targets such as coronavirus pandemic lockdowns and the Chinese Communist party. In July, she told CNN she would support Trump in 2024 and “would be shocked if he asked” her to be his running mate. Noem has experience in elected office and could give Trump a new shot at credibility among Christians, rural Americans and women.

Sarah Sanders

She was unswervingly loyal as Trump’s [White House press secretary](#), championing his agenda and insisting that he was misunderstood by critics. Last month she was elected as governor of Arkansas, following in the footsteps of her father, [Mike Huckabee](#), creator of The Kids Guide to President Trump. Sanders and Huckabee, a former pastor, might help Trump shore up the Christian evangelical vote against potential challengers such as Pence.

Tim Scott



Tim Scott. Photograph: Wade Vandervort/AFP/Getty Images

The South Carolina senator is said to be eyeing his own run [for the presidency](#). The Trump campaign might regard Scott as a compelling choice, hoping that he would neutralise accusations of racism and rally “[Blacks for Trump](#)”. He told the Republican national convention in 2020 that his grandfather “suffered the indignity of being forced out of school as a third-grader to pick cotton and never learned to read or write ... Our family went from [cotton to Congress](#) in one lifetime.”

Elise Stefanik

Trump prizes loyalty and few have been more loyal than congresswoman Elise Stefanik of New York, the number three Republican in the House of Representatives. [Once a moderate](#), she staunchly defended the former president during his impeachments and declared this year: “I am ultra-Maga. And I’m proud of it.” Shrugging off disappointing midterm results, she was quick to endorse Trump for 2024. He has described her as “a star” and said: “She looks like good talent.”

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OpinionArtificial intelligence (AI)

Could a robot ever recreate the aura of a Leonardo da Vinci masterpiece? It's already happening

[Naomi Rea](#)



AI is already capable of mimicking human creativity. Whether or not it makes artists obsolete will be down to how they use it



Portraits created by AI in the style of Renaissance painters using Stable Diffusion software. Composite: Universal Public Domain Dedication

Mon 2 Jan 2023 01.00 EST Last modified on Thu 5 Jan 2023 01.39 EST

This month, the internet was flooded with stunningly ethereal digital art portraits, thanks to the work of the latest artificial intelligence-assisted application to go viral: [Lensa](#). Users uploaded their photographs to the app and then – for a small fee – it used AI to transform their profile pictures into, say, a magical elfin warrior princess version of themselves, in no time at all.

This year has seen a breakthrough for AI-driven image generators, which are now better than ever in quality, speed and affordability. The AI models are “trained” on millions of pieces of image and text data scraped from publicly available content online, and as in the case of Microsoft-backed [DALL-E](#), can turn short text prompts such as “Ronald McDonald performing open heart surgery” into [unique images](#).

Anyone can now produce professional-looking images tailored to their desires, without having any training in art or design themselves. If that sounds great to you, you might not be one of the millions of humans whose livelihoods depend on being able to exchange those skills for money.

Those working in the more cognitive creative industries have long felt that they had nothing to fear from automation. After all, how could a computer ever recreate the aura of a masterpiece by Leonardo da Vinci, or possess the unique skill set required to devise a compelling visual marketing campaign for a luxury brand?

Early images generated with these tools were full of glitches that marked them out as machine-made. But as the results have become more convincing, creatives have grown more concerned. On the frontlines of this debate are gig workers such as graphic artists and commercial illustrators, who take art commissions based on client specifications.

Anyone inclined to dismiss the idea that AI could take over creative jobs as scaremongering should know: it is already happening. This winter, San Francisco Ballet used the independent research lab [Midjourney](#) to create the [visual campaign](#) for its production of The Nutcracker (although a representative for the ballet said that, despite using AI, nearly 30 human designers, producers, and creatives were also employed in the campaign's making).

Another threat to artist livelihoods comes from these tools' ability to create imagery "in the style of" specific artists. This functionality is fun when used to conjure up quirky visions of how Van Gogh might have painted Rishi Sunak [riding into No 10 on a unicorn](#), but when it comes to living artists who have spent years developing their own distinctive style, the AI's uncanny ability to mimic, without credit or compensation, becomes problematic.

Earlier this year, fantasy art illustrator [Greg Rutkowski](#) found out that his name was one of the most popular prompts on the AI platform [Stable Diffusion](#) – more popular than Picasso or Leonardo. "The only thing that could at least stop feeding the algorithm is to stop posting your work on the internet, which is impossible in our industry," says Rutkowski.

The legal recourse for artists who feel these tools are infringing on their copyright is knotty and unclear. In the EU, lawyers are contesting the legality of using images under copyright for training AI models but as the

UK bids to become an industry leader, it has already proposed a bill to allow carte blanche AI training for commercial purposes. Meanwhile it remains unclear if traditional copyright even applies here, as it is difficult to copyright a visual style.



Open AI's representation of 'A sea otter in the style of Girl With a Pearl Earring by Vermeer'. Photograph: OpenAI/AFP/Getty Images

While these issues have only recently garnered mainstream attention, there are factions of artists who predicted this when the field was still in its infancy, and have been working to develop solutions. Among them are Berlin-based artists [Mat Dryhurst](#) and [Holly Herndon](#), who have created [a search function](#) that anyone can use to see whether their work has been scraped for a 150-terabyte dataset called [LAION](#), which is used to train most AI image generators. Their organisation, [Spawning](#), is also developing another tool that would allow artists to set permissions on how their style and likeness can be used by the algorithms, including the option to opt out entirely.

