



# The Guardian

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2023.04.24 - 2023.04.30

- [Headlines saturday 29 april 2023](#)
- [2023.04.29 - Spotlight](#)
- [2023.04.29 - Opinion](#)
- [2023.04.29 - Around the world](#)
- [Headlines tuesday 25 april 2023](#)
- [2023.04.25 - Spotlight](#)
- [2023.04.25 - Opinion](#)
- [2023.04.25 - Around the world](#)
- [Headlines monday 24 april 2023](#)
- [2023.04.24 - Spotlight](#)
- [2023.04.24 - Opinion](#)
- [2023.04.24 - Around the world](#)
- [Headlines friday 28 april 2023](#)
- [2023.04.28 - Spotlight](#)
- [2023.04.28 - Opinion](#)
- [2023.04.28 - Around the world](#)
- [Headlines thursday 27 april 2023](#)
- [2023.04.27 - Spotlight](#)
- [2023.04.27 - Opinion](#)
- [2023.04.27 - Around the world](#)

## Headlines saturday 29 april 2023

- ['Toxic' Firm releases almost 800kg of 'forever chemical' a year into Lancashire river](#)
- [Live Russia-Ukraine war: fire rages at Crimea oil depot; Zelenskiy asks Xi for help with deported children](#)
- ['I was in tears' Briton with valid passport barred from flight over Brexit rules](#)
- [Brexit Lords committee urges end to barriers for musicians and young people](#)



The Wyre estuary, about two miles downstream from the AGC Chemicals Europe site in Thornton-Cleveleys. Photograph: Christopher Furlong/Getty Images

[PFAS](#)

## **Firm releases almost 800kg of ‘forever chemical’ a year into Lancashire river**

Exclusive: Environment Agency finds ‘very persistent, mobile and toxic’ PFAS in effluent legally discharged near Wyre estuary

[Rachel Salvidge](#)

[@rachsalv](#)

Sat 29 Apr 2023 02.00 EDT

A chemicals company is releasing large quantities of a “forever chemical” described as being “very persistent, mobile and toxic” into the River Wyre in [Lancashire](#) each year, and is not breaking any rules.

Earlier this year, the Guardian and Watershed Investigations [revealed](#) that effluent coming from the site of AGC Chemicals Europe in Thornton-Cleveleys could contain about 700 types of perfluorinated and polyfluorinated alkyl substances (PFAS).

[PFAS](#) is an umbrella term for thousands of human-made substances known as “forever chemicals” because they will not break down in the environment for thousands of years. Some are also known to be toxic and can accumulate in the human body.

The Environment Agency has now released its evaluation of a [PFAS](#) known as EEA-NH4 that was found in the effluent, and said it was “very persistent” and “mobile” in the environment, as well as “toxic” because it was classified as “reprotoxic category 2”, meaning there was evidence to suggest it could disrupt sexual function, fertility and development in humans.

Using data supplied by AGC Chemicals Europe, including monitoring data and effluent volumes released into the River Wyre, the agency estimated that an average of about 783kg of EEA-NH4 is discharged into the river each year.

The report highlights multiple gaps in knowledge, including whether, as with many PFAS, the substance builds up in humans and animals. “It is not possible to draw a conclusion on the bioaccumulation potential of EEA-NH4 in air-breathing organisms in the absence of data on the human clearance time or better predictive methods,” it states.

Prof Ian Cousins, an environmental chemist at Stockholm University, said: “EEA-NH4 is very persistent and mobile similar to GenX used by Chemours, which has been found in the Arctic, and it’s likely that EEA-NH4 will also be measured there as emissions continue. It will be transported by ocean currents, but even air emissions can result in long-range atmospheric transport.”

Dr David Megson, a senior lecturer in chemistry and environmental forensics at Manchester Metropolitan University, said the case highlighted “how we desperately need improved regulation and management of PFAS.

“Industry continues to innovate and develop new PFAS to replace those that have been banned. However, tougher regulations need to be put in place to ensure that these replacement chemicals are not also going to pose a risk to the environment and human health.

“This should not be at the detriment to industry, but we should use it as an opportunity for collaboration to develop safer sustainable replacements for PFAS.”

EEA-NH4 is just one of more than 10,000 chemicals classed as PFAS and currently there are only restrictions on the manufacture and use of two – perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) – because they have been studied closely and linked with a range of diseases including cancers and thyroid problems.

AGC Chemicals Europe, which produces polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE) and ethylene-tetrafluoroethylene (ETFE), said it “has never used PFOS, and PFOA was voluntarily phased out over a decade ago”.

In 2022, Watershed Investigations found discharges of [12,000 nanograms a litre of PFOA](#) to the Wyre estuary coming from the site where AGC Chemicals is based. AGC said it did not use or manufacture PFOA, and that any PFOA in the effluent may have come from historical usage at the site. AGC’s discharge is not illegal.

Studies have also shown that some PFAS can disrupt normal reproductive function in women through altering hormone secretion, the menstrual cycle, and fertility, but any effects of the emissions of thousands of other PFAS remain a mystery.

Cousins said: “We know little about the consequences of the releases of the hundreds of other PFAS because we only understand the toxicities, and other properties, of a few PFAS.”



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A spokesperson for AGC Chemicals Europe said the company was in “full compliance with UK and EU regulations” and that it “sets the highest standards for itself as a responsible member of the local community and a sustainable business. We welcome recent assessments by the Environment Agency to protect and improve the environment and, as part of this, to address the uses of PFAS in the UK.”

They said the “evaluations conducted by the Environment Agency do not indicate that the substances used in our manufacturing processes have caused environmental harm. Ecological monitoring of the River Wyre which has been conducted for over 40 years shows no significant impact of AGC Chemicals Europe emissions to the River Wyre estuary.

“We take our responsibilities for the management of substances used in and emitted from our manufacturing process extremely seriously. We are actively developing and improving processes that save energy and further reduce emissions from our process. AGC Chemicals Europe has invested significantly in abatement equipment to minimise emissions and we have committed additional investment to further reduce emissions by the end of 2024.”

The company said the “fluoropolymers manufactured by AGC Chemicals Europe have unique properties which cannot be replicated by other compounds, making them essential for applications across the UK, European and global markets that contribute to sustainability including use in renewable and alternative energies, electric vehicles and medical applications”.

The spokesperson added that AGC Chemicals Europe “continues to work closely with the Environment Agency to ensure regular assessment of the substances we use”.

A spokesperson for the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Environment Agency said: “Since the 2000s, we have increased monitoring and either banned or highly restricted a number of PFAS both domestically and internationally. We are continuing to work with regulators to further understand the risks of PFAS and implement measures to address them. The Environment Agency is working with AGC Chemicals to further understand potential concerns about the presence of EEA-NH4 in the environment so that appropriate action can be taken.”

Earlier this month, the Health and Safety Executive recommended that PFAS emissions be cut by developing restrictions under [the chemicals regulatory regime known as UK Reach](#), as well as setting legal limits for PFAS in drinking water. The government said it has accepted the findings.

In the EU, the European Chemicals Agency is considering a [proposal](#) by Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden to restrict the manufacture and use of about 10,000 PFAS in an effort to regulate them as a class, reduce emissions and make products safer.



## [Ukraine war live](#)Ukraine

# Russia-Ukraine war live: Crimea navy oil depot fire ‘contained’ – as it happened

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Is your passport more than 10 years old on the day of entry? Photograph: David Burton/Alamy

[Consumer affairs](#)

## **‘I was in tears’: Briton with valid passport barred from flight over Brexit rules**

Experts say it is vital to check you meet EU requirements, or you could risk losing your holiday

[\*Miles Brignall\*](#)

Sat 29 Apr 2023 02.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 29 Apr 2023 11.12 EDT

Travellers who have not used their passport for a while were this week being urged to dig it out and check it conforms to the post-Brexit rules for entering the EU – because if it doesn’t, you will almost certainly be denied boarding this summer.

Despite previous [warnings in Guardian Money](#) and some other publicity, UK travellers trying to enter the Schengen zone are being turned away on a daily basis by airline staff at boarding gates – in most cases because their UK passport was issued more than 10 years ago.

Rosi Simpson, a teacher from Brighton, is one of the latest to be caught up in the confusion. She says she was left “mortified and in tears” after easyJet staff refused to allow her to board a flight to Paris to see her son, who is studying there, because her UK passport had been issued 10 years and one day previously.

“I had no idea of the 10-year rule,” she says. “I’d checked the expiry date, and my passport had eight months remaining. What happened at the boarding gate was absolutely awful. I lost the cost of the flight and the accommodation I’d booked – I’d been so looking forward to seeing my son – all because a load of wankers voted for Brexit. What I don’t understand is why this [rule change] hasn’t had more publicity – an information campaign. I wasn’t the only one who this had happened to at the airport that day,” she says.



The Eiffel Tower, Paris. Rosi Simpson from Brighton was stopped from boarding a flight to the French capital because of the over 10-year rule on

passports. Photograph: Alexander Spatari/Getty

In terms of flights and ferries to mainland Europe, passengers will also be denied boarding if their passport expires less than three months after their return date. Previously, it was thought that UK travellers needed at least six months left, although the [EU has since clarified the three-month requirement](#).

Prior to Brexit, UK passport holders could travel in and out of the EU as long as they held a valid passport, even one that expired the day after their return.

The more onerous rules, which came into effect in 2021, apply to UK passport holders travelling to any EU country (except Ireland), plus the others in the Schengen zone: Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Andorra, Monaco, San Marino, the Vatican and Switzerland.

The “over 10-year” problem came about because, for many years, those renewing their passport before the previous one expired were able to add any remaining time left. Prior to September 2018, you could have up to nine months added to the replacement’s 10-year length – meaning their passport could be valid for as long as 10 years and nine months.

Passengers may look at their passport, see that it does not expire until well after their return, and conclude that all is well. However, they need to check the date of issue. If the passport will be more than 10 years old on the day of entry, they will not be allowed in.

The change has caught out a great many passengers who were unaware of the change. Last year, [Guardian Money featured the case of Pat Cerey](#) and her husband, Peter, who were refused permission to board their plane to Madeira on the grounds that Pat’s passport was not valid – even though it had another nine months remaining.

If you have a holiday planned this summer, check your passport now to make sure it meets all the requirements

*Jo Rhodes of Which?*

Every day, others are falling foul of the rule – and if it happens to you, it can be a financial disaster. Travel insurers will not pay out for a lost holiday if you tried to travel with an invalid passport.

Jo Rhodes, the deputy travel editor at Which?, says: “Recently, some travellers have been caught out by EU passport rules, meaning they haven’t been able to go on holiday as planned.

“Your passport must have been issued in the past 10 years at the time of entering the EU. Legally, you’re also required to have at least three months left on your passport at the time you plan on exiting the EU. If you have a holiday planned this summer, check your passport now to make sure it meets all the requirements for your destination, so you don’t risk being turned away at the airport.”

She says Which? advises travelling with at least six months’ validity “to be on the safe side”.

She adds: “Despite the legal requirement being three months, UK travellers are strongly advised by the European Commission and the UK government to have no less than six months on the end of their passports. This is because some border guards believe that people tend to stay in the EU for longer than they say and so they’re reluctant to grant you entry if you have less than six months.”

Countries such as Romania, which is in Europe but outside the Schengen zone, stipulate that UK passport [holders are required to have at least six months](#) on their passports to enter the country. It is by no means alone.



It is thought that up to a quarter of the Passport Office's 4,000 employees have taken part in the five-week strike. Photograph: Yui Mok/PA

To add extra excitement to the story, [Passport Office](#) workers, who process applications, are approaching the end of a five-week strike. It is thought that up to a quarter of the agency's 4,000 employees are not in work as normal.

However, while the Passport Office says [users should currently allow 10 weeks for their application to be processed](#), most applications are being sorted out a lot more quickly than that. The 10-week advice includes every kind of application, including those for new passports or where the renewal requires a change of name after a marriage or similar.

If you have a straightforward renewal of an existing passport and your details are all the same – name and address and so on – then people are reporting getting their replacements in days rather than weeks.

The most recent postings on the [Passportwaitingtime.co.uk](#) website – which tells you how long it is likely to take to get your UK passport – suggested that simple adult renewals were being processed in an average of 12 days, and often more quickly than that. Adult first passport applications were typically being processed in 17 days (29 days with an interview) while one-



week fast-track applications were being dealt with in 5.7 days, it said this week.

Guardian Money has heard similar reports. The online process is the quickest and cheapest way to apply.

A Passport Office spokesperson told us it “remains well positioned to deal with this industrial action, and there is no change in our guidance ... People are receiving their passports in good time, with 99.7% of applications processed within the published 10-week timeframe.”

The final sting in the tail is that the passport fees all rose for the first time in five years in February. The fee for a standard online application made from within the UK rose from £75.50 to £82.50 for adults, and from £49 to £53.50 for children. Postal applications went up from £85 to £93 for adults and from £58.50 to £64 for children. If you were born on or before 2 September 1929, it is free.

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The number of school trips from the continent to places such as Stratford-upon-Avon has collapsed post-Brexit. Photograph: Colin Underhill/Alamy

[Brexit](#)

## Lords committee urges end to Brexit barriers for musicians and young people

Chair says small changes could make big difference to cultural and educational interests on both sides of Channel

[Lisa O'Carroll](#) *Brexit correspondent*

[@lisaocarroll](#)

Sat 29 Apr 2023 02:00 EDT Last modified on Sat 29 Apr 2023 02:28 EDT

An influential House of Lords committee is urging the government to start working with EU capitals to remove Brexit barriers that block musicians, young people and professionals working easily in [Europe](#).

After six months of research and evidence from 40 witnesses the European affairs committee says it has identified 72 areas where small changes could make a huge difference in areas of cultural and educational interests on both sides of the Channel.

The chair, Lord Kinnoull, said the report, The future UK-EU relationship, was not about the big “reset moment” in 2025 when the trade deal is renegotiated – a move that would risk the wrath of Brexiters.

“The report is really a laundry list of lots and lots of small suggestions, which you can put in place, that are actually mutually beneficial ideas,” he said.

“It is not going to be snowstorm. It will be a gradual thing because this trust rebuilding must go on,” he added, talking of the thawing of relations between the UK and the EU since the Windsor agreement on Northern Ireland was sealed last month.

He said the committee of 13 “cross-party Brexiters, remainers and beyonders” believed all 72 recommendations were achievable.

Top of the list is getting music and theatre tours moving again in both directions and [school coach trips](#) from the continent to the UK back on the road.

It expressed particular disappointment at the lack of progress to enable musicians to tour Europe easily again after the end of free movement, a benefit of the single market.

“It’s not about the Beyoncés of this world. They can cope with the rules. It’s for the small bands, for the vast majority of musicians. The travel is not about a huge economic activity,” said Kinnoull.

Much travel could resume if the rules were simplified, centralised and made easier to navigate, the report found.

Post-Brexit changes to immigration rules also triggered a collapse in bookings for school trips from the continent because the border force will no longer accept ID cards, and instead requires passports and visas for non-EU children on the school trips.

The government told the committee the ban on ID cards was because of the high incidence of document fraud but the committee urged the government to revisit the matter.

“We were not able to find any evidence schoolchildren engage in ID card fraud and there were at least two members of the committee that are exceptionally interested in this area,” said Kinnoull.

He said the benefits for loosening the rules for children would go in both directions across the Channel, given the difficulties British schools are also having with delays at Dover.

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“We are talking about travel through liberal democracies in Europe. We think we can do better and we must do better, and we have the mechanics to do better,” he said.

Other recommendations include renewed efforts to launch mobility schemes between individual EU countries and the UK, allowing adults under 30 to work for a short stint in each other's country.

“The UK has got such a scheme with Australia and New Zealand, and France has it with Canada. There is no reason why these schemes could not be in place between EU countries and the UK,” said Kinnoull.

Other recommendations include an expansion of Turing, the replacement to the Erasmus student placement programme scheme, to allow EU students come to the UK, and an intensification of foreign, defence and diplomatic cooperation.

Trust after the turmoil of Brexit is still an issue, with EU sources pushing back on suggestions last week that UK travellers could soon be using e-gates at airports.

“An improved atmosphere doesn't mean rebuilding trust in itself,” said Kinnoull.

“What one has got to do is start doing a few deals and to build that trust by getting into the meeting room and talking.

“Of the 24 committees under the trade and cooperation agreement, 22 have been pretty well sitting doing nothing because of the impasse over the Northern Ireland protocol,” he said.

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## 2023.04.29 - Spotlight

- [Tim Minchin 'Politics affects my mental health ... I feel gaslit'](#)
- [The best and worst health myths and wisdom Chocolate doesn't cause acne – but carrots do help you see in the dark](#)
- [Jack Whitehall 'I have a punchable face, and my body looks like it's been drawn by a child'](#)
- [Rafael Behr How putting away my phone helped me recover from a heart attack](#)

# Tim Minchin: ‘Politics affects my mental health ... I feel gaslit’

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**Chocolate doesn't cause acne – but  
carrots do help you see in the dark: the**



# best and worst health myths and wisdom

True or false: cheese gives you bad dreams and oysters are aphrodisiacs?  
We investigate good, bad and mad health advice

*Tracey Ramsden*

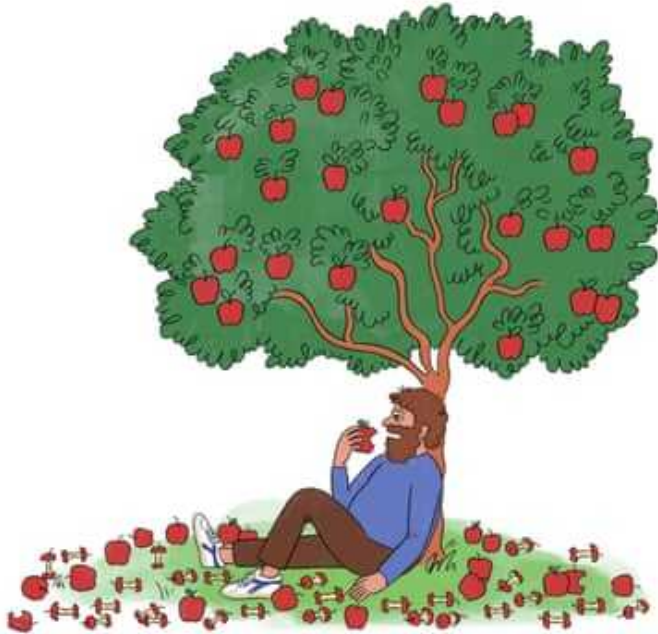
Sat 29 Apr 2023 02.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 29 Apr 2023 06.31 EDT

## Chicken soup helps cure colds and flu

**TRUE** “When you’ve got a cold, the best thing you can eat is a hearty, nutritious soup,” says Rhiannon Lambert, a nutritionist and the author of [Re-Nourish: A Simple Way to Eat Well](#). “Chicken contains vitamin B12, plus other antioxidants and vitamins which support the immune system and aid digestion. It’s also rich in protein, which is good for cellular repair. Adding more veg also increases the vitamins and minerals that are needed to aid recovery.”

## Chocolate causes acne

**FALSE** “The skin is your largest organ and has its own microbiome – its own bacteria – so the better you eat, the better your skin,” says Lambert. “Small amounts of chocolate won’t hugely impact skin health but chocolate with less sugar and dairy is better. More important for skin health is hydration – you should drink a minimum of 1.5-2 litres (6-8 glasses) of water a day. Coffee is a diuretic, but the amount of fluid you take in outweighs what you lose in urine. Tea is also fine, but avoid drinking it with a meal, because tannins in tea block iron absorption.” (Iron deficiency can lead to symptoms such as itchy skin.)



## **An apple a day keeps the doctor away**

**FALSE** “It’s untrue but it may keep you away from the pharmacy,” says Dr Hazel Wallace, nutritionist and author of [The Female Factor](#). “One study looked at healthcare practices of daily apple eaters and found they used fewer prescription medications. This had more to do with them being healthier overall – apple eaters also had higher educational levels and were less likely to smoke – than specifically with eating apples. However, since apples are nutritious, one a day is not a bad idea.”

## **Going out with wet hair gives you a cold**

**FALSE** “If wet hair makes you shivery, it’s an inflammatory response, so you probably already have a viral infection brewing,” says Punam Krishan, a GP and author of [How To Be a Doctor and Other Life-Saving Jobs](#). “But if you’re otherwise healthy, you won’t catch a cold. Lack of sleep and stress affect your immune system, leaving you susceptible, but you only catch colds from other people, particularly in cold weather. Viruses and bacteria spread easily when we’re huddled indoors with no ventilation.”