Both Stability AI – the organisation behind Stable Diffusion – and LAION have committed to partner with Spawning to honour consent requests made in advance of the next training of Stable Diffusion, and a recent update to the tool removed the ability to write prompts that specify an artist by name.

There are other flaws in the vast open datasets on which the AI models are trained, which limit its potential. Deficiencies in the diversity of the data, as well as biases held by the humans who originally labelled the images it learns from, have unwittingly coded the models with harmful stereotypes and representations. Some users are finding that Lensa creates [overly sexualised female avatars](#), [exaggerates racial phenotypes](#) in its outputs, and has [difficulty reading mixed-race features](#). Such issues might give pause to anyone thinking of using the technology for commercial purposes – at least until the training datasets are improved.

Many artists remain unfazed, and in fact believe the technology could open up possibilities for them to make better work, or at least to work more efficiently. Though she has not used it yet, the UK-based illustrator [Michelle Thompson](#) sees potential in the idea of using AI both to develop concepts and to refine artistic outputs. “I see it less as a threat and more of an opportunity,” she said, adding: “Like everything else, there will always be artists who can use the tools better.”

These tools are only as good as the datasets they are trained on. Human imagination, on the other hand, has no limit. For Dryhurst, AI models “could attempt to make a pale version of something we did years ago,” but that “doesn’t account for what we might do next”.

For those watching closely, the visual outputs of these widely available AI tools are already getting repetitive, and even untrained eyes will learn soon to recognise the hand of the machine. Some of the most interesting and conceptually rich work being made with AI is still coming from artists such as [Mario Klingemann](#) and [Anna Ridler](#), who are customising their own training datasets, and curating the machine outputs in imaginative ways.

The kind of artificial intelligence we might imagine replacing artists – an entirely autonomous creative robot capable of human-like imagination and expression – does not yet exist, but it is coming. And as AI becomes more ubiquitous, artists, illustrators and designers will ultimately be set apart not by if, but by how, they use the technology.

- Naomi Rea is European market editor at Artnet News, an online art industry newswire

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[OpinionBBC](#)

As an ex-BBC presenter, I want to hear a vision that goes beyond cut, cut, cut

[Roger Bolton](#)



‘It’s your BBC,’ they say. But that will ring hollow unless licence-fee payers are given a say in what happens



The statue of George Orwell outside BBC Broadcasting House in London.
Photograph: Bloomberg/Getty Images

Mon 2 Jan 2023 02.00 EST Last modified on Mon 2 Jan 2023 14.14 EST

Do we still think public service broadcasting matters? For those of us who do, these are worrying times. “The public service broadcasting system is undoubtedly facing an existential threat,” [warns](#) the former chair of ITV and much else, Peter Bazalgette.

ITV, he reveals, has not yet decided to reapply for a new public service broadcasting (PSB) licence because it does not know what the terms will be. He and many others await the new [broadcasting bill](#), which, they hope, will ensure that when their services are placed on a digital platform they do not own – such as Amazon, Apple, Samsung, LG, Sky and Virgin – they will be given “prominence” and not charged ridiculous amounts. If not, says Bazalgette, ITV has plenty of [non-public service](#) broadcasting options.

Elsewhere in PSB-land there is heartening news, for it now [seems unlikely](#) that the broadcasting bill will propose privatising Channel 4. But what next? Who knows. Could someone please offer an inspiring vision of what its contribution to public service broadcasting should be in the next 40 years? I understand why independent producers opposed privatisation with such

vehemence – it threatened their businesses – but what about inspiring content? Does anyone have a vision of the future to compare with that which Jeremy Isaacs, its founding chief executive, displayed all those years ago?

And then there is the BBC, the public service mothership just turned 100 years old. But what is [its vision](#) for the next decade, let alone the next century?

Two noble baronesses hit the nail on the head very forcibly in a recent House of Lords debate. “It remains unclear what the [BBC](#) wants to be, beyond being a significant player in this global media world,” said the Conservative peer Lady Stowell, chair of the communications committee, who once worked for the BBC. She wanted to know “what it will do more of... continue to do ... stop doing”.

Lady (Dido) Harding, also a Conservative peer, fired a warning shot across the bows of Broadcasting House, saying, “No investment proposal should be approved without a compelling long-term vision and plan.” The implication was clear, she hadn’t seen one. But then, neither have the rest of us. It’s a creative vision thing: is there such a thing at and for the BBC ?

There is certainly a business vision, as there should be. The BBC board is now top heavy with bankers and business people. The chairman, Richard Sharp, [tutored Rishi Sunak](#) at Goldman Sachs. The corporation’s future as a big, international business is pretty secure. A commercial version of it could survive without the licence fee, but is that what we want?



‘BBC Four, which originally commissioned the wonderful series Detectorists, is to go online and become an archive channel only.’
Photograph: Jack Barnes/BBC/Channel X

Contrary to what the Daily Mail constantly argues, the BBC is now a very efficient business, not least because of the herculean efforts of its director general, Tim Davie, who, while cleverly blunting government allegations of bias, has been faced with a [30% cut](#) in real spending power. With inflation rampant, further cuts are in the offing, which will follow already announced cuts in essential elements of its public service offering, including news, [local radio](#) and the World Service.

But no one voted for that. All this is happening without the people who pay for the corporation, the licence-fee payers, being consulted. The oft-used slogan “It’s your BBC” is in danger of ringing hollow.

The BBC has never been very good on consultation or accountability, as I know from my many years presenting Radio 4’s Feedback, where all too often there was little feedback. When it came to inviting executives on to the programme, the press office would often intervene, saying, “We don’t think this is the right time to say something on this subject.” I would reply that the right time was whenever the listener wanted an answer.

(There were some wonderful exceptions, such as the departing controller of Radio 3, [Alan Davey](#), who would always come on and answer anything. He got it. Well, he had been – inside and outside the BBC – a very public servant.)

When it came to inviting presenters and producers on to Feedback, requests also had to go through the press office, and if an interview took place a press officer would usually be present, at their insistence. The good producers, and there are a lot of them, would roll their eyes at being chaperoned. And I got the impression that some press officers were a bit embarrassed by their role as “minders”.

Davie has said he is determined to improve accountability, and I am sure he is sincere, but he then presses on with his business plan – and those cuts – as though he were running a commercial business, not this much-loved, publicly owned, publicly financed institution.

Of course, someone has to take decisions, we can't all vote on what has to go, but surely we would have a right to expect the ability to discuss priorities? For example, Radio 4 Extra may go [online only](#), thus depriving some older listeners of a service they greatly value, while leaving them with many other, much more expensive, services they could well do without. They had no say. The BBC director of speech radio, Mohit Bakaya, says, rather mystifyingly, that the online move of 4 Extra is “not a done deal”. Maybe [protests](#) could tip the balance.

BBC Four, which originally commissioned the wonderful series *Detectorists*, is also to go online and become an archive channel only. Again, no consultation. BBC local radio is being decimated, despite its role in serving so many communities.

Truly, to use Bazalgette's phrase, an existential threat, and with a new year we need new thinking: pause the BBC cuts now, postpone the debate on the privatisation of Channel 4 and ensure ITV remains a public service broadcaster, while conducting a proper cross-party inquiry into the future of the public service media and how to pay for it.

We have, by accident and design, created a landscape and a tradition of public service broadcasting in this country that is very special. We must be vigilant of it. It would be careless, not to say criminal, to let it slip away.

- Roger Bolton is a former BBC executive and journalist. He presents the podcast Roger Bolton's Beeb Watch
- This article was amended on 2 January 2023. An earlier version said that the BBC was blunting government allegations of impartiality when it should have said allegations of bias.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/jan/02/bbc-presenter-news-cuts-threat-public-service-broadcasting>.

[Starmer's path to power](#)[Electoral reform](#)

There's no point Labour winning unless it promises to dismantle our toxic electoral system

[Neal Lawson](#)

Britain's first-past-the-post rulebook tilts politics to the right. But the opposition still refuses to back an alternative



Keir Starmer welcomes new Labour MP Samantha Dixon to parliament, London, 7 December 2022. Photograph: Leon Neal/Getty Images

Mon 2 Jan 2023 04.00 ESTLast modified on Thu 5 Jan 2023 01.39 EST

As the Tories flatline, two big questions must prey on Keir Starmer's mind: can he win, and will a government that he leads really change British society? According to one way of thinking, these are unconnected dilemmas – Labour just needs to get over the line and only then worry about what needs to be done. But means and ends can never be separated.

How Starmer wins will shape how he governs. In our tumultuous times, winning office is necessary but not sufficient; winning the power to act in big ways over a long time is essential. So how can the [Labour](#) leader both win and be prepared for what comes next?

Labour's lead hovers at [about 20%](#). But remember that under our first past the post (FPTP) electoral system, where it's the spread of support across the country that counts, Labour needs a lead of 12% for any parliamentary majority. Historically, the trend is that governments recover as they get closer to election day.

Regression analysis of previous midterm leads show that a 28% lead tends to result in an [eight-point margin](#) of victory on election day. That would put Labour deep in hung-parliamentary territory. The loss of a dozen seats through boundary changes and voter suppression through ballot ID checks combine to make things even harder. And Labour's lead looks soft.

A recent poll conducted for the Win As One campaign, which I helped to lead, shows that [63% of voters](#) believe Starmer's current lead is down to negative views of the government, not positive views of Labour. The injustice of the voting system and the way it skews political debate should lead Starmer to see that the answer to winning and governing lies in pluralism, alliances and proportional representation (PR).

FPTP is the toxic glue that holds together a centralised winner-takes-all system, privileging the interests of the already powerful and a few swing voters in a few swing seats, tilting our politics to the right whoever wins. PR would weaken the grip of regressives on our country simply by making every vote count, helping progressives win office and real power.

There was a big progressive majority in 2019, but you wouldn't think it from the result: 16.2 million people [backed progressive parties](#) and only 13.9 million supported the Tory and Brexit parties. But they won an 80-seat majority because they formed a pact and didn't split their votes.

FPTP isn't just unfair, it also forces Labour to the right. Take the issue of immigration. The country is evenly split between those who think it's a good

thing and those who don't. But the positive votes tend to pile up and be wasted in [only 25% of seats](#). So, it's little surprise that politicians pander their message to the other 75% of seats. It is what leads us to the situation where Nigel Farage is saying he [backs Starmer's stance](#) on immigration. So, we have lost before an election is even called.

The same dynamic is repeated across the policy agenda. People want climate action and social justice, but the political system works against it. In this way, democracy is a first-order issue for Labour. Unless we change the system, we can't change society. At the launch of the Gordon Brown's report on the [future of UK democracy](#), Starmer rightly said: "People up and down this country are crying out for a new approach."