## **Carrots help you to see in the dark**

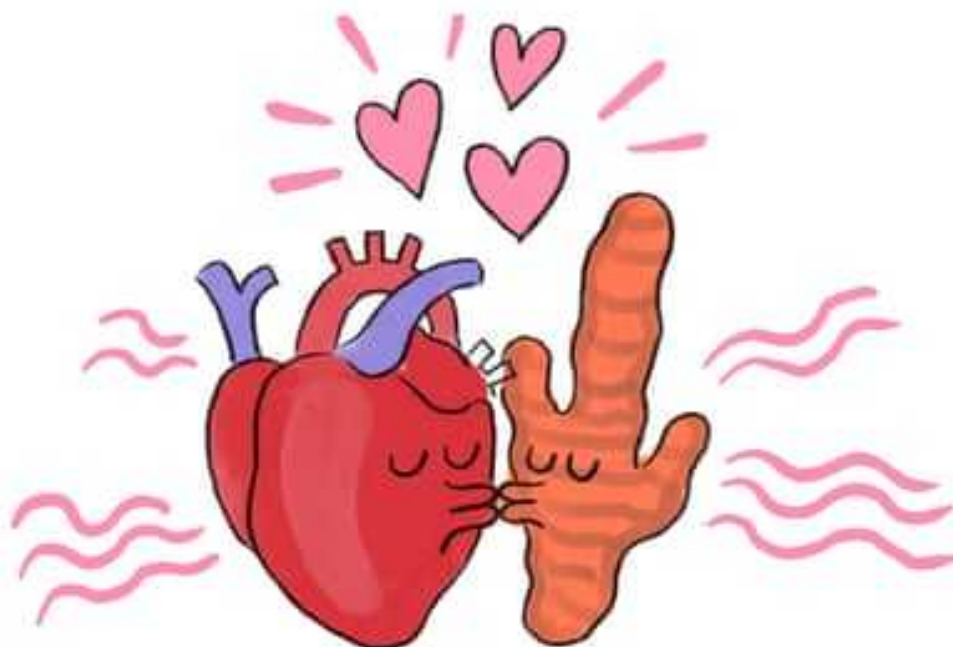
**TRUE** “Carrots contain vitamin A, which is important for healthy vision because it helps form a pigment in the retina called rhodopsin,” says Dr Ayan Panja, partner in an NHS surgery and author of [The Health Fix: Transform Your Health in 8 Weeks](#). “This is necessary for low-light vision. Vitamin A deficiency can lead to difficulties seeing in low light, so getting enough – from foods such as carrots, leafy greens and sweet potatoes – is important for night vision.”

## **Spicy curry induces labour**

**FALSE** “The theory is that spice stimulates the gut to work harder, and can stimulate the uterus at the same time,” says Krishan. “When you are about to go into labour the gut naturally gets irritated so most women will experience diarrhoea as a sign that the baby is coming. However, no food will bring on labour – it was probably imminent anyway.”

## **Feed a cold, starve a fever**

**TRUE** “It is more accurate to say ‘feed a virus, starve bacteria’,” says Lambert. “Nutrition is important for recovery, hence feeding a cold, ideally with carbohydrates, to fuel immune responses against the virus. Conversely, bacterial infections benefit from fasting – the body’s response to bacteria can be extreme, so reducing carbs stops the immune system going into overdrive. Fluids are essential with both types of illness, however, and it’s better to eat little and often if possible.”



## **Turmeric helps prevent heart disease**

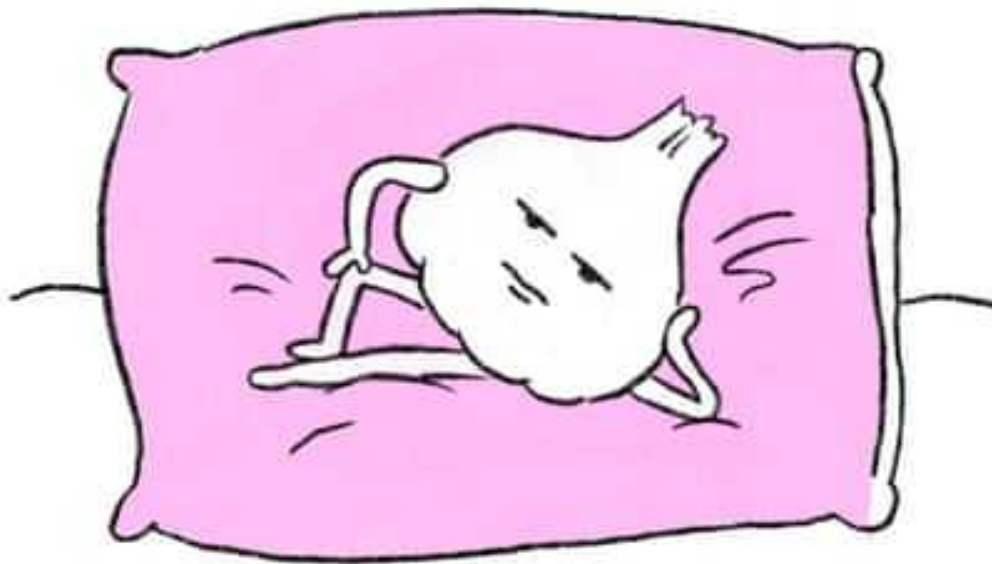
**TRUE** “Turmeric has been shown to have anti-inflammatory and anti-oxidant properties, both of which help fight heart disease by reducing oxidative stress – a harmful biological process akin to rust on iron,” says Panja. “To absorb the active ingredient in turmeric – curcumin – you need fat such as olive oil, and a compound called piperine, found in black pepper, though it is unclear how much you would need to feel the benefit. Krishan adds: “High doses of turmeric can interfere with some blood thinning medication, so consult your GP first.”

## **Cracking your knuckles will give you arthritis**

**FALSE** “That snapping sound of knuckle-cracking is caused by the rapid release of nitrogen gas from the fluid that lubricates our joints,” says Panja. “This is not actually harmful to joints and there is no evidence to suggest it can cause arthritis. However, some studies show that excessive knuckle cracking may be linked to swelling of the hands, reduced grip strength and damage to soft tissue.”

## **It takes up to seven years to digest swallowed chewing gum**

**FALSE** “Chewing gum is made of sweeteners, preservatives and softeners, which your digestive system mostly breaks down,” says Lambert. “It also contains artificial polymers like waxes, which pass out in your poo in less than seven days. The bigger problems from chewing gum are bloating and acid reflux, caused by the stomach preparing to receive food, and producing saliva and unnecessary acid.”



## **Garlic under your pillow aids sleep**

**FALSE** “Garlic contains minerals including vitamin B6 and selenium (plus several sulphur compounds, which may ward off insects) but it won’t have

any impact on sleep,” says Panja. Consuming garlic can, however, help lower cholesterol and blood pressure and boost immunity. A better way to improve sleep is to avoid large meals before bed, keep the bedroom dark and go to bed and wake up at the same time each day.”

## **Peeing after sex can prevent UTIs**

**TRUE** “Urinating after sex can help prevent a UTI by reducing the bacteria in the genital area,” says Panja. “Women are at higher risk because bacteria has a shorter distance to travel from the vagina to the bladder, and sex can trigger cystitis. The penile urethra is longer but it’s still a good idea to ‘void to avoid’ a UTI.”

## **Cinnamon helps balance hormones**

**FALSE** “Some small trials showed that a natural chemical in cinnamon called cinnamaldehyde increased progesterone and decreased testosterone in women, helping to balance hormones,” says Lambert. “But the quality and amount of cinnamon you consume is unlikely to be enough. Hormones are part of your endocrine system and eating a balanced diet helps support that, but you can’t control hormones with food. You can, however, manage stress hormones cortisol and adrenaline with diaphragmatic breathing to switch your body from a sympathetic [fight or flight] to parasympathetic [relaxed] state.”

## **Urine relieves jellyfish stings**

**FALSE** “Ammonia, being alkaline, is thought to neutralise the acid from bee stings, which is where this myth probably arose,” says Panja. “But it could actually make a jellyfish sting worse by causing the venom to release more toxins.” Water or urine can change the composition of the solution of any remaining stinging cells in the skin, so can encourage more venom release. “Also,” he adds, “introducing bacteria to the skin risks infection. It’s better to remove any tentacles with tweezers or scrape them off with a credit card then ask a doctor for oral pain relief and an anti-inflammatory cream.”

## **Oysters are aphrodisiacs**

**FALSE** “Oysters are rich in zinc, which is important for reproductive health, but there are no studies to suggest that eating oysters will boost libido,” says Panja. “Zinc can increase dopamine, the brain’s pleasure chemical, but it’s a stretch to say a libido rise would occur instantly.” Krishan adds: “Treating low libido or erectile dysfunction is more about getting to the root cause, which for many is chronic insomnia, mental health issues, such as anxiety or depression, or perimenopause and menopause.”

## **You lose about half of your body heat through your head**

**FALSE** “The amount of heat you lose from your head will be proportionate to its size in comparison with the rest of your body,” says Krishan. “You usually lose about 10-15%, largely because when you’re outside in the cold, most of you will be covered by clothes except for perhaps your head and face. If you went out in shorts, you would lose a similar amount of heat from your legs.”



## **Cheese gives you bad dreams**



**FALSE** “There’s no robust evidence that cheese causes nightmares,” says Wallace. “In one [2015 study](#), 17% of people said they felt their dreams were influenced by what they ate, with dairy products most frequently blamed for disturbing dreams. However, this contradicts more substantial evidence that other dairy products, such as warm milk, before bed can help aid sleep, thanks to the amino acid tryptophan, which is used to make serotonin – ‘the happy hormone’ – and melatonin, a hormone that initiates sleep. However, for tryptophan to work, it needs to pass through the brain’s security system – the blood-brain barrier – to be converted into serotonin. Consuming carbohydrates alongside foods high in tryptophan may help this process, which is why malted milk or milk with honey are recommended for sleep.”

## **Sitting too close to a screen damages eyesight**

**FALSE** “The world is becoming more myopic, and staring at our screens for too long is one theory for this,” says Panja. “However, sitting too close is more likely to cause eye strain than permanent damage. Taking regular screen breaks reducing blue light and glare and ensuring its brightness isn’t lighter or darker than your surroundings can help.”

## **Breakfast is the most important meal of the day**

**TRUE and FALSE** “Skipping breakfast is not harmful, provided you can fit essential nutrients and daily calories into other meals,” says Wallace. “Those who consume most of their calories earlier in the day tend to eat less, be a healthier weight and have a lower risk of type 2 diabetes and heart disease. However, if you habitually skip breakfast and fit in healthy meals elsewhere, stick to what works for you.”

## **Probiotics support your gut health**

**FALSE** “Probiotics are live beneficial bacteria and yeast that can be found in foods such as yoghurt [with live active cultures], kefir, kombucha, kimchi and natto [fermented bean], and you can find them in supplements,” says Wallace. “There is some evidence that probiotic supplements may be helpful in some cases, such as easing symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome but there’s little evidence to support the many other health claims

made about them – and currently no convincing evidence to suggest that taking a probiotic will benefit healthy people who don't have gut issues. There are also many different probiotic strains that can have different effects on the body, so it is case-by-case. Better to support your gut with food, aiming for 30 different plant-based foods, including nuts, seeds, wholegrains, pulses, herbs and spices, a week. The more diverse your diet, the healthier your gut microbiota, which will mean better immunity and better mental, cardiovascular and digestive health.”

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Jack Whitehall: ‘What keeps me awake at night? Mainly my devil dog.’  
Photograph: Eric Charbonneau/Rex/Shutterstock

[The Q&A](#)[Life and style](#)

**Jack Whitehall: ‘I have a punchable face, and my body looks like it’s been**

# drawn by a child'

The comedian on alienating his friends, regrettable hairstyles and tricking his dad into naked yoga

[Rosanna Greenstreet](#)

Sat 29 Apr 2023 04.30 EDTLast modified on Sat 29 Apr 2023 08.54 EDT

Born in London, [Jack Whitehall](#), 34, began his career at the 2007 Edinburgh festival fringe. On television, he appeared in Fresh Meat and wrote and starred in Bad Education. He was named King of Comedy at the 2012, 2013 and 2014 British comedy awards. Travels With my Father, his Netflix show, ran for five seasons, and his recent films include Clifford the Big Red Dog and Jungle Cruise. He appears in travel show Live Italian on Prime Video. He lives in London with the model Roxy Horner.

## **What is your greatest fear?**

Turning into my father.

## **What is the trait you most deplore in yourself?**

I'm rabidly indiscreet. If you tell me an embarrassing story, it will probably end up in one of my scripts or standup routines.

## **What is the trait you most deplore in others?**

I dislike dawdlers. When I walk, I do so with purpose. I have no time for people shuffling along.

## **What was your most embarrassing moment?**

I was bumped as a guest on The Justin Lee Collins show for Bianca from EastEnders.

## **What is your most treasured possession?**

I have a signed photograph in my lavatory from the Chuckle Brothers which says: From me to you love Barry and Paul.

## **What would your superpower be?**

I'd like to be able to talk to animals.

**What is your guiltiest pleasure?**

I was pretty scared at how much I loved the Abba Voyage experience.

**What do you most dislike about your appearance?**

I think I might have quite a punchable face, and a body that looks like it's been drawn by a child.

**If you could bring something extinct back to life, what would you choose?**

One Direction.

**Who would play you in the film of your life?**

Christopher Biggins.

**What scares you about getting older?**

Gradually alienating all of my friendship circle.

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**Which book are you ashamed not to have read?**

The Bible. I'm going to wait for them to make it into a Netflix series.

**What did you want to be when you were growing up?**

I was hellbent on being a Thunderbird. I was devastated when my parents finally told me it was a fictional organisation. Ruined my 18th.

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

"You look like a fat Jack Whitehall."

**What do you owe your parents?**

Everything and nothing.

**What is the worst job you've done?**

It's also one of the best jobs I've done, but two hours in, when everyone's pissed and ignoring you, hosting the Brit awards can be a tough gig.

**If you could edit your past, what would you change?**

All of my hairstyles from the age of 16 to 25.

**What do you consider your greatest achievement?**

Tricking my dad into doing naked yoga.

**What keeps you awake at night?**

Mainly my devil dog.

**What is the most important lesson life has taught you?**

Don't make jokes at the expense of Little Mix. They have an ardent fanbase.

**What happens when we die?**

I want to come back as a ghost and torment my enemies.



‘I had taken time away from my phone before, on holidays, and found it difficult’ ... Rafael Behr. Photograph: Graeme Robertson/The Guardian

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## **Antisocial: how putting away my phone helped me recover from a heart attack**

After being forced to quit social media, political journalist Rafael Behr was able to see its corrosive influence clearly. How can we repair the damage caused by a system that plays on our worst impulses?





[Rafael Behr](#)  
[@rafaelbehr](#)

Sat 29 Apr 2023 04.00 EDT

In the first weeks of my convalescence I developed a capacity for time travel. I had to spend a lot of time in bed and, floating on the edge of wakefulness, half-conscious, I discovered I could explore scenes from my past in exquisite detail. I wondered if it was a side effect of my various medications and whether it would be permanent. It was almost hallucinogenic and not unpleasant. I couldn't replay whole scenes from my youth, but I was able to transport myself back to old places – only interiors. I could feel the contours of the Artex on the walls of my childhood home in the late 70s. I could smell the damp on the charcoal-coloured carpet in the living room of the flat I rented with friends when I left university.

I could explore these spaces with fingertip precision, inch by inch. I remembered the angles of door handles and the action on light switches.

I told my wife that the heart attack had left me with a superpower, albeit not a very practical one. She wasn't impressed. Then the gift faded away. I understood it better after it was gone. My hyper-vivid memory had taken

me to places I had once lived and been happy. It was an expression of relief; security. I was reaching out to the past to confirm that it joined up with the present and contained a bridge to a future. My body was caressing memories of places I had once called home. I had made it back.

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I wasn't strong enough yet to venture far from my front door and work was forbidden, which meant I also didn't look at the news. I disengaged from the internet and, to my surprise, I didn't miss it.

I had taken time away from my phone before, on holidays, and found it difficult in much the same way that I had once found it hard to quit smoking. There is the same restlessness, the same twitchiness in the hands bereft of something to hold, the same feeling of being stalked by an absence.

Nicotine activates receptors in the brain that release dopamine – a potent feelgood chemical that gets involved whenever you do something pleasurable. It is there when you eat delicious food, wake from a good night's sleep, score a goal, have sex. The insidious genius of the cigarette is the way it mimics the gratification of getting things done. It whispers success in your mind's ear. The first few drags send out a tingle of reward for having accomplished something. By lighting a cigarette, you have indeed solved a problem – the problem of not having a lit cigarette in your mouth.

Social media plays on the same cycle of false reward and renewed craving. Journalists are especially susceptible to Twitter because it satisfies two appetites – compulsion to know what is happening and the need for an audience. Even hostile reaction feeds the addiction, either because you feel obliged to defend yourself or because you don't want to log out on a negative note. You have a bitter taste in your mouth after reading abuse, and kid yourself that more tweeting will rinse it away.

It is also a game, and contains a particular kind of compulsion. It is a race to acquire friends and followers, likes and retweets. That quest for recognition, regardless of what is being said or shared, is the commercial engine of

social media. The commodity is attention, and it doesn't matter whether it was a cat picture or an anti-vaccine video that induced the click.

The concept of an “attention economy” was coined before the internet wrote it into the business model of a multi-trillion-dollar industry. It was first theorised in the 1970s by computer scientist and psychologist (and Nobel laureate) Herbert A Simon. As he put it:

In an information-rich world, the wealth of information means a dearth of something else: a scarcity of whatever it is that information consumes. What information consumes is rather obvious: it consumes the attention of its recipients. Hence a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention.

The more crowded the information marketplace, the harder it is for bland facts to compete with more lurid fare. Palates that are jaded need higher doses of spice. In politics, that creates incentives to wilful provocation. One way to catch the attention of a large audience is to stir a smaller one into a lather of indignation. In politics, infuriating the other side can be an effective campaign technique to amplify a core message.

An infamous case was the claim painted on the side of a [Vote Leave battle bus](#): “We send the EU £350 million a week. Let's fund our NHS instead.” Remainers were incensed by the number, which had no meaningful basis in fact. But attacks on that figure still served the underlying Brexit goal, which was to implant in voters' minds an idea: EU membership cost a load of money.

Extreme opinions are doubly lucrative, shared once by those who passionately agree and then again by the other side as exemplars of wrongness. The arena where news and ideas are debated is whipped into emotional frenzy, which is not a mental state conducive to judicious moderation.

Some of the most sophisticated technologies developed by our species have been made subordinate to the primitive side of our nature. Then we wired that machinery up to the heart of democracy. Repetitive troglodyte clicking is a feature, not a bug, in the system of politics online.

One-click consumer culture is the enemy of deferred gratification. Whatever the problem, the solution is here and now. This is analogous to the impatience that demagogues exploit when campaigning against the frustrations of representative democracy. Every second of the political day on social media is a referendum on whatever feels most urgent in the moment. The high frequency of that cycle makes it harder to distinguish between what is noisy and what is important. It militates against the debate of priorities, which is part of the negotiation of trade-offs necessary for pluralist politics to function. The algorithms that make us eager online shoppers for trash we don't need also stoke our appetite for junk politics.

The information space has been segregated into comfort zones, barricaded against distressing counter-argument

The effect is infantilising, in the sense that it infuses politics with a toddlerish temperament – wanting things right now; having tantrums when they are denied. (Chris Wetherell, the software developer who created the retweet function for Twitter, worried about exactly this bypass of adult cognition when he [reflected that](#) “we might have just handed a four-year-old a loaded weapon”.)

Tech companies didn't set out with the goal of corrupting democracy. The embitterment of debate and shrinkage of neutral spaces where compromise might be available just happen to be the commercial imperative – the online bazaar is also a public square. The trading platform is also a service that disables critical judgment in politics.

The damage goes deep. It is a structural assault on the bedrock of collective belonging to a single political community. It unpicks the conceptual basis of what we call, as a singular noun, “the public”, as distinct from a multitude of querulous individuals or tribes. It is hard to have a debate about the best course of action when the information space has been segregated into comfort zones, each with its own protective barricade against distressing counter-argument.

In such a disaggregated, post-public realm, it is hard to agree on what matters, and hard even to settle on a standard account of what constitutes

reality – whether the crowd at a presidential inauguration was big or small; whether or not [Covid](#) is real.

Scientifically demonstrable facts have not been eliminated from public life, as the common “post-truth” lament would imply. Covid was killing people whether they believed in it or not. Pandemic policy in Britain might not have been a prompt or exact enactment of what government scientists recommended, but nor did it go chasing after bizarre superstitions.