But the report was strangely silent on PR, given the Labour conference had [overwhelmingly backed it](#) as a policy just two months before. Labour advocating for it now would encourage mass tactical voting to win and forge an alliance to govern on the big challenges of inequality, climate chaos, housing and social care. Instead, by fighting on the terrain of elites, swing voters and the demands of the rightwing media, any Labour victory is in danger of caging itself in.

[Recent polling](#) shows there is both majority support for proportional representation (56%) and remarkable backing for progressive parties to work together in government (78%), with 71% believing candidates should stand aside for each other to win. Just as the right already do.

This is the path to victory and a new society. But the Labour machine still refuses to back PR. At best, this represents an out-of-date technocratic and paternalist culture seeking to do politics *to* people. At worst, its twisted goal is to retain a monopoly of opposition by stopping other parties and new entrants competing fairly. But guaranteed second place or occasional periods in office on Tory terrain are no longer good enough.

In his campaign to win the Labour leadership, Starmer backed the case for [voting reform](#). Now it seems he needs a nudge. Thus, it ever was. Real power is never given away. It is waged and won by combining morality with force.

We can look for inspiration to the Scottish parliament, only realised through a huge civic campaign. And because we know that in 1997 Labour promised voting reform but refused to deliver on it, the case for change through citizens' pressure must be maintained whatever the election result.

The polls are likely too close. Starmer, his party and candidates will want as much support as possible. The condition must be their backing for real democratic reform. They can be bent to a better politics. These are not normal times, and politics as normal will not do.

- Neal Lawson is director of the cross-party campaign organisation Compass

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Opinion Women

Why Christmas (and Diwali, Hanukkah and Eid) are cancelled in my household

[Nilanjana Bhowmick](#)

I am on a journey of unlearning – saying no to overwork and extra caregiving expected of me because of my gender



Women often feel pressured into entertaining because they are told they are so good at it. Photograph: Pream Kumar/Alamy

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Mon 2 Jan 2023 01.30 EST Last modified on Mon 2 Jan 2023 04.45 EST

I did not plan a New Year's get-together this year so that my family could all scream "happy new year 2023" even as I droop with exhaustion in the background. After the festivities my feet hurt and I just want to kick off my shoes, get into bed and stay there in my pyjamas.

I have cancelled festivals and festivities. Yes, for ever. From Diwali to [Christmas](#), from Holi to New Year's Eve or Thanksgiving or Hanukkah or Eid, everyone wants to have a good time, surrounded by friends and family. But are women having a good time, too? Not really. They are busy organising and executing the "good time" because, of course, this is "women's work" which they "do so well" because it's a special gift that comes with having a vagina. Right. You know what else comes with that? Anxiety, stress and depression. This constant expectation of nurturing is unnerving.

But dare we say that out loud? Or even think it? Nope. For many of us have grown up with our mothers slaving in the kitchen, cooking and baking, gathering family and friends together and nurturing them, writing those endless Christmas cards and New Year letters, buying gifts. But are their

smiles really beatific – or have we been socialised to just see the smile and not the weariness underneath it? According to [a 2019 report from the International Labour Organization](#), globally women carry out more than 75% of unpaid care work and dedicate 3.2 times more time to it than men. And this peaks throughout the year during festivities – annual, planned or impromptu.

We have stowed away awkward memories of our mothers' exhaustion and weariness because we do not know what to do with them

The famed Indian hospitality is completely built on the invisible labour of Indian women. Growing up, it was usual for my father to invite scores of his friends over for meals, without a word of warning to my mother. My mother, a working woman, would be in the kitchen for hours to feed guests, who would leave praising my father for his immense hospitality, although his part was merely inviting them.

Later on, when my mother started putting her foot down the loop of hospitality labour didn't end, it just got passed on to my aunts – my father's sisters. So, for family get-togethers they would bring the food over, while whispering unkind words about my mother.

We all have stowed away memories of those awkward flashes of our mothers, a quick showreel of exhaustion and weariness – these memories are uncomfortable because we do not know what to do with them. Did our mothers enjoy the soirees they threw often of their own volition? Do we? But we grow up with these images, we idolise them and we are dragged into replaying the same roles in our lives as wives and mothers. At work, more often than not, we are either placed in charge of planning festivities or we volunteer, because “we do it so well”.

We need to stop saying “women love taking care of their friends and families”. They do, sure, but no more or less than a man. Taking care of loved ones is a primal human urge. However, women have acquired this image of thriving on caring for people around them. It's a myth imposed on women, so they have no choice but to grin and bear it. But it's a burden. Yet a majority of women have internalised this labour as something that only

they are able to offer. For example, [in 1990, a study found that](#) “while Christmas shopping may be a labour of love to some, it is most widely construed as “women’s work”.

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This labour is nothing but our third shift. We can’t say it, because if we do then we are self-centred, unkind, not “woman” enough – because the most enduring definition of a woman is that she is caring. So, we overwork ourselves, taking care of the family, taking care of anyone in need, sick friends, relatives, lending empathy to those who need it. Is it any wonder that many of us suffer from anxiety and depression that only deepens during festive times? After all, a 2019 YouGov survey reported that [51% of women felt stressed around Christmas as against only 35% of men](#). More than a third of women also say they’ve felt anxious at this time, as against less than a quarter of men.

For a long time I too thought making sure everyone was having a good time was my job. But it is not. Unless I make it mine.

So, I have cancelled all festivals now. I have cancelled all extra caregiving that is expected of me just because of my gender. Saying no to overwork – emotional or physical – is a long journey of unlearning. I am almost there.

- *Nilanjana Bhowmick is a Delhi-based independent journalist and author of the book Lies Our Mothers Told Us*
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Croatia

Croatia takes final steps into EU with open border and euro switch

Common currency was already used for valuations and bank deposits in former Yugoslav country, which joined the EU in 2013



People in Ban Jelačić Square, Zagreb, celebrate the new year. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

[*Shaun Walker*](#) *Central and eastern Europe correspondent*

Mon 2 Jan 2023 07.15 ESTFirst published on Sun 1 Jan 2023 20.13 EST

Croatia has adopted the euro and joined the European Union's borderless Schengen zone, two steps that its prime minister said represented a historic moment.

“Nothing is the same after this,” said Andrej Plenković, promising that joining the euro would better protect Croatians from financial crises, and joining the Schengen zone would make travelling easier and boost tourism.

Croatia became the 20th eurozone country on Sunday, at a time when inflation is high across [Europe](#) after rising food and fuel prices since Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

“It is the season of new beginnings. And there is no place in Europe where this is more true than here in Croatia,” [tweeted](#) the European Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, as she arrived in Croatia to mark the occasion on Sunday.

Croatian politicians said the currency adoption and the removal of borders with neighbouring Slovenia and Hungary were symbolic steps that marked the end point of the country's post-independence journey.

“We opened our doors to borderless Europe. This goes beyond eliminating border controls, it is the final affirmation of our European identity,” said the interior minister, Davor Božinović, who was at the Bregana border crossing with Slovenia to celebrate the end of passport checks.

Croatia declared independence from Yugoslavia in 1991 and fought a war to cement its existence as an independent state, in which 20,000 were killed and hundreds of thousands displaced.

Croatia was the most recent country to join the EU, in 2013. Slovenia joined in 2004, while the other parts of the former Yugoslavia – Serbia, Bosnia, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Kosovo – are still in the early stages of negotiations over accession.

While some Croatians expressed fears that the switch to euros could lead to price increases, the general mood in the country was celebratory.

“Fantastic! Phenomenal!” ran a headline in the newspaper Večernji list, quoting travellers who used the border on New Year's Day.

Some people had travelled to the border with Slovenia in the first hours of the new year to watch a small piece of history in real time.

“I spent years of my life waiting at border checkpoints, so I came here tonight to witness this moment, the moment after which I will wait no

more,” Stipica Mandić, a 72-year-old professional driver, told Associated Press at the Bergana crossing. He had left a New Year’s Eve party and driven to the crossing to be there at the moment the checks ended.

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A new sign at the border announces “free passage” in English, German, Slovenian and Croatian.

In Zagreb, Plenković treated Von der Leyen to a coffee on the city’s main square, paid for in euros.

“Our citizens and the economy will be better protected from crises,” he said.

Experts say the adoption of the euro will help shield Croatia’s economy at a time when inflation is soaring worldwide. The country’s new euro coins feature designs including the map of Croatia and the inventor Nikola Tesla.

The euro was already widely used in Croatia, with about 80% of bank deposits denominated in the currency and shops and restaurants in tourist areas accepting payment in euros.

“The euro was already a value measure – psychologically it’s nothing new – while entry into Schengen is fantastic news for tourism,” a tourism agency employee, Marko Pavić, told Agence France-Presse.

Analysts say joining the euro is likely to improve borrowing conditions in Croatia, pointing out that inflation in recent months has tended to be higher in EU countries, such as Poland and Hungary, which are outside the

eurozone. Croatia's inflation rate was 13.5% in November, higher than the 10% in the eurozone.

The tourism industry accounts for 20% of Croatia's GDP, and the adoption of the euro as well as the end of land border controls with Slovenia and Hungary are expected to provide a boost to tourists heading to the country's popular Adriatic coastline this year.

Croatia becomes the 27th member of the Schengen zone, made up of EU countries as well as Liechtenstein, Iceland, Norway and Switzerland.

For some years, rights groups have criticised Croatian authorities for illegal pushbacks of refugees and migrants at the country's border with Bosnia, with police accused of violence and abuse.

In a [report last month](#), Human Rights Watch accused European agencies of turning a blind eye to, or even encouraging, such behaviour in Croatia, Romania and Bulgaria, all countries which have been keen for some years to join the Schengen zone.

"The EU Commission's funding of border management in these countries enables continuing abuses," said the report.

Last month, when agreeing to accept Croatia into the Schengen zone, a meeting of EU interior ministers rejected applications from Romania and Bulgaria. Austria and the Netherlands voted against the two countries, citing concerns they were too soft on migration.

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China

China's warplane incursions into Taiwan air defence zone doubled in 2022

The military ramped up sorties and launched the largest war games in decades to protest against a visit by US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi in August



China sent 1,727 planes into Taiwan's air defence identification zone (ADIZ) in 2022 Photograph: Xinhua/REX/Shutterstock

Agence France-Presse

Sun 1 Jan 2023 23.07 EST

China's warplane incursions into Taiwan's air defence zone nearly doubled in 2022, with a surge in fighter jet and bomber sorties as Beijing intensified threats towards the island democracy.

Self-ruled Taiwan lives under constant threat of invasion. Communist party rulers claim the island as part of China's territory and have vowed to seize it one day.

Relations have been icy for years under President Xi Jinping, China's most assertive leader in a generation.

[2022 saw a deeper deterioration](#), as Xi's military ramped up incursions and launched the largest war games in decades to protest against a visit by US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi in August.