The more subtle and pernicious aspect of post-truth media is the amount of energy consumed in the competition to define basic facts that shouldn’t even need contesting. That accelerates corrosion of trust in civil institutions. A vicious cycle begins. The overwhelming complexity of modern life is made more alarming by the digital frenzy, which in turn stimulates an appetite for comforting fictions about the world. We use selective information tools to insulate ourselves from spiky truths. In those conditions, voters are attracted to candidates who reflect their fear and anger back at them, validating their sense of grievance and offering the solace of simple solutions.

Those candidates are hopelessly ill-equipped to handle the actual challenges of government. Once elected, they fail to deliver the gratification that was promised. Then begins the hunt for scapegoats. Frustration and anger with the political system becomes both cause and effect of political fury. Staggering through that red mist, we lose sight of what we have in common.

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Once I stopped doom-scrolling, I became conscious of a change in mental tempo that comes when you no longer interrupt your own thought processes with a luminous screen. The search for news had rarely been the real reason for taking my phone out of my pocket. Nine times out of ten, there would be no particular thing I was looking for, no destination, just a vague itch to scratch.

I suspect that the trigger had been unconscious reluctance to let my mind wander by itself, unguided by the algorithm of sequential distractions. How had I become so mentally unadventurous? When had I decided that my train of thought needed derailing before it left the station? Letting it roll down the track reminded me of being a child, having a space to explore that was virtual but not digital. The word for that realm is imagination.

I still get angry, but I am better at seeing what portion of the anger is organically mine and how much is synthetic

I don't claim to have reached a Zen state of post-fury. My family would laugh at the idea, especially when I have a deadline. Some contact with social media was unavoidable once I went back to work (although the rule is rarely on weekends, never on holidays). With sufficient digital hygiene – maximum privacy settings; blocking and muting the lunatics – it can be a bountiful source of data and ideas. For every maniacal troll I have had to ignore, there are plenty of witty and thoughtful voices. There are people I have never met offline but whose sanity and good humour on the internet has helped keep me balanced and who, with reasonable challenges, have given me cause to adjust my views.

I still get angry, but I am better at seeing what portion of the anger is organically mine and how much is synthetic – a poisonous substance sprayed out by the machinery I operate for work.

Anger is not inherently toxic to democracy. It can be the antidote to apathy, but it has to be the spur to something else. It has to lead somewhere that isn't just more anger. "Anger is to make you effective," Philip Roth once wrote. "That's its survival function. That's why it's given to you. If it makes you ineffective, drop it like a hot potato."

Rage is rooted in fear, as a defensive reaction against perceived threat. I am a little better now at seeing the hostility in other people – and myself – as an expression of anxiety and insecurity. Whether on social media or in real life, incivility and aggression spring from dread of losing control. In politics, they arise when someone feels under attack, which is increasingly common when the boundaries between opinion, policy and identity are blurred. People do not respond kindly to views that they experience as injury to their sacred beliefs. That response might not be rational, but the feeling is real, and telling someone to get over it doesn't help. The trick is not to take it personally, even when it *is* personal.

In all arguments there is always a place of common understanding somewhere. Find that; build on it

The Hungarian mathematician George Pólya had good advice for anyone overwhelmed by a complex challenge: "If you can't solve a problem, then there is an easier problem you can solve: find it." It doesn't apply exactly in politics, because mathematical problems tend to have precise solutions. The equation can be simplified. A graph can be plotted and the answer found at the place where the lines cross. Maths abhors grey areas. But there is still a political application for Pólya's principle of locating the doable part of a problem. In apparently intractable, polarised arguments, there is nearly always a place of common understanding somewhere – some sliver of terrain where the terms of reality are mutually recognisable. Find that; build on it.

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After nearly two years as a cardiac outpatient, I had to submit to something called a nuclear stress test. It sounds like the sort of thing that should be done in a concrete bunker underneath an American desert. In reality, it



meant going to a hospital, swallowing a radioactive isotope that illuminates the arterial routes carrying blood to the heart, taking a drug that excites the cardiovascular system and lying under an MRI machine that can locate any blockages.

I was offered a blanket. The room needed to be kept at a fridge temperature to protect the scanning machines which are vulnerable to overheating. I remembered then how much I had shivered during the emergency intervention while I was having my heart attack. The medical team had held me still so the surgeon could insert a catheter. In my morphine-addled haze it had felt as if they were wrestling to keep me out of death's hands, holding me still as my body tried to shuffle off the mortal coil. It turns out to be more prosaic than that: a cold room.

I was a lot more relaxed two years later, blanket tucked up to my chin, lying still while the scanner whirred overhead. When it was done, I was free to go about my business with the proviso that I would still be mildly radioactive for a few hours.

The bumf I had been sent counselled against hugging children or getting close to pregnant women immediately after the procedure. So this is what it means to be toxic, I thought. And not as a metaphor, but literally – walking down the street emitting dangerous particles.

The test found no hidden blockages, showing only the damage I knew had already been done to my heart by years of unhealthy living and denial. The radiation wore off soon enough, having served its diagnostic purpose. The poison had worked its way out of my system by the time I got home.

This is an edited extract from Rafael Behr's *Politics: A Survivor's Guide – How to Stay Engaged Without Getting Enraged* (Atlantic). To support the Guardian and Observer order your copy at [guardianbookshop.com](https://guardianbookshop.com). Delivery charges may apply. Behr will discuss the book at a Guardian Live event in London on Monday 12 June. Readers can join the event in person or online. Book tickets [here](#)

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

## 2023.04.29 - Opinion

- Now we know how fabulously wealthy Charles is, why can't he pay for his own coronation?
- Nixed nuptials, Fox in trouble and 'erratic' behaviour ... Is Rupert Murdoch OK?
- South Korea may look perfect, but behind the facade lies a devastating suicide crisis
- Richard Sharp was Boris Johnson's toxic legacy – never again should politicians pick a boss for the BBC



King Charles III and the Queen Consort at a military ceremony at Buckingham Palace, London, 27 April 2023. Photograph: Yui Mok/PA

[Cost of the crown](#)[King Charles coronation](#)

**Now we know how fabulously wealthy  
Charles is, why can't he pay for his own  
coronation?**

[Norman Baker](#)



If the king wants to be a moderniser, he won't let hard-pressed UK taxpayers pick up the bill for this self-serving tradition

Sat 29 Apr 2023 03.00 EDTLast modified on Sat 29 Apr 2023 03.29 EDT

And so here we are: days away from the coronation of Charles III. Along with much of the population, I will not be celebrating. A YouGov poll this month [revealed](#) that 64% of us don't care very much or care at all about the event, while only 9% care a great deal.

I do care, perhaps not for the same reasons as that small minority of Britons, but because it is estimated that the whole event will cost [up to £100m](#) and – in line with self-serving royal traditions in this country – the bill will be picked up by the taxpayer, not the super-rich royals.

Why are we having a coronation, anyway? No other European monarchy bothers. The last one in Spain was in 1555, and the Scandinavian monarchies in Denmark, Sweden and Norway had all deemed the archaic practice unnecessary by 1906.

There is no legal need for a coronation. Charles is king without it. That was sealed in the days after the Queen's death at the accession council, which I attended as a privy counsellor (though naturally none of us got a vote).

No, the real purpose is to stage a huge candy-floss PR event for the royals. But it will bring in tourists, royal supporters argue. Personally, I don't think it sensible to base our constitutional arrangements on what tourists want. We are not Disney World. Or perhaps we *are*, with golden coaches, fake princesses and castles galore.

In any case, the royal palace in Europe that pulls in most tourists is Versailles, and the French got rid of their monarchy in 1848. We could probably get more tourists into Buckingham Palace if the royals were no longer there.



The latest phase of development in Poundbury, the king's experimental planned community in Dorset, England, 2023. Photograph: Adrian Dennis/AFP/Getty Images

Incidentally, did you know that while the taxpayer is coughing up for the coronation and an additional £369m for a gold-plated, bells and whistles refurbishment of the palace, both King Charles and William, the Prince of Wales, have private estates that have yielded more than [£1bn](#) in the past.

When I asserted on the BBC Radio 4 Today programme that the [Duchy of Cornwall](#) estate should be regarded as public, not private, within an hour there was an intervention from St James's Palace to demand a correction, which was provided. If it is a "private" estate, how come it pays no corporation tax, as every private estate does?

But then the royals [have form](#) in lobbying to change the law in their favour, the only consistent thread being to take as much money as they can from the public and pay out as little of their own as possible. Truly, we have a royal mint and a national debt.

The recent [Guardian revelation](#) that Charles has a sprawling estate of properties at Sandringham worth £75m is depressingly unsurprising. The British royal family, unlike other European monarchies, has a huge property portfolio.

How have they managed to accumulate this? After all, until the passing of the [Crown Private Estates Act 1800](#), the king was not allowed to own any property.

The answer in the case of Sandringham and Balmoral is clear. Early in Victoria's reign, her husband, Prince Albert, went cap in hand to the government, arguing that the money provided to the Queen was insufficient for her to discharge her duties. The government coughed up, as governments nearly always do, in the face of royal pleading. However, the extra money was used by Victoria and Albert not to discharge their duties, but to buy Sandringham and Balmoral.

As the MP who in 2008 helped lift the lid on the abuse of taxpayers' money by MPs, I recognise Albert and Victoria's behaviour as using public money for improper private gain. It is called fiddling your expenses.

Then there is the crown estate, which was [handed over](#) to the public in 1760 by George III in return for an annual civil list payment to him of £800,000 a year, an enormous sum in those days.



As far back as the 1980s, the royal family lobbied to reconnect their funding to the crown estate profits. But the family finally got their way under David Cameron and George Osborne. Under this arrangement, the civil list was replaced by the sovereign grant, linked to the profits of the crown estate. The result is that a civil list [payment](#) of £7.9m in 2011 has become one of [£86.3m](#) last year, helped by a massive windfall from a windfarm development on the crown estate seabed.

The public largesse here is way in excess of that made available to other European monarchies. Compare this figure of £86.3m with that of the next biggest, the [Netherlands at £44m](#) and one of the smallest, Spain, £7.4m.

And add to that the exemption from taxes like death duties, and the Duchies of Lancaster and Cornwall, and it is not difficult to see how Charles's personal fortune is now well in excess of a billion pounds.

Charles says he wants to modernise the monarchy. If he is serious, he can start by paying tax on the gigantic inheritance from his mother – the racehorses, the paintings and the rest. And he can pay for his own coronation. After all, he can afford it.

- Norman Baker was the Liberal Democrat MP for Lewes from 1997 to 2015
- ***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](#).***



Media baron Rupert Murdoch and his son and heir Lachlan Murdoch arrive for a conference in Idaho on 13 July, 2018. Photograph: Bloomberg/Getty Images

[Opinion](#)[Rupert Murdoch](#)

## Nixed nuptials, Fox in trouble and ‘erratic’ behaviour ... Is Rupert Murdoch OK?

[Marina Hyde](#)



In the grand tradition of his newspapers lasering in on public figures at their lowest moments, we really deserve to know

Fri 28 Apr 2023 06.49 EDTLast modified on Fri 28 Apr 2023 13.40 EDT

On Page 3 of the Sun, I once saw the central i of the word “tit” asterisked out, not four inches away from a topless pair of the genuine article. So there’s always been a ludicrous coyness to Rupert Murdoch and his many works. But surely we are not really to believe that the media mogul this week ditched his highest-rating news anchor, Tucker Carlson, for referring to a woman as a “cunt” in an email? This is the take of the Wall Street Journal – proprietor: Mr R Murdoch – which explains: “[Tucker Carlson’s Vulgar, Offensive Messages About Colleagues Helped Seal His Fate At Fox News](#)”.

Righto. It’s fair to say the Wall Street Journal is not alone in the quest to make sense of Murdoch’s recent behaviour. The week after [he paid \\$787.5m](#) to settle the lawsuit brought against Fox News by Dominion Voting Systems – Dominion’s lawyers were going to force him to take the stand – Murdoch sacked Carlson via his son Lachlan. Media outlets have been scrambling to find logical explanations for actions that arguably, to

deploy a euphemism, defy logic. After all, this is a 92-year-old who only weeks ago was [delighting us](#) with news of his impending fifth marriage – a whirlwind engagement to a former dental nurse turned prison chaplain, which was hastily called off a mere fortnight later. Apparently, Murdoch had become “increasingly uncomfortable” with his fiancée’s “[outspoken evangelical views](#)”. Again: really?

The one thing we can say with certainty is that Murdoch would want us to pick over his actions and ask if he was still playing with a full deck of Happy Families cards. For decades, his newspapers have lasered in on public figures as they reach their twilight, premature or otherwise. Back in the day, a paparazzi picture of a painfully thin Freddie Mercury limping across the street was glossed with the Sun’s front page inquiry: “ARE YOU OK FRED?” – one of those newspaper questions to which the answer is patently: no. No, he’s not – what does it effing look like? So in the same solicitous spirit we must survey the recent actions of the mercurial mogul, and ask, in the way he taught us: ARE YOU OK RUPE?



Rupert Murdoch and Jerry Hall on their wedding day outside St Bride's church, London, 5 March, 2016. Photograph: Peter Nicholls/Reuters

Put candidly ... what does it effing look like? Last October, Murdoch announced plans to merge both his public companies, Fox Corp and News Corp, before being forced in January to [abandon the scheme](#) in the face of shareholder bafflement and dismay. March brought news of the bonkers betrothal and Murdoch's bizarre interview about how he "[dreaded falling in love](#)"; April saw the engagement's abandonment. Murdoch was supposed to end the month testifying in the Dominion lawsuit; having settled that, he set about blindsiding even his allies by sacking Carlson. While legacy media oblige their own moguls by suggesting lucid cause-and-effect, some of the upstarts are finally breaking the glass on the word "[erratic](#)".

"Erratic" was certainly a word that came to mind when reading the epic recent [Vanity Fair article](#) on Murdoch, in which every line was a marmalade-dropper. Take the single paragraph that revealed Murdoch had fallen and seriously injured himself on a Caribbean superyacht trip with his now-former wife Jerry Hall. Though it hastened to dock to get him to hospital, the boat was too big for the pier, resulting in Murdoch having to be precariously lowered down, after which he spent a night under a tent in a car park (the local hospital was closed). He was finally medevaced out, but, according to a family friend, "kept almost dying". LA medics discovered a broken back, noting from the X-rays that he had previously fractured vertebrae. The paragraph concludes: "Murdoch explained it must have been from the time his ex-wife Deng pushed him into a piano during a fight." (Ms Deng did not respond to the publication's requests for comment.)

It feels particularly piquant that all this is taking place against the backdrop of the final series of Succession. Murdoch is extremely, extremely relaxed about the show, to the point of having it written into his divorce settlement with Jerry Hall that she was [banned from speaking to its writers](#). Jerry reportedly realised the Oxfordshire house she got in the settlement was rigged with cameras still beaming their footage back to Fox HQ, a discovery that prompted Mick Jagger's security guy to come and dismantle the apparatus for her.

Despite settling with Dominion, Murdoch's unfortunate courtroom dramas continue. This week, Prince Harry's phone-hacking case alleged Murdoch's News Group Newspapers [reached a huge settlement](#) with Prince William,

but requested it be kept secret so as not to affect their ongoing legal battles with other claimants. Pleading favours off the establishment he has always regarded as his lawful prey – perhaps Murdoch is not so very different from other unhappy kings. Harry’s statement suggested he had bonded with Rupert’s boy James when they had met at some Google event / creche for megarich estranged second sons. “[He made a real effort to try and come and talk to me](#),” recalled Harry of James Murdoch. “I got the impression that, having broken away from the cult that is the Murdoch dynasty, he was starting to show signs that he wanted to do things differently ... Given that he had broken away from his family’s history, and I was about to do the same with mine, I felt that we were kindred spirits of sorts.” Real rebel hearts. As Succession’s Connor Roy once put it: “The elites are scared.”

But are the shareholders a little on edge too? There is something increasingly preposterous in the spectacle of media outlets searching for rational explanations to explain Rupert Murdoch’s recent antics. Surely at some point soon, we might need to consider irrational ones instead?

- Marina Hyde is a Guardian columnist

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‘South Korean culture places strong emphases on both conformity and competition.’ Photograph: Kim Hong-Ji/Reuters

[OpinionSouth Korea](#)

## **South Korea may look perfect, but behind the facade lies a devastating suicide crisis**

[Raphael Rashid](#)





The death of a K-pop star has focused minds again on the young people struggling to cope in this hyper-competitive society

Sat 29 Apr 2023 04.00 EDTLast modified on Sat 29 Apr 2023 04.31 EDT

Before I moved to South Korea, 12 years ago, I hadn't really come across suicide in my social life. Now, every year I hear of friends, or friends of friends, taking their own lives. The recent suspected suicide of [K-pop star Moonbin](#) has focused minds yet again on this problem – one which is far from limited to the entertainment industry, but is a full-blown social crisis affecting [Koreans of all ages](#) and backgrounds. However, it is young people in particular who are bearing the brunt.

So what is going on?

Korea, after all, is a dynamic country whose global reputation is remarkably positive. It has made from the behemoth that is K-pop and its film industry, to its innovative skincare products that have revolutionised the beauty business. These achievements have solidified South Korea's reputation as a [cultural powerhouse](#) and global trendsetter.



Moonbin, a member of K-pop boy band Astro, 2021. Photograph: Jung Yeon-Je/AFP/Getty Images

Yet beneath the facade lies a mental health crisis of grave proportions. In 2021, South Korea recorded [a suicide rate](#) of 26 per 100,000 people, the highest among OECD countries. Suicide was the [main cause of death](#) for those aged 10 to 39, with 44% of teenage deaths and 56.8% of deaths of those in their 20s attributed to it. [Mental illness](#) was identified as the leading cause of suicide.

I have seen this crisis with my own eyes. Many of my closest friends have struggled with suicidal thoughts and depression. They often cite societal pressures to succeed, feelings of isolation, worthlessness and discrimination for not conforming or being different. It's a conversation that's become all too familiar and many of my peers are seeking psychological help, albeit discreetly. While more people speak openly about mental health than they used to, the topic still [remains taboo](#) and is often seen as a personal weakness or failure.

Suicide in the entertainment industry is just one manifestation of the constant pressure and stress that young people face in a hyper-competitive society. In the case of Moonbin, in a live chat just days before his passing, [the singer](#) with the group Astro said, "I've chosen this job, so I need to

handle it”. Police found no signs of foul play, and suspect he died by suicide.

However, the crisis is not confined to K-entertainment and there are no shortage of daily headlines about people making “extreme choices”, a euphemism for ending one’s life. This includes schoolchildren – factors such as academic pressure and bullying are cited as explanations.

This month, three teenagers fell to their deaths from high-rise buildings within five days of each other in Seoul’s affluent Gangnam district. Although the factors at play will be complex and varied, the place is known for its high concentration of elite schools and expensive private “cram schools”.

In the hope of securing bright futures for their children, many parents throw them into an intensive education system, which takes precedence over socialisation and wellbeing. This obsession stems from the highly competitive job market, where good grades and a prestigious university degree are seen as necessary for obtaining stable and well-paid employment. The result is that [the vast majority of children](#), some as young as two, are sent to cram schools on top of regular schooling.

Here’s the thing: South Korea is a deeply unhappy country. Having written a book on [the topic](#), I’ve explored how South Korean culture places strong emphases on both conformity and competition, a contradiction that can generate stress, isolation, suppressed emotions, and deep dissatisfaction.

Recently, the government announced its aim to [reduce the country’s suicide rate](#) by almost 30% within five years, and to shorten the gap between mandatory mental health checkups from 10 years to two.

Not all mental health treatments are covered by [national insurance](#), which makes it difficult for people to access mental health services. Private counselling and therapy sessions can be expensive. This financial burden can be especially challenging for those who require ongoing counselling or therapy for conditions such as depression. Help centres and helplines also exist and are playing an important role, but these are mainly reactive measures to address mental health issues after they have developed.

I once tutored a seven-year-old in English. She did not get to bed until 10pm each day because of all her extra tuition and CV-embellishing activities. During my lessons, she tended to fall asleep. She was anything but happy. I felt terrible contributing to her misery, and quit.

As [South Korea](#) continues to dazzle with its outward image of perfection, the glaring paradox at home can no longer be overlooked. It's time to break the cycle of competition and conformity and create a society that values compassion and individuality. Above all, policymakers need to restore hope in citizens that South Korea is a place where they can simply be happy.