China sent 1,727 planes into Taiwan's air defence identification zone (ADIZ) in 2022, according to an AFP database based on daily updates released by Taipei's defence ministry.

That compares with about 960 incursions in 2021 and 380 in 2020.

Fighter jet sorties more than doubled from 538 in 2021 to 1,241 while incursions by bombers, including the nuclear-capable H6, went from 60 to 101.

Last year also saw the first incursions by drones, with all 71 reported by Taiwan's military coming after Pelosi's visit.

Military analysts say China has used the incursions to probe Taiwan's defences, exhaust its ageing air force and voice displeasure over western support for Taipei, especially the United States.

"They want to show their determination, their will and to coerce the United States: don't get too close to their red lines, don't cross their red lines," Lee Hsi-min, Taiwan's former chief of general staff, told AFP.

China sent 71 warplanes to conduct a "strike exercise" on 25 December in response to what it described as "escalating collusion and provocations" by Washington and Taipei.

That came days after US president Joe Biden signed off on up to \$10bn in military aid to Taiwan.

August saw a record 440 sorties by Chinese warplanes, the same month Pelosi became the highest-ranking US lawmaker to visit Taiwan in 25 years.

“The more frequent sorties are worrying and compel the Taiwanese side to be in a perpetual state of alert to ensure that the PLA (People’s Liberation Army) does not use them as cover for an attack against Taiwan,” Taipei-based political and military analyst J Michael Cole told AFP.

However, he also said a rise in incursions “does not signify that (China) is ready to use force at an earlier date against Taiwan – at least not an invasion scenario, which would require months of mobilisation”.

Many nations maintain air defence identification zones, including the United States, Canada, South Korea, Japan and China, which are not the same as a country’s airspace.

They instead encompass a much wider area in which any foreign aircraft is expected to announce itself to local aviation authorities.

Analysts say China’s increased probing of Taiwan’s defence zone is part of wider “grey-zone” tactics that keep the island pressured.

“The PRC (People’s Republic of China) is launching a war of attrition on the Taiwanese military,” said Richard Hu, deputy director of National Chengchi University’s Taiwan Centre for Security Studies.

While China intends to collect crucial intelligence and “readiness parameters”, such as how quickly and from where Taiwan’s interceptions take place, an invasion remains a hugely risky and costly endeavour.

The mountainous island would be a formidable challenge for any military to conquer.

“In terms of taking Taiwan by force, PRC is still confronting a number of vital challenges such as sending hundreds of thousands of troops across the Taiwan Strait,” said Hu, a retired army major general.

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[Air transport](#)

Four people dead after two helicopters collide near Sea World on Gold Coast

Authorities say one aircraft managed to land after fatal mid-air collision that left three others critically injured

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Footage shows aftermath of fatal helicopter crash on the Gold Coast in Australia – video

[Tory Shepherd](#) and [Warren Murray](#) on the Gold Coast

Mon 2 Jan 2023 02.04 ESTFirst published on Mon 2 Jan 2023 00.23 EST

Four people have died and three are in a critical condition after two helicopters collided near Sea World on the Gold Coast.

More than a dozen people were assessed by the [Queensland](#) ambulance service after the helicopters came into contact on Monday afternoon. Police later confirmed four people were killed and three critically injured when the helicopter they were travelling in crashed to the ground, landing upside down.

The other helicopter managed to land near the Sea World theme park after the collision which occurred about 2pm local time (3pm AEDT). Passengers in that helicopter sustained minor injuries from glass shrapnel.

Acting Insp Gary Worrell said it was a “difficult scene”. “Four people have lost their lives today and we have three others critical in hospital,” he told reporters.

There were “lots of moving parts” and it was initially difficult to access the crash site on a sandbank, he said.

“[From] our initial inquiries it would appear that one has been taking off and one has been landing,” Worrell said.

“[One] airframe has the windscreen removed and it’s landed safely on the island. The other airframe has crashed and it was upside down. Members of the public and police tried to remove the people and they commenced first aid and tried to get those people to safety.”



Police and rescue personnel inspect one of the helicopters at the crash scene. Photograph: Dave Hunt/AAP

Ambulance supervisor Jayney Shearman said passengers suffered “multi-system trauma”. “Which means there was a lot of impact to the body,” she said.

The Queensland premier, Annastacia Palaszczuk, said it was an “unthinkable tragedy”. “My deepest sympathies are with each of the families and everyone affected by this terrible accident,” she wrote on Twitter.

What has happened on the Gold Coast today is an unthinkable tragedy. My deepest sympathies are with each of the families and everyone

affected by this terrible accident.

— Anastacia Palaszczuk (@AnastaciaMP) [January 2, 2023](#)

Witness Va Tuala, who was visiting from Ipswich, said she heard a “sudden, loud bang”.

“It sounded almost like a loud thunderstorm. As we turned towards the noise, we just saw both helicopters in the air and one had basically been hit by the other,” she told Guardian Australia.

“It just spiralled out of control and we saw it basically crashing down, and we saw the debris from the crash. The other helicopter managed to land safely and everyone basically just stopped ... we were all just looking at what had happened.

“It seemed like something out of a movie. When the other helicopter had landed we saw passengers or maybe the pilot running towards the helicopter that had crashed and a whole bunch of people just running towards it.”

People on jetskis and in boats rushed to help the victims at the small sand island off the theme park before paramedics and police arrived on the scene.



The helicopters on the sandbank. Photograph: Nine News

Police urged motorists and pedestrians to avoid Seaworld Drive at Main Beach.

The Australian Transport Safety Bureau has begun an investigation. The chief commissioner, Angus Mitchell, said the ATSB would publish a preliminary report within six to eight weeks.

“Transport safety investigators with experience in helicopter operations, maintenance and survivability engineering are deploying from the ATSB’s Brisbane and Canberra offices and are expected to begin arriving at the accident site from Monday afternoon,” he said.

“During the evidence-gathering phase of the investigation, ATSB investigators will examine the wreckage and map the accident site.”

Anyone who saw the collision, witnessed the helicopters in any phase of their flights, or has footage of any kind, should contact the ATSB, the bureau said.

GOLD COAST: Seaworld Drive in Main Beach has been closed off due to a helicopter crash. Motorists and pedestrians are urged to avoid the area.

— Queensland Police (@QldPolice) [January 2, 2023](#)

Photographs showed a Sea World logo on one of the aircraft. A witness said one of the helicopters had been conducting joy flights from Sea World in the hours before the collision.

“We and the entire flying community are devastated by what has happened and our sincere condolences go to all those involved and especially the loved ones and family of the deceased,” a Sea World Helicopters spokesperson said.

“We are cooperating with all the authorities including the ATSB and the Queensland police. As it is now a police investigation we cannot provide

any further information at this stage.”

The Queensland ambulance service said “multiple QAS resources and other emergency services” attended the scene.

[#MainBeach](#) - Multiple QAS resources and other emergency services are on the scene of a major incident involving two helicopter at 1.59pm. No further details at this time.

— Queensland Ambulance (@QldAmbulance) [January 2, 2023](#)

Witness Jonathon James Spagnol said the crash happened after helicopters got too close, with one’s rear rotor sawing off the other’s.

“Yea 2 choppers hit each other. Look like one went up and one was coming back in. Chopped the back off the other landed on the sand bar. Was right behind us,” he wrote on Facebook.

Carmen Renée Mallia wrote: “I seen it also. I was absolutely shocked. Shook me to the core. I hope everyone was ok.”

“Saw it hit something from the car and it just went straight down. Hope everyone is okay,” Billie Tunks said on Facebook.

- *With Australian Associated Press*

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[New York](#)

Machete-wielding man attacks New York City police at New Year's Eve event

Authorities are investigating whether the 19-year-old suspect was inspired by radical Islamist extremism, an official said



New York City police stand guard on a road after a 19-year-old assailant attacked three officers with a machete near Times Square during the New Year's Eve celebrations. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Associated Press

Sun 1 Jan 2023 17.52 ESTLast modified on Mon 2 Jan 2023 08.42 EST

A man wielding a machete attacked three police officers at the New Year's Eve celebration in [New York](#) City, authorities said, striking two of them in the head before an officer shot the man in the shoulder.

Authorities were investigating whether the man was inspired by radical Islamist extremism, according to a law enforcement official familiar with the matter.

The attack happened a little after 10pm about eight blocks from Times Square, just outside of the high-security zone where revelers are screened for weapons.

The two officers were hospitalized, one with a fractured skull and the other with a bad cut, and were expected to recover.

Police did not identify the 19-year-old suspect, who also was expected to recover, but the law enforcement official identified him to the Associated Press as Trevor Bickford, of Wells, Maine.

Investigators think Bickford traveled to New York City earlier in the week and are examining whether he came to New York specifically to attack police officers at one of the largest New Year's celebrations in the world, the law enforcement official said.

New York City police and federal officials are still trying to discern a motive, and investigators have been reviewing Bickford's online postings, which included some mentions of Islamic extremist views, the official said. The official could not publicly discuss details of the ongoing investigation and spoke to AP on condition of anonymity.

The attack and sound of a gunshot briefly sent some people in the crowd running, but the incident did not affect the festivities in Times Square, which continued uninterrupted.

Mayor Eric Adams said at a news conference that he had spoken to one of the wounded officers as he was being stitched up at the hospital.

"He was in good spirits," Adams said. "He understood that his role saved lives of New Yorkers today."

An investigation was under way to pinpoint a motive for the attack, but authorities said they did not believe there was any ongoing threat to the

public.

Keechant Sewell, the police commissioner, said: “We are working with our federal partners for this investigation and it is ongoing ... there is no active threat at this time.”

The NYPD mounts a huge security operation every year to keep the New Year’s Eve crowd safe. Thousands of officers are sent to the area, including many new recruits.

One of the injured officers just graduated from the police academy on Friday, the mayor said.

The blocks where the biggest crowds gather to see performances and the midnight ball drop can be accessed only through checkpoints where officers use metal-detecting wands to screen for weapons.

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[Brazil](#)

‘This nightmare is over’: Lula vows to pull Brazil out of Bolsonaro’s era of ‘devastation’

Leftwinger promises environmental protections and social progress as he’s sworn in as president

Teary-eyed Lula tells Brazil 'It's time to reconnect' – video

[Tom Phillips](#) in Brasília

Sun 1 Jan 2023 14.32 EST First published on Sun 1 Jan 2023 08.52 EST

A tearful [Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva](#) has vowed to haul Brazil out of Jair Bolsonaro’s era of “devastation” and kickstart a new phase of reconciliation, environmental preservation and social justice after being sworn in as president.

Fighting back tears as he addressed tens of thousands of supporters who had packed the plaza outside the presidential palace in Brasília, Lula declared the end of “one of the worst periods in Brazilian history” under the former far-right president.