- Raphael Rashid is a Seoul-based freelance journalist and author of *The Korea We Refuse to See*
- *International helplines can be found at [www.befrienders.org](http://www.befrienders.org). In the UK and Ireland, [Samaritans](#) can be contacted on 116 123 or email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org) or [jo@samaritans.ie](mailto:jo@samaritans.ie). In the US, the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) is at 800-273-8255 or chat for support. You can also text HOME to 741741 to connect with a crisis text line counselor. In Australia, the crisis support service [Lifeline](#) is 13 11 14.*
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‘The question left by Richard Sharp’s resignation as chair of the BBC is: what took him so long?’ A screen inside BBC headquarters in central London relays news of Sharp’s departure. Photograph: Jordan Pettitt/PA

[OpinionBBC](#)

## **Richard Sharp was Boris Johnson’s toxic legacy – never again should politicians pick a boss for the BBC**

[Jonathan Freedland](#)



This debacle brought together a foolish man and a dishonest prime minister, but it also highlights the urgent need for systemic reform

Fri 28 Apr 2023 11.52 EDTLast modified on Sat 29 Apr 2023 03.58 EDT

A word of advice for anyone who has worked hard to acquire a reputation they cherish: if Boris Johnson approaches, if he comes anywhere near, run a mile. Richard Sharp is [the latest proof](#) that, even out of office, Johnson continues to act as reputational napalm, laying waste careers and turning good names bad.

Sharp joins a long list that [includes Christopher Geidt](#), who had the poison task of serving as Johnson's adviser on ethics; Allegra Stratton, whom the former prime minister said [had "sickened" him](#) when she joked about a party in Downing Street, even though he had attended several himself; and the one-time rising star civil servant and current cabinet secretary, Simon Case, [quoted this week](#) as having said of Johnson, "I don't know what more I can do to stand up to a prime minister who lies". Each entered Johnson's circle as a respected figure; each was diminished by their contact with the reverse Midas, the man who rots everything he touches.

One question left by Sharp's resignation as chair of the BBC is: what took him so long? He hardly needed to wait for today's report by Adam Heppinstall KC, with its verdict that Sharp's [failure to disclose](#) his role in brokering an £800,000 loan arrangement for Johnson represented "a breach of the governance code", to know that he could not possibly continue in a job whose defining duty is to maintain the independence of the BBC. As the former director general John Birt [said a month ago](#), Sharp was "unsuitable" for the role, thanks to "navigating a loan for the prime minister at exactly the same time as applying for the job at the BBC. It's the cosiness of that arrangement that made it unsuitable, and I wish the cabinet secretary had called it out." (The cabinet secretary being Case, serially Midased by Johnson.)

According to those inside the BBC, Sharp had been a capable chair. But the manner of his appointment meant he could never do the job properly. Witness last month's [row over Gary Lineker's tweet](#), aimed at Suella Braverman's language on migrants. That was a moment when you might expect the chair to lead from the front, publicly explaining either why impartiality is central to the BBC's mission or why it was vital that the BBC not succumb to government pressure – or both. Instead, Sharp was mute and invisible, too hopelessly compromised as the man who had helped bail out a fiscally incontinent Tory prime minister to say a word.

It's baffling that all of this did not occur to Sharp himself long ago – including right at the start, when he submitted his job application and was required to identify any conflicts, or perceived conflicts, of interest. The fact that he didn't mention his role in the Johnson loan, even though he had discussed the issue with Case, suggests he knew that it looked bad – that it would give rise to the "perception that Mr Sharp would not be independent from the former prime minister, if appointed," [as Heppinstall puts it](#). Given he knew the importance of perceived, as well as actual, neutrality for the BBC, that silence was itself disqualifying.





‘Many have been diminished by their contact with Boris Johnson the reverse Midas, the man who rots everything he touches.’ Photograph: Charles McQuillan/PA

His grudging resignation statement suggests the penny has still not dropped. Dominic Raab may have started a fashion for passive-aggressive Friday departures, because [Sharp was insistent](#) that his breach of the rules was “inadvertent and not material”. Still, he invited our admiration for his decision “to prioritise the interests of the BBC” since “this matter may well be a distraction from the corporation’s good work were I to remain in post”. Er, yes, just a bit. Again, if preventing a distraction was Sharp’s concern, he should have gone the moment this story broke. As it is, he’s left multiple questions still to answer – including whether Johnson should not have [recused himself](#) from the appointment process on the grounds that he had an egregious conflict of interest, given that he knew Sharp had helped him out with the loan.

What’s needed now is not just a new BBC chair, but a new way of doing things. Even if he hadn’t got involved in Johnson’s personal finances, Sharp was hardly a non-partisan figure. He is a longtime, high-value donor to the Tory party, [to the tune of £400,000](#). True, political parties, Labour included, have been appointing allies and chums to this role since the 1960s, but that practice needs to stop. Lineker [distilled the case nicely](#): “The BBC

chairman should not be selected by the government of the day. Not now, not ever.”

This goes wider than the BBC: there’s a slew of public jobs that might appear to be independently appointed, but that are quietly filled on the nod, or whim, of Downing Street. But it’s with the [BBC](#) that independence matters acutely. To understand why, look across the Atlantic.

This week’s announcement by Joe Biden that he will seek a second term had to [fight for media attention](#) with the firing of Fox News anchor Tucker Carlson. That’s because Carlson had become second only to Donald Trump in influence over the Republican party, able to make senior elected officials and aspirant presidential candidates bend to his agenda and ideological obsessions – even when mainstreaming previously fringe, and racist, ideas like the “[great replacement theory](#)”, with its claim of a deliberate, if shadowy, plot to replace white Americans with a more diverse and pliant electorate.

Fox News itself, with its repeated amplification of the big lie of a stolen election, is partly responsible for why nearly [two-thirds of Republican voters](#) do not believe a demonstrable fact: namely, that Biden won office in a free and fair contest in 2020. Today’s America is a land of epistemic tribalism: knowledge is not shared across the society, but rather dependent on political affiliation. There are red state facts and blue state facts, and which you believe comes down to which media you consume – which social media accounts you follow, which TV networks you watch.

In Britain, there have been efforts to lead us down that gloomy path. There are [partisan, polemical TV channels](#) now, desperate to do to Britain what Fox has done to America. And Johnson was Trumpian in his contempt for the truth, determined to create a world of Brexit facts that would exist in opposition to the real one. But if those efforts have largely failed – and if Johnson was eventually undone by his lies – that is partly down to the stubborn persistence in this country of a source of information that is regarded by most people as, yes, flawed and, yes, inconsistent, but broadly reliable and fair. [Trust levels in the BBC](#) are not what they were, and that demands urgent attention, but it is striking nonetheless that, according to a Reuters Institute study, aside from local news, BBC News is the [most](#)

[trusted news brand](#) *in the US*. It seems that in an intensely polarised landscape, people thirst for a non-partisan source.

The BBC should be defended – and that process starts with governments treating it as the [publicly funded broadcaster](#) it is, rather than the state broadcaster some wrongly imagine it to be. That means giving up the power to pick its boss – and getting politicians out of the way. The BBC is a precious thing – so precious, we might not fully appreciate it until it's gone.

- Jonathan Freedland is a Guardian columnist

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## 2023.04.29 - Around the world

- [US supreme court Leaked abortion draft made us 'targets of assassination', says judge](#)
- ['This was unexpected' Abortion bans blocked in Nebraska and South Carolina](#)
- [Indonesia Arrested Australian man says he felt 'almost possessed' during naked rampage](#)
- [Italy 'Provocative' mermaid statue causes stir](#)



Samuel Alito's draft ruling was leaked to Politico on 2 May last year, to uproar and protest nationwide. The final ruling was issued on 24 June. Photograph: Yana Paskova/Reuters

[Roe v Wade](#)

## Leaked abortion draft made us 'targets of assassination', Samuel Alito says

US supreme court justice, who wrote Dobbs ruling that overturned Roe, denies claims he was responsible for leak in draft form

[Martin Pengelly](#) in New York

[@MartinPengelly](#)

Fri 28 Apr 2023 16.49 EDTFirst published on Fri 28 Apr 2023 16.04 EDT

Samuel Alito [said](#) the decision he wrote removing the federal right to abortion made him and other US supreme court justices "targets of assassination" but denied claims he was responsible for its leak in draft form.

“Those of us who were thought to be in the majority, thought to have approved my draft opinion, were really targets of assassination,” Alito [told the Wall Street Journal](#) in an interview published on Friday.

“It was rational for people to believe they might be able to stop the decision in Dobbs by killing one of us.”

Alito wrote the ruling in Dobbs v Jackson, the Mississippi case that overturned [Roe v Wade](#), which established the right to abortion in 1973.

Alito’s draft ruling was [leaked to Politico](#) on 2 May last year, to uproar and protest nationwide. The final ruling was [issued on 24 June](#).

On 8 June, an armed man was [arrested](#) outside the home of [Brett Kavanaugh](#), with Alito one of six conservatives on the nine-justice court. Charged with attempted murder of a United States judge, the man pleaded not guilty.

The conservative chief justice, John Roberts, voted against overturning Roe, but the three rightwingers installed by Republicans under Donald Trump ensured it [fell](#) regardless.

Progressives charged that a conservative, perhaps the hardline Alito, might have orchestrated the leak in an attempt to lock in a majority for such a momentous decision.

Alito said: “That’s infuriating to me. Look, this made us targets of assassination. Would I do that to myself? Would the five of us have done that to ourselves? It’s quite implausible.”

The leak was investigated by the supreme court marshal, [without](#) establishing a perpetrator.

Saying the marshal “did a good job with the resources that were available”, Alito said he had “a pretty good idea who is responsible, but that’s different from the level of proof that is needed to name somebody”.

Alito said the leak “was a part of an effort to prevent the Dobbs draft ... from becoming the decision of the court. And that’s how it was used for those six weeks by people on the outside, as part of the campaign to try to intimidate the court.”

He also [said](#) the leak “created an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust”. The justices “worked through it”, he said, “and last year we got our work done ... but it was damaging”.

Last November, after [a bombshell New York Times report](#), Alito denied leaking information about a decision in a 2014 case about contraception and religious rights.

His Wall Street Journal interview seemed bound to further anger Democrats and progressives. Justices regularly claim not to be politically motivated, but even with a Democrat in the White House the court has made other momentous conservative rulings, notably [including](#) a loosening of gun-control laws.

Joe Biden’s administration has shied from calls for reform, including the idea justices should be added to establish balance or give liberals a majority, reflecting Democratic control of the White House and Senate.





Samuel Alito in March 2019. Photograph: Susan Walsh/AP

Alito [told the Journal](#) he did not “feel physically unsafe, because we now have a lot of protection”. He also said he was “driven around in basically a tank, and I’m not really supposed to go anywhere by myself without the tank and my members of the police force”.

Complaining that criticism also stoked by corruption allegations against two more conservatives, Clarence Thomas and Neil Gorsuch, were “new during my lifetime”, Alito said: “We are being hammered daily, and I think quite unfairly in a lot of instances.

“And nobody, practically nobody, is defending us. The idea has always been that judges are not supposed to respond to criticisms, but if the courts are being unfairly attacked, the organised bar will come to their defense.”

Alito said legal authorities had, “if anything ... participated to some degree in these attacks”.

He declined to comment on [reporting by ProPublica](#) about Thomas’s friendship with Harlan Crow, a Republican mega-donor who has bestowed gifts and [purchases](#) which Thomas largely did not disclose.

But Alito did complain about how Kavanaugh was treated when allegations of sexual assault surfaced during his confirmation process.

“After Justice Kavanaugh was accused of being a rapist ... he made an impassioned speech, made an impassioned scene, and he was criticised because it was supposedly not judicious, not the proper behavior for a judge to speak in those terms.

“I don’t know – if somebody calls you a rapist?”

Accusations against Kavanaugh included attempted rape while a high school student. On Friday, the Guardian [reported](#) that new information showed serious omissions in a Senate investigation of the allegations, mounted when Republicans controlled the chamber.



Polling [shows](#) that public trust in the supreme court has reached historic lows.

“We’re being bombarded,” Alito [complained](#), “and then those who are attacking us say: ‘Look how unpopular they are. Look how low their approval rating has sunk.’”

“Well, yeah, what do you expect when ... day in and day out, ‘They’re illegitimate. They’re engaging in all sorts of unethical conduct. They’re doing this, they’re doing that’?”

Such attacks, he said, “undermine confidence in the government [as] it’s one thing to say the court is wrong; it’s another thing to say it’s an illegitimate institution”.

With some court-watchers, the interview landed heavily.

Robert Maguire, research director for Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, an independent watchdog, [said](#): “There is no depth to the pity [justices] – and Alito in particular – feel for themselves when they face public criticism.”

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Abortion rights supporters on Thursday at the Nebraska state capital in Lincoln, Nebraska. Photograph: Larry Robinson/AP

## [Abortion](#)

# **‘This was unexpected’: abortion bans blocked in Nebraska and South Carolina**

Six-week ban blocked in Nebraska while South Carolina senators reject bill that would have banned nearly all abortions in the state

*Associated Press in Lincoln, Nebraska and Columbia, South Carolina*

Fri 28 Apr 2023 08.03 EDTLast modified on Fri 28 Apr 2023 11.06 EDT

Abortion rights campaigners won notable victories in Nebraska and [South Carolina](#) on Thursday, blocking a six-week ban in the first state and a near-total ban in the second.

In Lincoln, [Nebraska](#), a vote to end debate so the bill could advance failed by one vote. Cheers erupted as opponents of the bill waved signs and chanted: “Whose house? Our house!”

Jo Giles, executive director of the Women’s Fund of Omaha, was brought to tears.

“Wow!” she said. “This was unexpected, but we’re so glad to have this win. We have fought so hard. This bill is not what the majority of women in this state wanted.”

In Columbia, South Carolina, senators rejected a bill that would have banned nearly all abortions in a state increasingly serving women across a region where Republicans have otherwise curtailed access.

Sandy Senn, a Republican senator, criticized the majority leader, Shane Massey, for repeatedly “taking us off a cliff on abortion”.

“The only thing that we can do when you all, you men in the chamber, metaphorically keep slapping women by raising abortion again and again and again, is for us to slap you back with our words,” Senn said.

The Nebraska bill would ban abortion around the sixth week of pregnancy. It is now unlikely to move forward this year. Since 2010, Nebraska has banned abortions after the 20th week. The new bill would have banned abortion once cardiac activity can be detected. It failed to get the crucial 33rd vote when state senator Merv Riepe abstained. He was a cosigner but expressed concern a six-week ban might not give women time to know they were pregnant.

A former hospital administrator, Riepe introduced an amendment that would have extended the ban to 12 weeks and add to the list of exceptions fetal anomalies deemed incompatible with life.

Riepe warned Republicans to heed signs that abortion will galvanize women to vote them out. He offered up his own election last year, noting that in the primary he was 27 points ahead but after the US supreme court’s

Dobbs decision in June, striking down Roe, his margin of victory in the general election against the same challenger, a Democrat who made abortion rights central to her campaign, dropped to just under five points.

“We must embrace the future of reproductive rights,” Riepe said.

The failed bill included exceptions for cases of rape, incest and medical emergencies and made exceptions for ectopic pregnancies and IVF procedures. It allowed for the removal of a fetus that has died in the womb. It did not ascribe criminal penalties to women or doctors. It would have subjected doctors to professional discipline.

The bill’s author, Joni Albrecht, called it “the friendliest pro-life bill out there”. But she rejected a compromise that would exempt women and medical professionals from criminal penalties.

“This is simply not necessary,” Albrecht said. She also rejected Riepe’s amendment, saying her six-week proposal “was a big compromise” from a total ban she failed to pass last year.

Among those celebrating outside the legislature was Pat Neal, 72, of Lincoln, who has been fighting for abortion rights since she received an abortion in 1973, the year the Roe v Wade decision guaranteed the right.

“This gives me hope for the future,” Neal said. “It gives me hope that the direction we’ve been seeing – across the country – could turn around.”

In South Carolina, three near-total bans have now failed in the Republican-led chamber since the Dobbs decision. Six Republicans helped defeat the bill this year.

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The chamber's five women filibustered the proposal in speeches highlighting the male majority they criticized for pushing abortion over other issues.

Penry Gustafson spent over 30 minutes on Wednesday detailing bodily changes throughout pregnancy. She said millions of women had not been heard. She emphasized her "pro-life" position but said the proposal left "no room for empathy, reality or graciousness".

The bill would have banned abortion with exceptions for rape or incest through the first trimester, fatal fetal anomalies confirmed by two physicians, and to save the patient's life or health.

Mia McLeod, an independent, criticized leaders who prioritized the ban over efforts to make South Carolina the 49th state to allow harsher punishments for violent hate crimes.

McLeod, who shared during debate that she had been raped, said it was unfortunate that women must reveal intimate experiences to "enlighten and engage" men.

"Just as rape is about power and control, so is this total ban," McLeod said. "Those who continue to push legislation like this are raping us again with their indifference, violating us again with their righteous indignation, taunting us again with their insatiable need to play God while they continue to pass laws that are ungodly."

Abortion remains legal through 22 weeks in South Carolina, a status that has drawn patients throughout the increasingly restrictive south-east.

The number of out-of-state patients has risen since the state supreme court struck down a 2021 law.

Opponents of the total ban said it would prevent safe access to the procedure and worsen alarmingly high maternal death rates and poorer outcomes for Black women.

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |



Australian man Bodhi Mani Risby-Jones was arrested after an alleged drunken naked rampage on an Indonesian island in the Aceh province. Photograph: ABC News

[Indonesia](#)

## Australian man arrested in Indonesia says he felt ‘almost possessed’ during naked rampage

Bodhi Mani Risby-Jones faces up to five years in jail after he allegedly assaulted a fisherman who required 50 stitches for his injuries

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Sat 29 Apr 2023 02.40 EDTFirst published on Sat 29 Apr 2023 00.21 EDT



Bodhi Mani Risby-Jones says he was not himself and felt “almost possessed” during an alleged drunken naked rampage that led to his arrest on an Indonesian island.

The 23-year-old Australian faces up to five years in jail if convicted over the alleged incident on Thursday on Simeulue, within the conservative Aceh province off the coast of Sumatra.

Risby-Jones allegedly emerged without any clothes from Moon Beach Resort and proceeded to chase and strike people on the main village road, according to the Aceh media outlet Bithe.

Shortly before 1am the Noosa man abused a fisherman from the village of Lantik, who suffered serious injuries requiring more than 50 stitches on his heel as well as fractures, Indonesian police told the publication in a written statement.

Supt Jamitko also alleged that Risby-Jones hit a security guard before he left his resort.

“He was enraged. He caused a scene. He hit a security guard and walked out of the resort and ran amok every motorbike rider he encountered,” Jamitko said.

Jamitko said the fisherman’s injuries were a result of Risby-Jones striking him as he passed by on his motorbike, and throwing the motorcycle on to him after he fell into the gutter, [according to the Sydney Morning Herald](#).

Angered by the tourist’s alleged behaviour, locals tried to set the resort itself ablaze, the police chief said.

“Knowing it, the people got angry and almost put the resort on fire. Luckily, local police and the village head managed to calm down the mob.”

Appearing under police guard before local media, Risby-Jones said: “I feel like not myself, like almost possessed.

“It was not a good feeling. I wasn’t myself. Normally I’m very nice guy.”

The family of Risby-Jones also released a statement on his behalf Saturday, saying he is “now fully aware of his behaviour” and disturbed by his actions, which he takes “full responsibility” for.

“He is extremely remorseful and apologetic and acknowledges the pain he has caused the victim. He is embarrassed and ashamed of his behaviour,” the statement said.

“Bodhi would also like to apologise to the Australian people for embarrassing them and is deeply ashamed of the trauma he has inflicted on his family.”

Risby-Jones said he only had one small shot of vodka prior to the incident but had been suffering from sunstroke from surfing the day prior, and maintained that he was wearing underwear during the incident, the ABC reported.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade said: “The Australian embassy in Jakarta is providing consular assistance to an Australian man detained in Indonesia.”

Tim Lindsey, a professor in Indonesian law at the University of Melbourne, said Aceh province is considered the most morally conservative province of Indonesia and is “unique” because it is the only province where Islamic sharia law can be applied as an independent source of law, operating in parallel with the secular national criminal code..

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However, Aceh is also a surfing destination and “the lifestyle that goes with it is always going to be at odds with a conservative Islamic morally conservative province like Aceh”, Lindsey said.

Risby-Jones would be charged under the criminal code, likely under article 351 for maltreatment resulting in physical injury, which carries a maximum penalty of five years in jail if the injury is considered serious, Lindsey said.

Whether the offending person had reached a reconciliation, often a financial compensation, with the family of the person injured “makes a great deal of difference” in criminal sentencing, Lindsey said.

However, if sharia law is applied, punishment may include caning.

Risby-Jones could also be charged for drinking alcohol, which is banned under sharia law.

The report the motorcycle rider’s wife submitted to police was about violence and not alcohol use – however, police have not ruled out investigating the alcohol aspect, meaning Islamic law could still be applied, according to the Sydney Morning Herald.

“Authorities sometimes turn a bit of a blind eye to foreigners smuggling in a bit of alcohol to drink, but it’s still an offence,” Lindsey said.

The incident comes as another Indonesian island cracks down on problem tourists. Tensions between foreign visitors and locals in Bali have also reached a boiling point after incidents that include [an influencer visiting a sacred site naked and dangerous motorcycle riding](#).

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |



The mermaid statue in Monopoli became a target of ridicule after photos were shared on social media. Photograph: Monopoli Times

[Italy](#)

## ‘Too provocative’ mermaid statue causes stir in southern Italy

Art school headteacher hails ‘tribute to the great majority of women who are curvy’ amid social media uproar

[Angela Giuffrida](#) in Rome

Fri 28 Apr 2023 09.50 EDTLast modified on Fri 28 Apr 2023 13.57 EDT

The voluptuous statue of a mermaid placed in a square in a fishing village in Puglia, southern [Italy](#), has caused a stir for being “too provocative”.

The statue was created by students at the Luigi Rosso art school in Monopoli before being positioned in a square named after the scientist Rita Levi-Montalcini.

The artwork, which is yet to be officially inaugurated, became a target of ridicule after photos taken during its installation were shared on social media.

The Bari-based actor Tiziana Schiavarelli wrote on Facebook that a friend in Monopoli had “rightly expressed some perplexity about this ‘monument’”.

“It looks like a mermaid with two silicone breasts and, above all, a huge arse never seen before on a mermaid. At least not any I know.”

Schiavarelli stressed that she did not have an issue with the art students or the local council, which had commissioned the work. “But I am very amused by this thing ... who knows if it will become a further attraction for tourists,” she added.



Adolfo Marciano, the headteacher of the Luigi Rosso art school, hailed the statue as a ‘tribute to the great majority of women who are curvy’. Photograph: Monopoli Times

Adolfo Marciano, the headteacher of the Luigi Rosso art school, defended the statue, saying it was a “tribute to the great majority of women who are curvy”. He explained that the students were tasked by the mayor of

Monopoli to create several statues for the town, including one on the theme of the sea.

“The students got together and came up with the idea of a mermaid,” Marciano said. “The council was shown the scale model and said it was good, and then decided the completed sculpture would be placed in the square.”

Marciano said he did not want to cast judgement on the students’ inspiration, but that he viewed the work “as a representation of reality, in this case of the female body”.

He added: “You see adverts on television with models who are very thin, but the mermaid is like a tribute to the great majority of women who are curvy, especially in our country. It would have been very bad if we had represented a woman who was extremely skinny.”

Beppe, who lives in Monopoli, said the sculpture, which has been kept covered until its inauguration, had caused much discussion in recent days, with some people criticising it as “too provocative”.

“It’s a shame as the art students deserve to be praised instead of criticised,” he said.

The students also created a statue dedicated to the victims of workplace accidents, which will be unveiled on Monday. “This is much more important than the mermaid,” said Marciano.

Female statues in other areas of Italy have caused similar controversy. In 2021, a [bronze statue](#) portraying a woman in a transparent dress in the Campania town of Sapri sparked a sexism row. The work, by the sculptor Emanuele Stifano, was intended as a tribute to La Spigolatrice di Sapri (The Gleaner of Sapri), written by the poet Luigi Mercantini in 1857. The statue, which was branded “an offence to women”, was unveiled during a ceremony attended by the former prime minister Giuseppe Conte.



| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

## Headlines tuesday 25 april 2023

- [Live 'Large-scale evacuation' of UK nationals begins in Sudan amid fears ceasefire will break down](#)
- [UK Government to begin evacuating British nationals from Sudan](#)
- ['The worst of worst case scenarios' Western diplomats blindsided over Sudan crisis](#)
- [Stories of the evacuees 'We were not sleeping, eating or drinking'](#)

## [Sudan](#)

# Sudan live: Evacuation flights continue as fighting threatens newly brokered three-day truce — as it happened

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Joint forces board the C-130 aircraft at RAF Akrotiri, Cyprus, on 25 April bound for Sudan to start the evacuation operation. Photograph: Reuters

[Sudan](#)

## UK to start evacuating British nationals from Sudan

RAF transport planes fly into country, as UK government takes advantage of ceasefire

- [Sudan crisis – latest updates](#)

[Patrick Wintour](#) and [Dan Sabbagh](#)

Tue 25 Apr 2023 09.22 EDTFirst published on Tue 25 Apr 2023 02.08 EDT

The British government is taking advantage of a [72-hour ceasefire](#) agreed by the warring factions in Sudan to evacuate UK nationals from the country, following intense criticism that it had missed a window of opportunity to evacuate more than British diplomats and their families on Sunday.

RAF transport planes have been flying into the Wadi Seidna airfield, north of Khartoum, from where UK nationals are due to be flown to Cyprus, which is being used as a staging post by the British military.

The operation involves A400M Atlas planes, with a passenger capacity of up to 200, and C-130 Hercules, with a capacity of about 120.

An RAF C-130 Hercules that has travelled back from Khartoum to Cyprus was understood to have been carrying an advance team, rather than being the first evacuation flight of the operation. The Ministry of Defence released pictures of Royal Marines and headquarters staff loading up on to a Hercules plane on Tuesday morning,

The flights to Cyprus, which should take between four and five hours, are open to British passport-holders and priority is being given to family groups with children, elderly people and individuals with medical conditions.

The foreign secretary, [James Cleverly](#), told UK nationals that they must make their own way to the airfield. “We have said that we are unable to provide escorts from where British nationals are to the airhead, they will have to make their own way there – as indeed has been the case for the nationals of other countries,” he said.

“It is important to remember that ceasefires have been announced and have fallen apart in the past so the situation remains dangerous, volatile and unpredictable,” Cleverly told broadcasters. “It is impossible to predict how long the ceasefire will last. It is impossible to predict how long any other route to evacuation will remain open.”

Why violence has broken out in Sudan – video explainer

It is thought more than 2,000 people, many dual nationals, have contacted the Foreign Office seeking to leave Sudan since violence broke out 10 days ago pitting army units loyal to its military ruler, Gen Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, against the Rapid Support Forces, led by [Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo](#), known as Hemedti.

The operation is limited by the size of the airfield, which the UK said on Monday could carry only two Atlas-size planes at a time. It is likely to be shared with countries other than the UK while the ceasefire agreed holds.

Only British passport-holders and immediate family members with existing UK entry clearance are eligible to board the evacuation flights. The Foreign Office said other exit routes were being considered, with two British military ships prepared for a possible evacuation.

The fact that the airlift was announced in advance reflects the need for the Foreign Office to communicate with a large number of British nationals so that they know a rescue operation is under way and that travel to the airport will be required once they are called forward.

It was being stressed that British diplomats are on the ground to coordinate, suggesting assurances are being given that the British military will not be going through the city.

The announcement of the ceasefire was critical to the decision to attempt the operation.

Sir Nicholas Kay, a former British ambassador to [Sudan](#), warned that the situation during the ceasefire remained “precarious”. He told BBC Radio 4’s Today programme: “The security situation can change very quickly, the command and control over forces isn’t complete and there is no trust between the two sides so they might kick off again.”

The former diplomat warned that moving around Khartoum could be “very difficult”, with the bridges crossing the Blue and White Nile rivers being controlled by the armed groups.

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There is concern that British nationals will try to get to the airfield without waiting to be called, risking a rush for the evacuation planes. The prioritisation process in Afghanistan during the [botched Kabul evacuation in 2021](#) proved difficult partly because politicians struggled to stick to clear criteria and responded to lobbying by Downing Street or MPs acting in the wake of their constituent's pleas.

The US announced on Monday evening that the two opposing forces had [agreed a three-day ceasefire](#). Previous attempted ceasefires have failed over the course of 10 days of fighting that has so far killed at least 427 people and wounded more than 3,700, according to UN agencies.

## [Map](#)

Hours before Blinken's announcement, the UN secretary general, António Guterres, had warned that the fighting could "engulf the whole region and beyond".

British ministers have been challenged repeatedly to explain how other countries had managed to evacuate at least some of their nationals, and whether the UK had wasted a window of opportunity to extract large numbers on Sunday, during a brief lull in the fighting.

France has airlifted 491 people from 36 countries, including 12 EU nations, to Djibouti since Sunday, according to the foreign ministry. They included two Greeks and one Belgian who had been wounded, as well as the German and Swiss ambassadors, it said.



Two Italian military planes landed in Rome on Monday carrying 83 Italian nationals and 13 citizens of various nationalities, who had first been evacuated to Djibouti.

James Heappey, the UK minister for the armed forces, had said in a briefing on Monday that the UK recognised “the job isn’t done” when it came to rescuing the British and dual nationals trapped in Sudan.

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |



People prepare to board a bus departing from Khartoum to flee the violence, Sudan. Photograph: AFP/Getty Images

[Sudan](#)

## ‘The worst of worst case scenarios’: western diplomats blindsided over Sudan crisis

Residents and regional experts say governments and NGOs should have been better prepared for violence

[Zeinab Mohammed Salih](#) in Khartoum, [Jason Burke](#) and [Patrick Wintour](#)

Tue 25 Apr 2023 00.00 EDT Last modified on Wed 26 Apr 2023 05.34 EDT

The message from the senior United Nations officials to their staff was honest – if unapologetic. Four days after [Sudan](#) was plunged into a welter of chaotic violence as two rival factions battled for control of its capital city, the UN’s special representative to Sudan answered questions online in a virtual “townhall meeting”.

“This is the worst of worst case scenarios,” Volker Perthes said. “We tried even with last ditch diplomacy ... last week and we have failed.”

Was there no warning, one staff member asked? “No, we did not have any early warning,” Perthes said, according to minutes of the meeting viewed by the Guardian.

But others disagree, saying that governments and international organisations should have been much better prepared for the crisis. They say it was always clear that army units loyal to Sudan’s military ruler, Gen Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, would end up fighting the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), led by Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, known as Hemedti, and that warning lights were flashing red long before 15 April, when the shooting started.

Why violence has broken out in Sudan – video explainer

Residents of Khartoum say they have been warning about such a clash for months. Both factions had been mobilising for a struggle, stockpiling ammunition, accelerating recruitment, [bringing in extra fuel](#) and medical supplies, even blood. Two nights before the outbreak of violence, there was none of the usual buzz of an evening during Ramadan in Khartoum’s cafes and restaurants.

Shamael el-Noor, a Khartoum-based Sudanese political analyst, said conversations with both factions convinced her violence was coming.

“I was aware of the pressure between the RSF and the army and certain that [it] could at any time escalate into an unwanted [violent] situation. I was totally expecting that there will be an explosion, [and] knew that if it was going to erupt anywhere it would surely be in Khartoum ... I just wasn’t sure about its level,” el-Noor said.

Many residents watched the movements of high-profile foreign diplomats in Khartoum as an indication of risk.

“Some people were reassured by the position of the American embassy, saying as long as the Americans didn’t release warnings, that meant the situation was safe,” she said.

Mini Arkou Minawi, the governor of Darfur and the head of the Sudan Liberation Army – a former rebel group that joined the government in Khartoum in October 2020 after fighting for about 18 years – said he had warned from March that war was coming and had urged both factions involved not to fight in the cities “among women and children, we used to go and fight in the mountains”.

Minawi said a key moment was the conclusion of a [UN and US-backed deal](#) late last year, which was supposed to lead to a transition to civilian-led government and security sector reform.

“They have been recruiting and increasing their forces from six to seven months ago ... Neither of them wanted [the fight], then they brought thousands of their troops to Khartoum,” he said.

In western capitals, there will now be difficult conversations about what could have been done more effectively to guide a transition from military to civilian rule after the fall of the veteran authoritarian ruler Omar al-Bashir in 2019 following months of popular protests.

[map](#)

One criticism is that sanctions should have been imposed on Hemedti and the RSF to send a strong signal after they massacred about 200 pro-democracy demonstrators in June 2019 as they moved to sideline civilians and consolidate their grip on power.

Cameron Hudson, an expert in US [Africa](#) policy at Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, said: “There were moments where sanctions could have been used to great effect and could have changed the trajectory ... Hemedti has been able to reinvent himself as a politician and a statesman and we, the US, allowed that to happen.”

Another charge may be a failure to address the concerns of both Fattah al-Burhan and Hemedti for their own personal safety if, somehow, they were convinced to step down.

The UK special envoy for Sudan and South Sudan, Robert Fairweather, told a recent meeting of Sudanese lawyers in London that in his discussions with Fattah al-Burhan and Hemedti both “expressed their worries about what would happen to them the next day if they were to relinquish power”.

Others, such as Stefan Dercon, director of the Centre for the Study of African Economies, University of Oxford and development adviser to successive Conservative foreign secretaries, said they thought the UK had been unrealistic.

“I was shocked the main thing we kept focus on with other embassies was transitional justice, gender empowerment and parliamentary things when the basic deal had not been done in the country, including the economic deal,” Dercon said.

Others said the number of different actors involved limited London’s leverage – and that of other western powers.

Dr Hannah Waddilove, a Foreign Office east Africa analyst, said western influence had declined from a high point in the early 1990s.

“We are in a classic 21st-century multipolarity in the Horn ... It has always been an area of competition, but there is now a constellation of different states,” she said.

Those now manoeuvring for advantage in Sudan and east Africa more broadly include China, Russia, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

[map](#)

Ahmed Soliman, of London’s Chatham House, said: “There were a lot of different visits, a lot of envoys ... There are plenty of actors who are keen

on a military authoritarian regime in Khartoum and much less keen on a civilian government spreading democratic values in the region.”

US commentators point out that the 2021 military coup came just hours after Fattah al-Burhan assured the US special envoy for the Horn of Africa of his commitment to a transition to civilian rule. Both the general and Hemedti “told the international community what they wanted to hear” with the result that the US “fundamentally misjudged” who they were dealing with in Sudan.

“We believed what Burhan and Hemedti were saying: that they had the intention of turning power over to civilians. That required believing the leopard had changed its spots. But at no point could you point to anything on the ground that would show that was the case,” said Hudson.

Just days before the fighting broke out on 15 April, the US secretary of state, Antony [Blinken, spoke again to](#) Fattah al-Burhan as part of frantic efforts to avert a looming clash and received further assurances. Other efforts to halt the slide to violence involved the African Union’s representative in Khartoum, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, the EU, UK and the UN. Optimism – possibly misguided, according to many commentators – remained until the last minute.

“There were signs of tensions building between RSF and SAF but .... On Friday [14 April] evening we thought that de-escalation had begun ... We were wrong,” Perthes said to UN staff in the internal meeting. Less than 12 hours later, the fighting began.

Successive efforts to establish a ceasefire have failed since and most countries are rushing to evacuate first their diplomats then their citizens from Khartoum. The World Health Organization estimated that more than 400 are dead and thousands injured – though medical NGOs in Sudan say the true toll is much higher.

Sudan: evacuees brave 'risky' travel as fighting intensifies – video report

However, on Monday evening a 72-hour ceasefire between the two sides, due to take effect at midnight on 24 April, was announced. Blinken said the

US would support efforts to set up a committee to lead negotiations to create a lasting peace.

“We are now in the war and the most scary thing is that it will become a civil war. It was obviously coming and I don’t think anything could have stopped it” said el-Noor.

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |





Saudi citizens and other nationals are evacuated through by Saudi Arabia from Sudan Photograph: Saudi Ministry Of Defense/Reuters

### [Sudan](#)

## ‘We were not sleeping, eating or drinking’: Sudan evacuees tell of dangerous journeys

Saudi Arabia has evacuated over 300 people of a range of nationalities, but is facing criticism for not doing more to facilitate a ceasefire

- [Sudanese Armed Forces and Rapid Support Forces agree ceasefire, says Blinken](#)

*Agence France-Presse*

Tue 25 Apr 2023 00.30 EDT

Evacuees from the fighting in Sudan have described a harrowing escape from the violence-wracked capital, across the Red Sea to [Saudi Arabia](#).

Wheelchair-bound elderly women and babies asleep in their parents' arms were among the nearly 200 people from more than 20 countries who disembarked from a naval frigate in the coastal city of Jeddah on Monday night after a daring journey to safety.

“We travelled a long way from Khartoum to Port [Sudan](#). It took us around 10 or 11 hours,” said Lebanese national Suhaib Aicha, who has operated a plastics factory in Sudan for more than a decade.

“It took us another 20 hours on this ship from Port Sudan to Jeddah,” he told the AFP news agency as his young daughter cried on his shoulders.

“We were not sleeping, eating or drinking. We lived through many difficult days,” said another Lebanese passenger who declined to give her name.

Fighting broke out in Sudan on 15 April between forces loyal to army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his deputy turned rival Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, known as Hemedti, who commands the powerful paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

At least 427 people have been killed and more than 3,700 wounded, according to UN agencies, and many are now grappling with acute shortages of water, food, medicines and fuel as well as power and internet blackouts.

Late Monday, US secretary of state Antony Blinken announced [Burhan and Hemedti had agreed to a 72-hour ceasefire](#).



Saudi royal navy personnel assist a woman who was evacuated from Sudan  
Photograph: Saudi Press Agency/Reuters

Those who reached Saudi soil on Monday said they were grateful to be out of a country where the doctors' union has reported that "morgues are full" and "corpses litter the streets".

Saudi Arabia has so far welcomed 150 people including foreign diplomats and officials in Jeddah. In total, 356 people have been evacuated to the kingdom from Sudan so far – 101 Saudis and 255 foreigners from more than 20 countries, the official Saudi Press Agency reported.

A US special forces operation at the weekend triggered the rush by many other [western countries to get their diplomatic staff out](#). They rescued dozens of people from Khartoum, spending less than an hour on the ground.

France sent two planes to Khartoum, evacuating nearly 400 people, including French nationals as well as citizens of other countries, while Germany's air force has flown out 311 people so far on three planes from an airfield near Khartoum.

[The British military is assessing](#) how to rescue some of the thousands of British nationals still stranded in Sudan after facing criticism for missing a

window of opportunity to evacuate more than just British diplomats and their families.

Saudi officials are coming under pressure to do more than facilitate evacuations, given their close ties to the two generals whose troops are fighting it out in and beyond Khartoum.

“Saudi Arabia is a critical player in the ceasefire diplomacy in Sudan,” Alan Boswell of the International Crisis Group told AFP.

“African and western governments are looking to Riyadh for help in convincing Sudan’s military to give talks a chance.”

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## 2023.04.25 - Spotlight

- ['I have an invisible disability myself' Edward Enninful and Sinéad Burke on their fashion revolution](#)
- [Eat fibre first – and ditch the juice Five quick and easy tips for a much healthier meal](#)
- [How we survive I was the sole survivor of a plane crash. This is what I learned in eight days alone in the jungle](#)
- [Donald Trump's civil rape case What is he accused of and what happens next?](#)
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L-R: Selma Blair in Vogue; Edward Enninful and Sinead Burke at Vogue House in London last month; and Dr Rosaleen McDonagh in Vogue. Composite: Adama Jalloh/Condé Nast; Yves Salmon/The Guardian

[Fashion](#)

[Interview](#)

# **‘I have an invisible disability myself’: Edward Enninful and Sinéad Burke on their fashion revolution**

[Zoe Williams](#)

How do you shake up a homogeneous industry? The editor and the fashion activist explain why they brought a daring, dynamic vision of disability to Vogue



[@zoesgwiliams](#)

Tue 25 Apr 2023 05.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 25 Apr 2023 08.23 EDT

The May issue of British Vogue, titled Reframing Fashion, features 19 disabled people from fashion, sport, activism and the arts. Five of them are cover stars: the actor Selma Blair, who has multiple sclerosis; Sinéad Burke, a disability activist and consulting editor for the issue; the models Ellie Goldstein and Aaron Rose Philip; and the American Sign Language performer Justina Miles. Since [Edward Enninful](#) was appointed editor in 2017, Vogue has performed a 180-degree turn: from the pronounced, even defiant, homogeneity that was once its hallmark to a magazine at the frontier of what representation and diversity in fashion can look like.



Burke, meanwhile, came at fashion from the citizen side, writing a blog about the industry's accessibility and

the visibility of disabled people within it. Over the past five years, it has turned into a global consultancy, [Tilting the Lens](#).

Enniful and Burke's mission with Reframing Fashion goes back to first principles and asks: what would a fashion shoot – or an image, or a magazine, or an industry, or society – look like if it were designed not *for* disabled people, but *with* them? “We have this notion that disability is invisible disabilities or physical disabilities,” says Burke. “The reality is, we live in an ageing society. We'll all be disabled at some point in our lives. This is not about *us*. This is about all of us.”