“[It was] an era of darkness, uncertainty and great suffering ... but this nightmare is over,” Lula said, vowing to reunite the bitterly divided South American country and govern not just for those who elected him in October’s historic election, but all 215 million Brazilians.

“It is in nobody’s interest for our country to be in a constant state of ferment,” Lula said, urging citizens to rebuild friendships destroyed by years of hate speech and lies. “There aren’t two Brazils. We are one single people.”

The veteran leftwinger, a former factory worker who was president from 2003 to 2010, broke down as he outlined plans to wage war on hunger, which he called “the gravest crime committed against the Brazilian people”.

“Women are rummaging through the rubbish to feed their children,” said Lula, 77. “Entire families are sleeping out in the open, exposed to the cold, rain and fear.”

Brazil’s new president did not mention his right-wing predecessor by name. But he excoriated the damage done by Bolsonaro’s four-year administration during which nearly 700,000 Brazilians died of a mishandled Covid outbreak, millions were plunged into poverty, and Amazon deforestation soared.

“No amnesty! No amnesty!” the crowd bellowed of Bolsonaro, who many want brought to justice for sabotaging Covid containment efforts and vaccination against an illness he called “a little flu”.



Lula after receiving the presidential sash, accompanied by his wife, Rosangela, Indigenous leader Raoni Metuktire, and other community leaders. Photograph: Sérgio Lima/AFP/Getty

“Bolsonaro killed my son. He was 20 when he died,” said one man in the crowd, Waldecir da Costa, his hands shaking with anger as he held up a

photograph of his late child on his phone. “I want him to pay for everything he did.”

Addressing congress shortly after being sworn in on Sunday afternoon, Lula said the “criminal behaviour of a denialist and obscurantist government that treated people’s lives with callousness” during the pandemic should not go unpunished.

Bolsonaro took refuge in the US on Friday, refusing to hand the presidential sash to his leftist rival as is democratic tradition.

Instead, during a profoundly symbolic and emotionally charged ceremony outside the presidential palace, that task was performed by Aline Sousa, a black waste picker and recycling activist from Brazil’s capital.

Lula strode up the ramp into the palace flanked by eight representatives of Brazil’s diverse society including one of its most revered Indigenous leaders, Raoni Metuktire, a rap DJ and metalworker and a 10-year-old child.

Vivi Reis, a leftist politician from the Amazon, shed tears as she watched Lula’s entrance. “After so much tragedy and a government that plunged Brazil into destitution and hunger, we now see that we have overcome this. We are here, we resisted – and we have won.”

Huge crowds of ecstatic Lula supporters flooded the streets of Brazil’s capital to celebrate the sensational political revival of a man who just over three years ago was languishing in prison on corruption charges that were later annulled.

“We feel dizzyingly unfathomable relief,” said the journalist Arimatea Lafayette, 59, as red-clad revellers marched towards the congress building on Sunday morning to toast Lula’s return and the downfall of [Bolsonaro](#), who has taken up residence in the Florida mansion of an MMA fighter. It is unclear when he plans to return.

“We’ve been through four years of terror and now we feel free,” added Lafayette, who had flown in from the north-eastern state of Alagoas wearing a T-shirt stamped with Lula’s face.



Supporters of Brazil's new President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva react as they gather in the surroundings of the National Congress to follow his inauguration Photograph: Carl de Souza/AFP/Getty Images

Franceli Anjos, a 60-year-old feminist, had travelled 55 hours by road from the Amazon city of Santarém to witness the long-awaited end of Bolsonaro's chaotic reign. "I'm convinced a new spring has arrived," she said.

Lucas Rodrigues's hands trembled with emotion as he described his delight at Lula's sensational comeback, exactly 20 years after the former union leader became Brazil's first working-class president in January 2003.

"The whole of Brazil is here – that's what Lula's capable of," the 25-year-old said after stepping off a bus from the southern state of Santa Catarina, where he is part of the landless workers' movement.

Lula's American biographer John D French said he believed that after declaring war on hunger – a hallmark of Lula's first government – the new president's top priority would be reuniting a bitterly divided nation after a poisonous election campaign marred by violence.

"I think what he'd like would be a generalised reconciliation ... and a standing down of the levels of conflict," French said, although he warned

that would be difficult given the toxic chasm between Lulistas and Bolsonaristas.

“The notion that everything is going to be roses and peaches and cream [is misguided]. I think this is going to be a very conflictual period.”

Bolsonaro’s narrow defeat in October’s election – which he lost by 2m votes – sent a wave of relief over progressive Brazilians desperate to see the back of a man they accused of wrecking Brazil’s environment and place in the world.

French said that relief was reminiscent of Democrats’ reaction to Donald Trump’s 2020 demise. “[People were] like: ‘Phew, OK – now things can go back to normal.’

“But they didn’t go back to normal in the US. Nothing is normal politically. And it’s not going to return to some sort of placid normality [in Brazil, either].”

Still, the mere prospect of a fresh start under a progressive and inclusive Lula government – which has vowed to fight environmental crime and named an Indigenous woman to lead Brazil’s first-ever ministry for Indigenous people – has thrilled supporters who have flocked to the capital.

“I know it won’t be easy for Lula to rebuild everything that Bolsonarismo has destroyed. But I feel hopeful. If there’s anyone who enjoys the popular support and international respect from leaders around the planet needed to rebuild Brazil’s relationships with the world, it’s Lula,” said Diogo Virgílio Teixeira, a 41-year-old anthropologist from São Paulo.

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