**Tell me your fashion origin stories. How did it all start?**

**Edward Enniful:** I've been in the fashion press since I was 16 years old. I started as a model, but I knew that, as an industry, it was getting left behind. When I started here, so many people I knew said: “We don't look at [Vogue](#), we don't see ourselves in it.” That was all I needed to hear. My work has always been about diversity in all its shapes; women of different sizes, ages, religions, socioeconomic backgrounds.

**Sinéad Burke:** I was training to be a primary school teacher and they asked us to create a blog. I created one about fashion. As someone with a physical disability and as a little person, I was hungry, always ravenous, for information. What does change look like? What do sustainability and accessibility look like, not as values, but as business initiatives? Through that, I got the opportunity to attend fashion shows. Disabled people have a skill set that is shaped by their experience. I have always been organised and articulate and tried to be considerate. Those are skills that I've had to harness for my own independence.



L-R: Sinéad Burke on the cover, and Aaron Rose Philip in the May 2023 edition of Vogue. Composite: Adama Jalloh/Condé Nast

### **What inspired you to create Reframing Fashion?**

**Enniful:** I met Sinéad when I started here, in 2018. We sat next to each other at the Burberry show and, from that minute, I just knew we were going to work together. I said: “I’m going to take your lead, because you’ve lived it. And you continue to change people’s perspectives on disability.”

**Burke:** I sat next to him, tugged on his sleeve and said: “Hi, I think what you’re doing at British Vogue is incredible, but have you ever thought about disability?” Knowing that, of course, based on his own lived experience, that was always going to be part of the conversation. So, in 2019, I was the first little person to be [on the cover of any Vogue](#).

### **Why this issue now?**

**Burke:** The pandemic was a mass disabling event. We all had a touchpoint to disability in a way we never had before. And yet, in the first cohort of deaths, six out of 10 people were disabled. We used language like “vulnerable” and “underlying conditions”, as if it was easier to accept those deaths. So, while our lived experience became much closer to disability, our awareness and empathy were unchallenged.

**Where do you think representation of disability has got to?**

**Enninfu:** From my point of view, we are not doing enough in the fashion industry. I want to emphasise that I'm also learning. I have an invisible disability myself: I've had five retinal detachments, I'm partially blind and my hearing is less than 50% – I'm wearing hearing aids now. It's never stopped me, but there are so many people with invisible disabilities who never talk about it, because it might hinder them. I've never had that fear. When I'm reading, it's still difficult; when I'm doing interviews, I have to ask people to talk at a certain level. But these are things that are me, these are things that I've embraced. We always talk about diversity and inclusivity, but that also has to extend to our disabled brothers and sisters.

**Burke:** Representation and visibility are so important, but we need to acknowledge the systemic barriers that exist. It was lovely that we sat together in this building and said: here's our ambition. But then we had to unpick the system. We had to make sure that the place itself was accessible. Does it have step-free access all the way through to the set, including the canteen and the bathrooms? Is there a quiet room on set for people who are neurodivergent, for people with requirements? You can imagine the information that came back was incredibly disappointing. When you look at representation as the only solution, you're not acknowledging all the barriers there are to participation. It's not just fashion – this is a microcosm of the wider world.



Ellie Goldstein in the May 2023 edition of Vogue. Composite: Adama Jalloh/Condé Nast

**Do you see yourselves as being on a political mission?**

**Enniful:** I would see it as just personal.

**Burke:** If we look at this portfolio of talent [in the forthcoming issue of Vogue], we have Dr Rosaleen McDonagh, who is a writer, and the Irish human rights and equality commissioner, and also an Irish Traveller. Is it political to have her in the issue, or is it just deeply personal, to ensure she has the pedestal and the platform she deserves? I think about Christine Sun Kim, the Asian American deaf artist. This is the value of having a lived experience in the room where decisions are made. It is about bringing in the humanity, creating an explicit invitation to people and saying: “You belong.”

**Enniful:** It’s an empathy question. I believe that, in whatever we do, we have to have empathy.

**This industry is perceived as forbidding, harsh and judgmental. Have you experienced any of that?**

**Burke:** Historically, there was a very specific definition as to what we defined and described as beautiful. In any industry, if you’re asking

questions about or advocating for a change of that norm, you are often met with friction, uncertainty, nervousness. From the beginning, I was hoping to create change for far more than me. Particularly since the pandemic, I've really started to ask the question: in terms of the part that I've played within the fashion system, did it become more accessible? Or did it become more accessible for me? Because that's not a broad enough definition of success.

**Enniful:** This is an industry that we both know very well. I've navigated it. I'm not scared. I'm very vocal. It's up to us to change it. Vogue changed with the times; it had to. The brilliant thing is, it's now a whole industry having these conversations. And we're very proud of that.

**Burke:** What's important about fashion is, wherever you participate in it, at whatever price point, the reality is we all have to participate in the fashion industry, because we all have to wear clothes. So, you may not have any interest in the most expensive streets in London, but the reality is, what happens in those rooms shapes what we have access to.



‘Representation has to be more than covers’ ... Enniful with Burke.  
Composite: Yves Salmon/The Guardian

**What has it been like dealing with the corporate world as an accessibility consultant?**

**Burke:** It can be incredibly difficult. You're sitting with somebody, saying: "This is an opportunity." And somebody says: "We're just not going to do it, because it's too expensive." Or because there's a recession. Or "we don't have time". And when you are a member of that community and have that lived experience, you can't help but feel like the refusal to participate is deeply personal. But I just choose differently the people I work with. The reality is, I will not convince everyone.

**Do you ever think exclusivity is in the DNA of the industry?**

**Burke:** I fundamentally believe that disability and accessibility are at the core of fashion's DNA. Because where this industry started was made-to-measure. We have moved to something that is much more streamlined, much more cyclical. If we were to reflect on where this industry began, it was about customisation. It was, of course, veiled in wealth – and, in many instances, still is. But in terms of the history of this industry, it began designing for bodies, not designing for a mass market that the body then had to fit.

**There is a seasonal logic to the industry. This leads people to think that, whenever there is a surge of representation, it will be short-lived, whether that's plus-size models, or racial diversity; it will happen, then drop out of fashion.**

**Enninfu:** That's why I always said, when I started at Vogue, you don't just do a special issue and move on. We need representation in every single issue. And we've been able to do that – not perfectly, but we have done it.

**Burke:** Last season, there was some really challenging data around the lack of representation of fat and plus-size models, how it had decreased from previous seasons. Two weeks later, British Vogue had three supermodels who were plus-size. This is not a moment. But it goes back to the idea that representation has to be more than covers. It has to be inclusivity at every strata of the industry where decisions are made.



L-R: Fats Timbo, author, comedian and content creator, in the May 2023 edition of Vogue; and Selma Blair on the cover. Composite: Adama Jalloh/Condé Nast

**When you're making editorial decisions about representation, where do you stand on invisible disability?**

**Enniful:** Even before we did this issue, someone said we should do an issue on invisible disability and I said: there is no way we're doing that. For me, you have to deal with both.

**Burke:** It's about a broader intersectionality – can you imagine, in this issue, if we'd said we were going to have one definition of disability? Maybe Aaron Rose Philip, who is a black transgender disabled woman, wouldn't be part of that. Our identities weave and overlap, we are not just one thing, and by not having a cacophony of voices in the room we further create a path where the most excluded continue to be excluded.

**There are evolutions of diversity and inclusion in which fashion has led the way, and others in which it has lagged behind. How do you account for that?**

**Burke:** Often, the people who have gravitated to this industry are people who felt excluded, people who wanted to discover who they were, people who came out as queer ...



**Enniful:** People who've been othered.

**Burke:** And clothes were this tool, this armour they could put on; whether it's a beautiful navy suit or a bell skirt, fashion gave them – and gave me, specifically – a vocabulary.

**Enniful:** And me.

**Burke:** So, we understood the language – and maybe LGBT people in particular felt seen and it felt like a safe place.

**Enniful:** We always think of fashion as where the misfits gather. We were all alienated one way or another and the industry welcomed us.

**Burke:** Clothes and beauty were ways in which people worked out who they were.

**Enniful:** I have always found it a very welcoming industry. I was a very shy, religious kid.

**Burke:** And look at you now.

**Historically it has also been racist, right?**

**Enniful:** Oh yeah. In the 1990s, they used to say things like: “Non-white models don't sell covers.” And it was OK to say that. And I used to go: “Here's another one. Here's another one.” You continuously have to fight. You continuously have to show another way. It's a complex industry.

**Burke:** What's important about this issue is that, whether or not people pick it up, very few people in the world don't know what Vogue is. And there are five disabled people on the cover of Vogue, being daring, dynamic – and disabled.

*The May issue of British Vogue is available on newsstands and via digital download*

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Instead of starting a meal with bread or crisps, why not try grilled vegetables instead? Photograph: Hihitetlin/Alamy

[The good advice guide](#)[Food](#)

**Eat fibre first – and ditch the juice: five quick and easy tips for a much**

## healthier meal

Scientist and author Tim Spector shows how to make small but important changes to improve the way you eat – while still enjoying your food

[Tim Spector](#)

Tue 25 Apr 2023 03.00 EDTLast modified on Wed 26 Apr 2023 12.59 EDT

Whilst researching my latest book, [Food](#) for Life, I learnt that we're very short of practical advice on food choices which are the most important things we can do for our health (humans and our gut microbes) and also to help the planet. I also learnt that *how* we eat can be as important as *what* we eat. Here are my top five, practical everyday tips to help you make small but sustainable changes across the year that will be far better for you than a few weeks of crash dieting or restrictive eating.

### **Start your meal with fibre and a simple vinegar and extra virgin olive oil dressing**

One of the simplest ways we can help our bodies thrive and prevent over-eating is to change the order in which we eat our food. Reaching for the bread basket or bowl of crisps at the start of a meal results in a rapid increase in blood glucose levels and a subsequent insulin response. This will likely leave you feeling tired, hungry and irritable just a few hours later. This is because glucose is rapidly absorbed from starchy foods, and this is even quicker on an empty stomach.



Olive oil and green olives. Photograph: Hera Food/Alamy

Why not start with a grilled vegetable platter, a selection of crunchy veggies or zesty fresh chopped herbs with a simple extra virgin olive oil and vinegar or lemon dressing. The extra acidity can reduce overeating on your next course, by reducing hunger signals and may also reduce harmful blood sugar spikes.

## **Choose high-quality, non-meat protein**

This can be grains, legumes, fungi or sustainable seafood sources. The importance of good quality protein in our diet is well known but what is less understood is that the classic combination of “meat and two veg” is not the only way to ensure we get the protein we need. Smoked tofu is surprisingly tasty and can be added to salads and stir fries for added protein.

I realised that not all fish is that healthy for us or the planet, but shellfish, such as clams and mussels, are an untapped source of sustainable, nutrient-rich seafood protein. These small and delicious foods are packed with protein, zinc, iron and B vitamins, as well as choline and iodine, making them a great addition to our diet.

Another unsung hero group in our diet is mushrooms. Mushrooms can replace meat in many dishes, bringing umami flavour, nutrients, protein and even vit D, if left on a sunny shelf, with a satiating and satisfying texture plus a positive impact on the environment.

## **Choose your drinks wisely**

Many of us find plain water a bit boring and Brits are world famous for their love of builder's tea: the mix of black tea, milk and sugar can contribute quite significantly to our energy intake, especially when it's the gateway to a biscuit or two.

Try some of these delicious swaps, to make your next drink choice healthier by choosing something polyphenol-rich, probiotic or both.



Coffee is rich in polyphenols and contains fibre. Photograph: pixelfit/Getty Images

If you like hot drinks, simply opting for black coffee over your builder's brew will make a big difference. [Coffee](#) is rich in polyphenols and contains fibre and won't contribute to excess energy intake if you drink it black or with a drop of unsweetened plant or whole cow's milk. Green tea,

especially matcha powder, has a host of well-known benefits thanks to specific polyphenols, including green tea catechins and fibre.

For cold drinks, avoid fruit juices and soft drinks. Opt instead for unsweetened live kombucha, which has a natural fizz and flavour with the added benefit of probiotic strains and no added sugar as it is fermented by the microbes.

For a hearty, filling alternative to shop-bought milkshakes and smoothies, natural kefir (made yourself or shop-bought) is a delicious and healthier alternative for adults and children alike. Add some almonds for crunch or chopped fruit for different flavours.

## **Add colour to your plate**

The colours in our plants are there thanks to chemicals called polyphenols, also known as phytonutrients. These chemicals are produced by plants to protect themselves against environmental stressors, including drought, cold weather, hot weather, insects and parasites. A great example of this is the dark red colour of the oranges which grow in the foothills of Mount Etna in Sicily, where the nights are very cold and the days are very hot and dry.





Beetroot is well proven to improve blood pressure. Photograph: Avalon\_Studio/Getty Images

It turns out these protective chemicals are also helpful for humans. This is why you should aim to eat lots of different colourful plants, choosing variety over the same familiar favourites, like iceberg lettuce and apple.

Different polyphenols are beneficial for different things. Beetroot is well proven to improve blood pressure and post-exercise recovery. Black beans are a staple in some of the longest-living humans and are the beans richest in polyphenols. A great way of introducing polyphenols is also to opt for colourful versions of your favourites, such as sweet potato and purple potato, purple carrots and purple sprouting broccoli, too.

## **Make simple tweaks to your daily staples like bread and yogurt**

Pick bread with high levels of fibre, seeds and no added sugar. Many supermarket breads have lots of added ingredients to make them last longer on the shelf and increase their palatability. True sourdough bread only needs a simple base of flour, with the sourdough starter, water and salt, which can be found in supermarkets (thanks to brands like [Bertinet bakery](#)) or can be made at a local bakery or at home. Choose to eat breads with whole grains, seeds and different types of flour, like dark rye, and always look for a high fibre content, rather than a healthy-looking label.

Before doing [the ZOE programme](#), I thought my breakfast of muesli with skimmed milk was exactly what I needed for the day ahead. I soon learned that this breakfast, washed down with a glass of orange juice, pushed my blood sugar to diabetic levels and I quickly changed the menu. Adding mixed nuts and seeds to plain natural yoghurt with some polyphenol-rich berries is a great way to enjoy a nutritious breakfast that won't spike your blood sugar.



Blueberries for breakfast won't spike your blood sugar. Photograph: ronstik/Alamy

Natural yoghurt is also a great way to introduce probiotics to your diet so, if you want to give your yoghurt an extra probiotic boost, simply add a splash of kefir. This is also great for those who don't yet love the taste of kefir and want to find a way of including it in their diet. Kefir is also a great addition to soups and stews; just make sure you don't actually cook the kefir as it will kill the live microbes.

Another easy way to include more fermented foods every day is to use miso paste, rather than stock cubes, to add flavour and umami to your dishes. Simply stir a teaspoon of miso into your pasta sauce or into your steamed greens or to add flavour to a fish recipe.

Finally, swapping white rice and white pasta with whole grains is an easy win. Replace white rice with pearled barley, choose buckwheat over couscous (which is just mini pasta balls), and enjoy spelt spaghetti instead of plain white spaghetti, keeping your favourite dishes but making them more nutritious with these simple tweaks.

Food for Life by Tim Spector (Vintage, £22). To support The Guardian and Observer, order your copy at [guardianbookshop.com](https://guardianbookshop.com). Delivery charges may

apply.

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# I was the sole survivor of a plane crash. This is what I learned in eight days alone in the jungle

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2023/apr/25/how-we-survive-i-was-the-sole-survivor-of-a-plane-crash>



Donald Trump in the Oval Office in December 2020. Trump has denied the allegations against him. Photograph: Patrick Semansky/AP

[Donald Trump](#)

[Explainer](#)

## Trump's civil rape case: what is he accused of and what happens next?

The writer E Jean Carroll is seeking damages after accusing the former president of sexually assaulting her in the mid-1990s

[Chris McGreal](#) in *New York*

Tue 25 Apr 2023 04.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 25 Apr 2023 12.10 EDT

The rape case brought in New York against [Donald Trump](#) by the famed advice columnist E Jean Carroll has caught the attention of America as the latest legal drama to involve the former US president.

The case is so far the only one to come to court among more than a [dozen allegations](#) of rape, groping and other sexual assaults made against Trump.

## **What does Carroll accuse Trump of?**

Carroll has filed two separate lawsuits against Trump. The first accuses him of defamation after he accused her of lying in her book, *What Do We Need Men For? A Modest Proposal*, in which she accuses Trump and other men of abusing her.

Carroll brought the second lawsuit after [New York](#) passed a law last year giving adult victims of sexual assault a window of one year to file civil actions against their assailants where the statute of limitations has expired. She is seeking damages after accusing Trump of assaulting her in a department store changing room in the mid-1990s.

The first lawsuit is on hold amid legal wrangling about whether the Trump can be sued for comments he made while president.

## **What was Trump's response to the accusations?**

Trump denied the allegations with his usual vigour, at various times saying that Carroll was “totally lying” and calling her a “nut job”. He also claimed that he would never have assaulted her because she was “not my type”.

Trump also claimed never to have met Carroll, even though they were photographed together with their spouses in 1987.

He said: “I’ve never met this person in my life. She is trying to sell a new book – that should indicate her motivation. It should be sold in the fiction section.”

## **Why is the US justice department siding with Trump in Carroll's defamation lawsuit?**

The justice department asked to move the defamation case from state to federal court on the grounds that Trump's public statements in 2019 denying rape were made as part of his job as president. The administration then argued that Carroll is not suing Trump as an individual but as an

employee of the US government, and that therefore the government should be substituted for Trump as the defendant.

“The government thus asserts that this case is virtually identical in principle to a lawsuit against a Postal Service driver for causing a car accident while delivering the mail,” said the judge in considering the position.

The judge rejected the claim that the president is just another government worker and said that, in any case, his statements about Carroll were not within the scope of his employment.

The issue is due to be considered by the Washington DC appeals court.

## **What will happen if Trump loses the sexual assault case?**

If the jury finds that Trump did rape or otherwise assault Carroll, it is likely to order him to pay damages. It will also mean that for the first time in US history, a jury will have found a former president is a rapist.

Political scientists say it is unlikely to do much damage to Trump’s run for the Republican presidential nomination next year because his more ardent supporters regard the various legal cases against him as a conspiracy.

But it will add to his already considerable political baggage in the general election and prove a further obstacle to re-election as president.

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E Jean Carroll in New York. Photograph: Craig Ruttle/AP

[Donald Trump](#)

## Who is E Jean Carroll, the woman who alleges Trump sexually assaulted her?

Former journalist who wrote for Rolling Stone and Playboy became an advice column for Elle magazine for 26 years

[Chris McGreal](#) in New York

Tue 25 Apr 2023 04.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 25 Apr 2023 04.52 EDT

E Jean Carroll is an 80 year-old former journalist who, until she accused [Donald Trump](#) of sexually assaulting her, was best known as an advice columnist for Elle magazine for 26 years.

The column was praised for its forthright writing including Carroll's view that women should never build their lives around men and the compassion of her replies to readers seeking advice. Elle terminated Carroll's contract in

2019. She [said](#) the magazine fired her because of her dispute with Trump. Elle denied it.

Born in Detroit and raised in Indiana, Carroll began writing for leading magazines of the era, including Rolling Stone and Playboy, after drawing attention with a “witty literary quiz” about Ernest Hemingway and F Scott Fitzgerald for Esquire.

Carroll left her husband and moved to New York where she established herself as “[feminism’s answer to Hunter S Thompson](#)”. By the mid-1980s she was writing for Saturday Night Live. A decade later she turned the advice column into a television talk show, Ask E Jean.

Carroll was well known within New York’s literary set. But she is now likely to be best remembered for her book, What Do We Need Men For? A Modest Proposal, and for suing Trump. The book describes the alleged assault by the now former president and attacks by other men, including the former chief executive of CBS Les Moonves, who was forced out over allegations of sexual harassment.

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## 2023.04.25 - Opinion

- [Dominic Raab is gone, but many others will continue his assault on human rights](#)
- [A 'skinny jab' is no quick fix for obesity – and no excuse to let junk food companies off the hook](#)
- [How do you put a new lover to the test? See how they react when your dog bites your mother](#)
- [Tucker Carlson was Fox News' biggest star. Then he became its biggest liability](#)



‘All the slogans are sending a xenophobic message that Britain does not enjoy enough ‘independence’.’ Rishi Sunak. Photograph: Reuters

[Opinion](#)[European court of human rights](#)

## **Dominic Raab is gone, but many others will continue his assault on human rights**

[Gordon Brown](#)



A plan to leave the European court of human rights is just the beginning, as our government seeks to undermine international law

Tue 25 Apr 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 25 Apr 2023 05.57 EDT

Dominic Raab has gone, but the evil ideas he propagated live on after him. The latest Conservative [proposal](#) to give ministers the power to disregard any interim judgments of the European court of human rights is a culmination of the assault he has led on human rights for years. And it is indeed ironic that the minister who has done most to undermine human rights in recent years leaves office complaining bitterly that his own have not been properly recognised.

Britain will never be quite like the Israel sought by [Benjamin Netanyahu](#), who wants to make the judiciary hostage to the government of the day. Nor are we the US of recent times, where supreme court judges are too often chosen on party political lines. Instead, the UK is famed across the world for its independent judiciary and for championing the rule of law, not least because of our involvement in the authorship of the [European convention on human rights](#) (ECHR), which came into force almost 70 years ago, on 3 September 1953, and was lauded as defining what we stand for as a country

by every prime minister from Winston Churchill on – except for the past five.

But how do we now characterise a country in which the explicit duty in the ministerial code that the government complies with international law has been removed, and unprecedented [new guidance](#) has been given to government lawyers to proceed with drafting legislation, even if there is a high risk of a successful legal challenge. For the government cannot state that the [illegal migration bill](#) is compatible with the convention. Indeed, experts say it breaches it in three ways: failing, as required, to [identify](#) victims of modern slavery before their return to their country of origin can be considered; failing to investigate and [prosecute](#) the perpetrators of this offence; and now, failing to abide by interim judgments of the European court. The result we are witnessing is quite grotesque: the so-called party of law and order itself undermining the rule of law.

For at least a decade, the Conservatives have had their guns targeted on the European convention. In 2013, David Cameron [told Andrew Marr](#) that leaving the ECHR might be necessary to “keep our people safe”. In 2016, [Theresa May](#) advocated remaining in the EU but withdrawing from the ECHR. Both their successors, Boris Johnson and Liz Truss, joined by two recent home secretaries, Priti Patel and Suella Braverman, have called for the UK to depart; [Braverman](#) asserting, with little evidence: “There are 100 million people around the world who could qualify for protection under our current laws,” and that she had to act because “they are coming here”.

A Downing Street [source](#) recently admitted that the new legislation pushed “the boundaries of what is legally possible while staying within the ECHR”, but then added that Rishi Sunak would be “willing to reconsider whether being part of the ECHR is in the UK’s long-term interests”. In doing so, No 10 set the stage for a Conservative election manifesto that will take us far beyond pledges to strip asylum seekers of their [rights of appeal](#), house them in inferior accommodation and deport them not just to Rwanda, but [to Turkey](#), and other countries. It is now not beyond possibility that, despite the foreign secretary’s [statements](#) this week, the next Conservative manifesto will state that they may have no choice but to withdraw from the ECHR on the grounds that the European court – not the government – is the offending

party for not giving a green light to the UK's blatant abuses of established rights. And even that would not be the end of the matter.

The context in which this assault on human rights has been mounted by Raab and his colleagues is clear, if not always explicit. All the slogans, ranging from “take back control” and “get Brexit done” to “stop the boats” and “send them home” floated under Cameron, Johnson, Truss and now Sunak are sending a xenophobic message that, even after cutting ourselves off from the [European Union](#), Britain does not enjoy enough “independence” to be able to privilege the “us” who have rights against the “them”, who have none. It reflects a view of sovereignty as indivisible, unlimited and accountable to no one but them and their prejudices – and completely out of touch with our modern, socially interconnected and economically integrated world, where everyone's independence is qualified by our interdependence.

And so, we can imagine that the ECHR is not the last international institution to be in the Brexiteers' line of fire. Already we have ministers repudiating the [UN refugee convention](#), which Britain pioneered in 1951, and the [UNHCR condemning](#) the current migration bill because it “extinguishes the right of refugees to be recognised and protected in the UK”. After that may come the convention on the rights of the child and other international treaties that run counter to this absolutist view that we cannot enter into international obligations.

So before it is too late, it is time to defend the European convention on human rights – not as a necessary evil but as an emancipating force for good – and remind people that it is, and remains, our last line of defence for upholding the right to a fair trial, to peaceful assembly, to family life and not to suffer degrading or inhumane treatment. To uphold basic rights, we need to intensify the fight against the poisonous geopolitical vandalism, led by Raab and fellow ministers, that lies behind the desire to destroy the ECHR. We need to remind people once more that the convention originated in the aftermath of the unspeakable horror of the Holocaust, in the demand for a “never again” world, and in the recognition we cannot always rely, as history has shown, on national safeguards of human rights.



Withdrawal would mean consequences beyond the Good Friday agreement requirement that the ECHR be honoured in Northern Ireland. The [2020 trade and cooperation agreement \(TCA\)](#) allows for the EU to retaliate in the event of changes related to “democracy, the rule of law and human rights”. Europe could end cooperation on law enforcement and hard-fought agreements on extradition and access to the database of biometric data, including fingerprints and DNA, thus inflicting more potential harm than any current legal changes to our country’s security and our citizens’ safety.

So as Raab exits, Britain is at a crossroads. Even if we stay inside the ECHR, we are deliberately undermining it from within by reneging on our long-established obligations and giving comfort to the backsliding of Hungary, Poland and Turkey, while also destroying any credibility our country has long enjoyed in criticising the disregarding of human rights across the world. But our concern should not be restricted to the violation of rights: we should also be righting wrongs. And so we need to stand up for what the ECHR has achieved and, instead of marching under the banner of authoritarian populists, we need to lead the fight for an international order based on the rule of law and not the law of the jungle.

- Gordon Brown is the UN envoy for global education, and was UK prime minister from 2007 to 2010

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‘Weekly injections of Wegovy [pictured] have to be combined with a low-calorie diet and exercise – which people already find difficult.’ Photograph: Jim Vondruska/Reuters

[OpinionObesity.](#)

## **A ‘skinny jab’ is no quick fix for obesity – and no excuse to let junk food companies off the hook**

[Sarah Boseley](#)



Rather than board the injection bandwagon, Britain should be taxing unhealthy food and clamping down on marketing

Tue 25 Apr 2023 03.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 25 Apr 2023 07.53 EDT

Humankind has been freed from the threat of disease by some wonderful, transformative inventions, from smallpox injections to the Covid vaccinations. With all due respect, I don't think the so-called skinny jab is one of them.

A boom in injectable weight-loss drugs, [such as Wegovy](#) from the Danish pharmaceutical giant Novo Nordisk, a biological type 2 diabetes medication containing semaglutide, has promised to revolutionise obesity treatment in recent months. For some people with serious obesity-related health conditions, these appetite suppressants will indeed be a life-saver. Trials show Wegovy can help people lose 15% of their body weight, and the drug has been approved by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (Nice) for use in the NHS. That's good news for people whose health is already suffering.

But the weekly injections, like Novo Nordisk's earlier daily injectable, Saxenda, are being used to treat obesity, not prevent it. Meanwhile, rates of obesity-linked disease, such as type 2 diabetes, cancers, heart attacks and strokes, are increasing across the world. Diabetes UK has [just published a sobering report](#), showing a rising impact on younger people. There are 4.3 million people in the UK with diabetes, of whom 90% have type 2. The numbers are growing fastest among the under-40s. There was a time when type 2 diabetes was almost unheard of in young people. Now it is no surprise.

Skinny jabs may look like an easy fix, and to pharma's delight, they have been embraced by a Hollywood elite, as well as Elon Musk, who tweeted that he is using Wegovy. Novo Nordisk has been working to keep up with demand. It is expecting [record operating profits this year](#). Novo Nordisk also has Ozempic, which is supposed to be only for patients with type 2 diabetes, but was [hyped on TikTok last year](#), as people raved about its non-prescription use for losing weight. Other firms [have similar drugs](#) in the pipeline.

Obesity is most visibly driving type 2 diabetes, which can have terrible consequences, including blindness and foot amputations. But it is highly likely to be doing other damage too.

It should not be forgotten – although it has been – that obesity put people at higher risk of ending up in intensive care with Covid. Boris Johnson is living proof. Not long after his recovery, [a chastened Boris](#) launched into an offensive against the food companies, pledging to get rid of bogof (buy one, get one free) offers in supermarkets and ban junk food advertising before the TV watershed to protect children.

He later kicked the initiative into the long grass after [backbench pressure](#), delaying the change on the spurious grounds that prices for junk food must not rise when the cost of living is hitting poor people hard, with no suggestion of [subsidising better food instead](#), of course.

Yet, it is prevention efforts like these that are so sorely needed, rather than injections once illnesses develop. [Curbing the marketing of junk food](#) helps protect children from excess weight gain. And adults, though nobody will

say so, since adults must make their own choices. Government foot-dragging is a result of pressure from the food and drink industry, which contributes substantially to the country's GDP.

We are suffering from the rampant marketing of highly palatable sugary, salty, fatty foods by companies that have grown to mammoth size. The companies that dominate our eating habits with the cookies and pies they churn out from vast factories are hardly going to market bananas or broccoli to us. The best they've done is cut down a little on salt and reduce sugar in some of their soft drinks. That's tinkering at the edges.

Governments want a quick fix, and these drugs seem to offer one. The health secretary, Steve Barclay, is delighted by the arrival of Wegovy on the scene. Government officials are said to be drawing up plans for the pharma companies to bid for multi-billion pound contracts to supply the drugs, and Barclay is hoping, [according to the Times](#), to turn around the obesity epidemic without any “nanny state” measures.

But a miracle jab it isn't. Those weekly injections have to be combined with a low-calorie diet and exercise – which people already find difficult. Diets are no fun and the body resists starvation, so weight loss slows as time goes on.

But, similarly, once people stop injecting these new drugs, the pounds can pile back on. People may have to stay on them for years, if not for life. We don't yet know the consequences of that. Like bariatric surgery, which reduces stomach size, they should be reserved as treatment for people at high risk of diseases. They anyway take away much of the enjoyment of food because they suppress the appetite, as my restaurant critic colleague [Jay Rayner points out](#).

The shift to the quick drug fix, away from tackling our junk food and sedentary living crisis is woefully shortsighted. [The seminal Foresight report](#) in 2007 told us the way, comparing obesity to the climate crisis in the extent of the shift we need to make, calling on governments to promote healthy diets, redesign our towns to get people walking and help shift societal values towards food.

Governments have tiptoed around it ever since. But without a full-frontal approach, encouraging healthy lifestyles and starting by taxing junk and subsidising real healthy food, global obesity will continue to rise. The jabs will not curb obesity. Preventing it in the first place is the only way.

- Sarah Boseley is the Guardian's former health editor

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |



Butter wouldn't melt ... Photograph: Iuliia Zavalishina/Getty Images/iStockphoto

[OpinionPets](#)

**How do you put a new lover to the test?  
See how they react when your dog bites  
your mother**

[Zoe Williams](#)





Pets have been known to tip the balance in many a promising relationship. Mine did its best with a scene straight out of Hammer Horror

Tue 25 Apr 2023 02.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 25 Apr 2023 10.08 EDT

Two-thirds of people would dump a partner or forgo a second date if their dog or cat didn't like the person, according to a poll by [Pets](#) at Home.

Single people are dumb, unless they secretly love being single, in which case they are smart, because this is a terrible test. A dog who is used to being the apple of your eye can easily take against a rival, for no better reason than they seem suitable. And you should never outsource this kind of judgment call to a cat. Cats don't like anyone.

But a bad pet can be a good early-warning system for how a relationship will cope with adverse conditions. On about my sixth date with my first husband, I had left my dog – a staffy crossed with a rhodesian ridgeback, who would now probably be called an XL bully, but that would be wrong – and two whippets who belonged to a friend at my mother's and gone out shopping.

Whippets, a behaviourist told me later, are notorious cheerleaders. Unlikely to bite a person themselves, they stand on the sidelines, barking at larger, stupider dogs, to encourage an attack. This is more or less what happened: my dog bit my mother.

This was not ideal, but it wouldn't have been quite so bad if she hadn't recently gone on blood thinners after a heart attack. So, my sixth date and I arrived at her house moments after to carnage, a proper Hammer Horror scene. Even after the shooting geyser of blood had been staunched and the wound established to be not that serious, the atmosphere *still wasn't great*.

I asked my future husband later whether, had it been date one, before we had bonded (shagged), he would have run for the hills. After some pedantic follow-up questions ("Why would we have our first date at your mother's house?" "Have you ever taken three dogs on a first date?"), he decided that yes, most likely, that would have been it. As it was, I admired his cool head under pressure and liked him even more afterwards.

The moral of this story is that you should always put out. No, wait, the moral is that a pet can be a useful positive filter in a relationship. Wrong again. The moral is: train your dog.

Zoe Williams is a Guardian columnist

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‘Carlson won’t stop what he’s doing. And he won’t disappear.’ Photograph: Richard Drew/AP

[OpinionFox News](#)

## **Tucker Carlson was Fox News’s biggest star. Then he became its biggest liability**

[Margaret Sullivan](#)



Tucker Carlson will find new ways to spew his toxic lies. But at least you won't pay for it on basic cable

Tue 25 Apr 2023 02.18 EDTLast modified on Tue 25 Apr 2023 16.44 EDT

On any other day, the revelation that anchor Don Lemon was out at CNN would have been a big deal in the world of media news.

But Tucker Carlson's abrupt toppling from his primetime perch at [Fox News](#) not only overshadowed that development by a mile, but it threw the whole rightwing media ecosystem into a tailspin.

Carlson has been far more than a cable-news host over the half-dozen years since he took that prominent evening slot and became Fox's most-watched personality.

He has been America's chief fomenter of populist resentments, its go-to guy for the politics of grievance and – despite his smarmy demeanor, and aging prep-school appearance – he's been a twisted kind of working-class hero.

“Carlson has been uniquely dangerous and damaging – the leading figure in the right’s larger undertaking of making stuff up and inciting a hate-filled narrative against the educated, cosmopolitan elite,” said Linda Hirshman, an author and cultural historian who studies and writes about social movements.

You can despise what these men are saying and still have trouble tearing your eyes from their TV presence

He has consistently elevated white-nationalist voices and, according to Jonathan Greenblatt of the Anti-Defamation League, “used his primetime show to spew antisemitic, racist, xenophobic and anti-LGBTQ hate to millions”.

Tucker is hard to replace with just another cable-news face, Hirshman noted, because “he doesn’t just repeat things that others are saying but rather he cooks up these ridiculous issues in an ever-evolving list of grievances”.

What’s more, he’s remarkably good at capturing attention and giving his viewers the language to express their anger, racism and hate.

In that sense, Carlson is something like Donald Trump, who famously called himself a “ratings machine”. You can despise what these men are saying and still have trouble tearing your eyes from their TV presence; they possess a kind of perverse gift, like one bestowed by an evil godmother upon an ill-fated infant in a fairy tale.

Carlson is smarter than most of his TV peers, but he has used that intelligence in the service of tearing down the democracy whose very first amendment protections have allowed him to spread his lies and hostility.

The media world was obsessed Monday with precisely *why* Carlson was out. Was it entirely related to the just-settled Dominion Voting Systems defamation suit which cost Fox News \$787.5m? Perhaps it really was about some other lawsuit yet to reach fruition – like that of his former Fox employee Abby Grossberg who is suing Carlson and the network for

discrimination, citing a hostile and sexist work environment, or another defamation suit coming up in New York by Smartmatic. Or maybe Fox's shareholders are preparing to file their own suits that would finger Carlson.

And, reporters speculated, how will the deposed host resurface? Will he drift to an even farther right network? Will he run for president as a spoiler against Trump whom Carlson has said privately he despises, despite continuing to give him valuable airtime? Will he accept the apparent invitation of state-funded Russia Today which was tweeting out its advances on Monday? Maybe he will start his own media enterprise, like Alex Jones with InfoWars, and take his huge and fervent audience with him?

Because Carlson has loomed so large, these questions are intriguing, though the answers are elusive.

One of the worst influences in American media and politics has been knocked off his extremely prominent perch

But what we do know for sure may be more important: one of the worst influences in American media and politics has been knocked off his extremely prominent perch. For now, his voice is – if not silenced – quieted.

“At least his Great Replacement lies won't be aired in America's waiting rooms or included in basic cable packages anymore,” observed Ben Collins, the talented NBC News reporter who covers “the dystopia beat”, delving deep into media's darkest fissures. Collins noted that Carlson's “A-block” – the first segment of his nightly show – was “often more extreme than the front page of InfoWars”.

Carlson won't stop what he's doing. And he won't disappear. His outrages will probably get even worse, since they will be freed of even the weak constraints at Fox News.

Whatever he does next, he will be no less toxic. But he may be less visible – less omnipresent in American day-to-day life.

And that alone is something to be grateful for.

- Margaret Sullivan is a Guardian US columnist writing on media, politics and culture

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |



## 2023.04.25 - Around the world

- [US North Dakota governor signs law banning nearly all abortions](#)
- [Antibiotics Use in farming 'endangering human immune system'](#)
- [Tucker Carlson Host leaves Fox News – reportedly fired by Rupert Murdoch](#)
- ['Wow' and 'OMG' Shock at Carlson's departure](#)



Abortion rights activists rally in front of the supreme court building in Washington DC. Photograph: AFP/Getty Images

### [North Dakota](#)

## **North Dakota governor signs law banning nearly all abortions**

The legislation has slim exceptions – only in cases of rape, incest or medical emergency – up to six weeks’ gestation

*Associated Press*

Mon 24 Apr 2023 22.20 EDTLast modified on Tue 25 Apr 2023 09.31 EDT

North Dakota on Monday adopted one of the strictest anti-abortion laws in the US as the Republican governor Doug Burgum signed legislation banning the procedure throughout pregnancy, with slim exceptions up to six weeks’ gestation.

In those early weeks, abortion would be allowed only in cases of rape, incest or medical emergency, such as ectopic pregnancy.

“This bill clarifies and refines existing state law ... and reaffirms North Dakota as a pro-life state,” Burgum said in a statement.

Last year’s [US supreme court](#) ruling overturning the 1973 Roe v Wade decision that legalized abortion nationwide has triggered multiple state laws banning or restricting the procedure. Many were met with legal challenges. Currently, bans on abortion at all stages of pregnancy are in place in at least 13 states and on hold in others because of court injunctions. On the other side, Democratic governors in at least 20 states this year launched a network intended to strengthen abortion access in the wake of the supreme court decision that eliminated women’s constitutional right to end a pregnancy and shifted regulatory powers over the procedure to state governments.

The North Dakota law is designed to take effect immediately, but last month the state supreme court ruled a previous ban is to remain blocked while a lawsuit over its constitutionality proceeds. Last week, lawmakers said they intended to pass the latest bill as a message to the state’s high court signaling that the people of North Dakota want to restrict abortion.

Supporters have said the measure signed Monday protects all human life, while opponents contend it will have dire consequences.

North Dakota no longer has any abortion clinics. Last summer, the state’s only facility, the Red River Women’s Clinic, shut its doors in Fargo and moved operations a short distance across the border to Moorhead, Minnesota, where abortion remains legal. The clinic’s owner is still pursuing a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of North Dakota’s previous abortion ban.

It’s expected that this new ban will also be the subject of legal challenges.

Republican Senator Janne Myrdal, of Edinburg, sponsored the latest state legislation.

“North Dakota has always been pro-life and believed in valuing the moms and children both,” Myrdal said in an interview. “We’re pretty happy and

grateful that the governor stands with that value.”

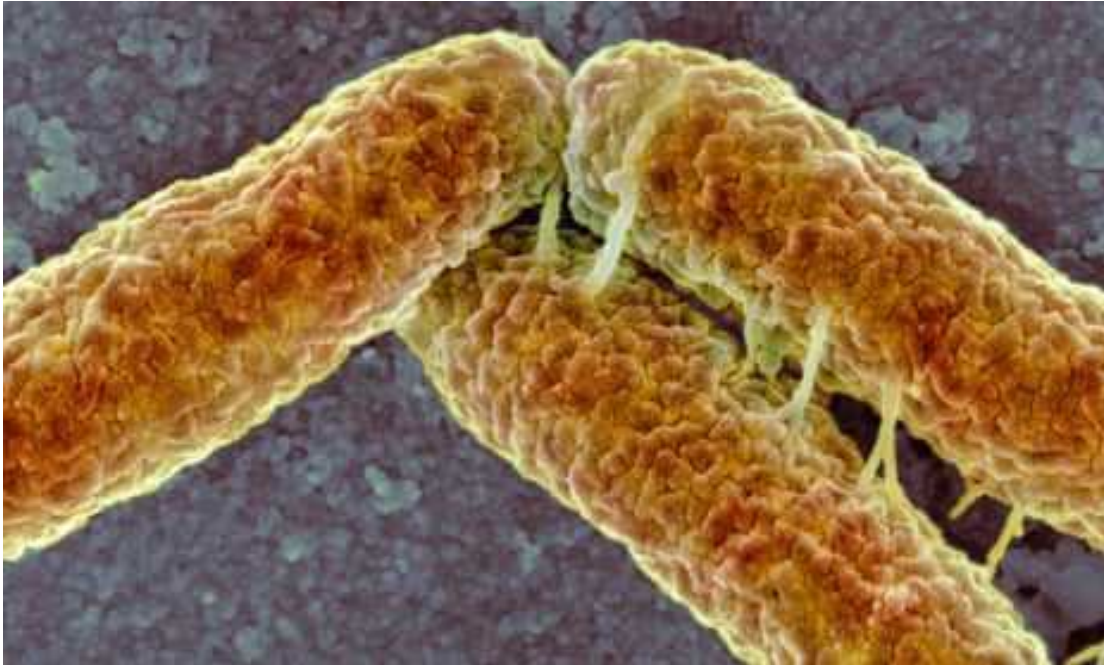
Liz Conmy, a Democratic representative, voted against the bill and said she had hoped Burgum would not sign it.

“I don’t think women in North Dakota are going to accept this and there will be action in the future to get our rights back,” Conmy said. “Our legislature is overwhelmingly pro-pregnancy, but I think women in the state would like to make their own decisions.”

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |



A strain of *E. coli* more likely to evade our immune system's first line of defence emerged as a result of using colistin as a growth promoter on pigs and chickens. Photograph: Science Photo Library/Alamy

### Antibiotics

## Use of antibiotics in farming 'endangering human immune system'

Study suggests antimicrobial used to promote livestock growth breeds bacteria more resistant to our natural defences

[Hannah Devlin](#) *Science correspondent*

[@hannahdev](#)

Mon 24 Apr 2023 19.01 EDT

The blanket use of antibiotics in farming has led to the emergence of bacteria that are more resistant to the human immune system, scientists have warned.

The research suggests that the antimicrobial colistin, which was used for decades as a growth promoter on pig and chicken farms in China, resulted in the emergence of *E coli* strains that are more likely to evade our immune system's first line of defence.

Although colistin is now banned as a livestock food additive in China and many other countries, the findings sound an alarm over a new and significant threat posed by the overuse of antibiotic drugs.

“This is potentially much more dangerous than resistance to antibiotics,” said Prof Craig MacLean, who led the research at the University of Oxford. “It highlights the danger of indiscriminate use of antimicrobials in agriculture. We’ve accidentally ended up compromising our own immune system to get fatter chickens.”

The findings could also have significant implications for the development of new antibiotic medicines in the same class as colistin, known as antimicrobial peptides (AMPs), which the scientists suggest could pose a particular risk of compromising innate immunity.

AMPs are compounds produced by most living organisms in their innate immune response, which is the first line of defence against infection. Colistin is based on a bacterial AMP – microbes use the compounds to shield themselves against competitors – but is chemically similar to some AMPs produced in the human immune system.

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The extensive use of colistin in livestock from the 1980s triggered the emergence and spread of *E coli* bacteria carrying colistin resistance genes, which eventually prompted widespread restrictions on the drug's use in agriculture. But the latest study suggests the same genes also allow pathogens to more readily evade AMPs that form a cornerstone of our own immune response.

In the study, *E coli* carrying a resistance gene, called MCR-1, were exposed to AMPs known to play important roles in innate immunity in chickens, pigs, and humans. The bacteria were also tested for their susceptibility to human blood serum.

The scientists found that *E coli* carrying the MCR-1 gene were at least twice as resistant to being killed by human serum. On average, the gene increased resistance to human and animal AMPs by 62% compared with bacteria that lacked the gene. The study, published in the [journal eLife](#), also showed that the resistant *E coli* was twice as likely to kill moth larvae that were injected with the infection, compared with the control *E coli* strain.

MacLean said it was not possible to estimate how this might translate into real-world consequences, such as the risk of an *E coli* infection leading to sepsis and death. And the prevalence of these strains of *E coli* have dropped steeply since China banned the use of colistin as a growth promoter, suggesting that these genes carry other “fitness disadvantages” for the pathogens. However, the findings highlight a fundamental risk that has not yet been extensively considered.

“The danger is that if bacteria evolve resistance to [AMP-based drugs], it could also make bacteria resistant to one of the pillars of our immune system,” said MacLean.



Antimicrobial resistance poses a dire global threat – the UN has warned that as many as 10 million people a year could be dying by 2050 as a result of superbugs – and so the need for new antibiotics is pressing. There is growing interest in the potential of AMPs as drugs, and some of those in development include drugs based on human AMPs.

MacLean and colleagues are not calling for the development of such drugs to be put on hold, but say extremely careful risk assessments of the likelihood of resistance emerging and the potential consequences are required. “For AMPs, there are potentially very serious negative consequences,” he said.

Dr Jessica Blair, of the University of Birmingham, who was not involved in the study, said: “Antimicrobial peptides, including colistin, have been heralded as a potential part of the solution to the rise of multidrug-resistant infections. This study, however, suggests that resistance to these antimicrobials may have unintended consequences on the ability of pathogens to cause infection and survive within the host.”

Dr George Tegos, of Mohawk Valley [Health](#) System in New York, said that broad conclusions about the potential risks of AMPs could not be drawn from a single study, but added that the findings “raise concerns that are reasonable and make sense”.

Cóilín Nunan, an adviser to the Alliance to Save Our [Antibiotics](#), who was not involved in the study, said: “This new study shows that colistin resistance is probably even more dangerous than previously thought ... It is also remarkable that the British government is still opposed to banning preventative mass medication of intensively farmed animals with antibiotics, even though the EU banned such use over a year ago.”





Tucker Carlson on 17 November 2022 in Hollywood, Florida. Photograph: Jason Koerner/Getty Images

[Fox News](#)

## Tucker Carlson leaves Fox News – reportedly fired by Rupert Murdoch

Far-right cable news host leaves with immediate effect with interim presenters replacing him

[Sam Levine](#) in New York

Mon 24 Apr 2023 21.40 EDTFirst published on Mon 24 Apr 2023 11.50 EDT

The far-right host Tucker Carlson has left [Fox News](#), it was abruptly announced on Monday.

“Fox News Media and Tucker Carlson have agreed to part ways,” the network said in a statement. “We thank him for his service to the network as a host and prior to that as a contributor.”

The statement said the last episode of Carlson's program was Friday. Beginning on Monday, the 8pm ET slot will be hosted by a rotation of personalities until the selection of a new permanent host, the network said.

Carlson found out about his firing 10 minutes before it was announced, according to the [Wall Street Journal](#). The decision to oust Carlson came from Rupert Murdoch, the 92-year-old Fox owner, with input from senior Fox officials, [the Los Angeles Times reported](#). Rupert Murdoch's son and Fox Corp CEO Lachlan Murdoch and Fox News CEO Suzanne Scott made the decision to fire Carlson on Friday evening, [according to the Washington Post](#).

It was connected to a lawsuit filed by Abby Grossberg, a former senior booking producer on Carlson's show who claims she faced sexism and a hostile work environment, the Los Angeles Times reported.

Justin Wells, Carlson's executive producer, is also leaving the network, [Semafor reported](#).

Murdoch was also concerned by Carlson's embrace of the idea that the January 6 attack on Congress was instigated by the government. On Sunday, CBS 60 Minutes [broadcast a segment](#) on Ray Epps, a Texas man Carlson has falsely accused of being an FBI plant at the Capitol.



Murdoch was also concerned by Carlson's embrace of the idea that the January 6 attack on Congress was instigated by the government, Photograph: Mary Altaffer/AP

The [Fox](#) host Harris Faulkner addressed Carlson's departure on air on Monday morning, saying the network and Carlson had "mutually" agreed to separate.

"We want to thank Tucker Carlson for his service to the network," she said.

Carlson is leaving less than a week after Fox settled a defamation lawsuit with Dominion Voting Systems for \$787.5m. Filings in the case featured scores of vulgar text messages from Carlson in which he said he "hated [Donald] Trump passionately" and called Sidney Powell, a lawyer for the former president who was spreading false election information, a liar.

"We are very, very close to being able to ignore Trump most nights. I truly can't wait," he wrote in one text message in January 2021.

"Sidney Powell is lying by the way. I caught her. It's insane," he wrote in another text message in 2020.

Carlson's exit was also related to negative comments about Fox management revealed in the Dominion case, the [Washington Post](#) and Wall Street Journal [reported](#), citing people familiar with Fox thinking.

"Do the executives understand how much credibility and trust we've lost with our audience?" Carlson wrote in one text to his producer.

"We're playing with fire, for real," he wrote in another message just after election day, when Fox made an early call for Joe Biden.

"Those fuckers are destroying our credibility," he wrote. "A combination of incompetent liberals and top leadership with too much pride to back down is what's happening," he added later.

A spokesperson for Dominion declined to comment. Fox faces a similar \$2.7bn defamation lawsuit from Smartmatic, another voting equipment company.

Carlson joined Fox as a contributor in 2009 and became one of its biggest stars after getting his own show, Tucker Carlson Tonight, in 2016. Last year, he became the most-watched host, averaging 3.32 million total viewers, [according to the Washington Post](#). He also had the most viewers in the sought-after 25-54 demographic.

In his climb to the top of the Fox ratings, Carlson relied on xenophobia and stoked white fears about America's changing demographics.

"Mr Carlson has constructed what may be the most racist show in the history of cable news – and also, by some measures, the most successful," the New York Times [wrote](#) last year. "Though he frequently declares himself an enemy of prejudice ... his show teaches loathing and fear. Night after night, hour by hour, Mr Carlson warns his viewers that they inhabit a civilization under siege."

Far-right host Tucker Carlson leaves Fox News in surprise announcement – video report

Carlson has embraced the “great replacement theory”: the idea that Jews and Democrats want to replace white people with non-white voters. After the murder of George Floyd by police officers in 2020, he belittled Black Lives Matter protesters as “criminal mobs”.

He has also downplayed the January 6 attack, recently airing selectively edited footage as he tried to frame the insurrection as peaceful. He has decried a so-called crisis of manliness, airing a special that promoted using tanning therapy on testicles.

Angelo Carusone, president of Media Matters for America, a left-leaning media watchdog, predicted that other hosts would pick up Carlson’s vitriol.

“Tucker served as the bridge between Fox News and the most extreme parts of the rightwing base – laundering anti-trans paranoia, Infowars nonsense, election lies and venomous rhetoric including the [great replacement conspiracy theory](#) nightly,” Carusone said.

“The Fox News audience is primed and ready to believe whatever lies and vitriol the next eight o’clock hour host comes ready to spew. Ahead of Carlson’s departure, Fox has already been leaning into toxic hate as a business model by elevating extremists like Jesse Watters and Jeanine Pirro who now stand ready to try to capture Tucker’s audience.”

Grossberg, the former producer now suing Carlson, alleges that on her first day of work, pictures of the California Democrat Nancy Pelosi in a plunging bathing suit were placed on her computer screen and around her workspace.

Grossberg also describes a newsroom-wide discussion over whether the Michigan governor, Gretchen Whitmer, or her Republican opponent, Tudor Dixon, was more attractive and which one staffers would rather have sex with.

Grossberg also alleges she was coerced into giving misleading testimony in the Dominion lawsuit. She also released evidence she said Fox had to turn over in the discovery process.

Fox denies Grossberg's allegations. Grossberg's attorney did not return a request for comment on Carlson's departure.

*Sam Wolfson contributed reporting*

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |



Tucker Carlson. Photograph: János Kummer/Getty Images

[US news](#)

## **‘Wow’ and ‘OMG’: shock after Fox News announces Tucker Carlson departure**

Many are surprised by news given Carlson’s popularity, while several conservative pundits expressed displeasure

[\*Gloria Oladipo\*](#)

[@gaoladipo](#)

Mon 24 Apr 2023 13.49 EDTLast modified on Mon 24 Apr 2023 22.27 EDT

Shocked reactions are pouring in across social media on the abrupt [departure of Tucker Carlson](#) from Fox News, with the network announcing that the prominent far-right television host is leaving the channel.



Many were surprised by the announcement given the popularity that Carlson enjoyed at Fox as well as the highest-rated host on cable television.

Far-right host Tucker Carlson leaves Fox News in surprise announcement – video report

“Wow,” [tweeted](#) the New York Democratic congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who [accused](#) Carlson and other Fox pundits of inciting violence during an MSNBC interview that aired on Sunday.

Some remained skeptical that Carlson’s departure from Fox would be the end of his career despite critics who called out his show as [racist](#) and inaccurate.

“I’d like to think Tucker Carlson’s departure is the end of an era, but I’m quite certain it’s the beginning of his political career,” the founder of gun control advocacy group Moms Demand Action, Shannon Watts, [tweeted](#).

Tucker Carlson: Gone from FOX.

— Stephen King (@StephenKing) [April 24, 2023](#)

Several conservative pundits took to social media to express their displeasure at the announcement.

“I STAND WITH TUCKER CARLSON!”,” the far-right Colorado congresswoman Lauren Boebert [tweeted](#).

Donald Trump Jr, the son of former president Donald Trump, [tweeted](#) his reaction to Carlson’s departure news. The tweet read, “Confirmed: Tucker Carlson out at Fox News. OMG.”

Carlson’s departure from Fox has already been acknowledged on air by the network.

Shortly after the news broke, the Fox anchor Harris Faulkner shared the channel’s statement, adding: “We want to thank Tucker Carlson for his



service to the network as a host, and prior to that, as a long-term contributor.”

Fox News anchor Harris Faulkner: “We want to thank Tucker Carlson for his service to the network.” [pic.twitter.com/ICfpPjAkbJ](https://pic.twitter.com/ICfpPjAkbJ)

— philip lewis (@Phil\_Lewis\_) [April 24, 2023](#)

In a statement published early on Monday, Fox News announced that Carlson and the network [agreed to part ways](#) and that his last show was last Friday.

“Fox News Media and Tucker Carlson have agreed to part ways,” Fox’s statement said. “We thank him for his service to the network as a host and prior to that as a contributor.”

It appears that many at Fox – including Carlson himself – [had no inclination](#) that Friday would be his last show.

Fox was still previewing Carlson’s show Monday morning, with the network [teasing an interview](#) between the departed host and Vivek Ramaswamy, an entrepreneur and 2024 US presidential candidate.

For what will be his last show with Fox, Carlson hosted Tyler Morrell from Cocco’s Pizza in Pennsylvania for his show last Friday. [Morrell](#) went viral after doorbell camera video showed him helping police catch a suspected car thief while on a delivery.

While chowing down on pizza pies delivered to him by Morrell, Carlson wished viewers a happy weekend before signing off.

“We’ll be back on Monday,” Carlson said.



## Headlines monday 24 april 2023

- [Diane Abbott Labour officials will decide on MP's future, says shadow minister](#)
- [Len Goodman Former Strictly Come Dancing judge dies aged 78](#)
- [Slavery Descendants of UK slave owners call on government to apologise](#)
- [Live Government exploring 'every single option' to get British nationals out of Sudan, says minister](#)
- [Sudan No assurances UK nationals will be rescued, says minister](#)



Diane Abbott has lost the lost Labour whip pending an investigation after her comments on racism. Photograph: Tolga Akmen/AFP/Getty Images

[Diane Abbott](#)

## Diane Abbott's comments on racism were antisemitic, says Keir Starmer

Labour leader condemns MP's letter but says decision on whether she will stand for party again must wait

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

[Peter Walker](#) and [Aletha Adu](#)

Mon 24 Apr 2023 08.14 EDTFirst published on Mon 24 Apr 2023 04.28 EDT

Keir Starmer has condemned comments about racism by [Diane Abbott](#) as “antisemitic” but said any decision about whether she could stand again as a Labour MP would be made after a formal investigation.

In a letter to the Observer published on Sunday, Abbott suggested that Jewish, Irish and Traveller people were not subject to racism “all their lives”, prompting Labour to [withdraw the whip](#).

Criticising an [article](#) published the previous week describing the racism experienced by many Irish, Jewish and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people in the UK, Abbott’s letter said people from these groups did experience prejudice, but that this was not the same as racism, likening it to the treatment faced by “white people with points of difference, such as redheads”.

Abbott apologised, saying an “initial draft” of her thoughts had been sent for publication by accident.

Starmer, during a visit to a community project in Camberwell, south London, said: “In my view what she said was to be condemned, it was antisemitic.

“Diane Abbott has suffered a lot of racial abuse over many, many years ... that doesn’t take away from the fact that I condemn the words she used and we must never accept the argument that there’s some sort of hierarchy of racism.

“I will never accept that, the [Labour](#) party will never accept that, and that’s why we acted as swiftly as we did yesterday.”

Asked whether Abbott might be prevented from standing again as a Labour MP, Starmer said: “There’s an investigation in place, I’ve got to let that investigation be completed.”

Earlier, John Mann, the former Labour MP who is now a peer and advises the government on antisemitism, suggested it might be best if Abbott, an MP since 1987, did not stand again for her London constituency of Hackney North and Stoke Newington.

But Pat McFadden, the shadow chief secretary to the Treasury, said the next steps would not be decided yet. “I’m sure that if she has made an apology, it

is genuine. But it will be for the chief whip and the leader to decide what happens next,” he told Sky News.

“The way this works in the Labour party is you are picked by your local party, you have to be approved by the NEC [national executive committee]. The chief whip has a big say in that too. So there’ll be a process there. It’s not for me to decide who gets to be a candidate.”

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Lord Mann told Sky: “I think we are seeing a rather sad end to what has been a very prominent political career. Has she not thought about her own constituents in this? What they must be thinking about what she said?

“It’s awful, it’s very, very sad. I think the best thing she could do is say she’s going to stand down at the next election.”

McFadden said the views in Abbott’s letter were “deeply wrong”. He said: “The chief whip of the party would have had no choice but to take the action that he took yesterday. When it comes to the awful history of racism, one thing we shouldn’t do is try to establish a hierarchy, or suggest that one group of people’s experience somehow counts more than others.

“When Keir Starmer became party leader three years ago, he was determined to turn the page on the culture that had come into the Labour party under the previous leadership. We’ve got to make sure that we underline our progress and that’s why yesterday’s suspension had to happen.”

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

'Everyone can dance': a look back at Len Goodman's life and career – video

[Len Goodman](#)

## Former Strictly Come Dancing judge Len Goodman dies aged 78

Agent says Goodman, who was a judge on the show from 2004 until 2016, died peacefully

[Mabel Banfield-Nwachi](#) and [Danya Hajjaji](#)

Mon 24 Apr 2023 14.05 EDTFirst published on Mon 24 Apr 2023 04.39 EDT

The former Strictly Come Dancing judge Len Goodman has died aged 78, his agent has said. He became a judge on the show in 2004 and [his final appearance](#) was on the 2016 Christmas Day special.

Jackie Gill said in a statement: “It is with great sadness we announce that [Len Goodman](#) has passed away peacefully, aged 78. A much loved husband, father and grandfather who will be sorely missed by family, friends and all who knew him.”





The Strictly Come Dancing judges in 2016 (left to right): Craig Revel Horwood, Darcey Bussell, Len Goodman and Bruno Tonioli. Photograph: Kieron McCarron/BBC/PA

Goodman began dancing at 19, winning various competitions, including the British Championships in Blackpool in his late 20s. He was replaced as head judge on the [BBC](#) show by Shirley Ballas.

Goodman also served as head judge on Dancing With the Stars, the US version of the show, for more than 15 years, until he announced his retirement in November last year. He said at the time that he wanted to “spend more time with my grandchildren and family” back in the UK.

Goodman received the Carl Alan award in recognition of outstanding contributions to dance.

As well as his dancing and television career, he owned the Goodman Academy dance school in Dartford, Kent.

Goodman’s longstanding colleague and fellow Strictly judge, Craig Revel Horwood, [posted a tribute](#) on Twitter: “I’ve just woken up to the sad news that my gorgeous colleague and dear friend Len Goodman has passed away.

My heart and love go out to his lovely Sue and family. Len ‘Goody’ Goodman is what I always called him, and ‘It’s a 10 from Len & seveeeeern’ will live with me for ever. RIP Len.”

I’ve just woken up to the sad news that my gorgeous colleague and dear friend Len Goodman has passed away. My heart and love go out to his lovely Sue and family. Len Goody Goodman is what I always called him and “It’s a ten from Len & seveeeeern” will live with me forever. RIP Len

— Craig Revel Horwood (@CraigRevHorwood) [April 24, 2023](#)

In an Instagram post, fellow judge Bruno Tonioli said he was “heartbroken” at the news of Goodman’s death. Tonioli, who starred alongside Goodman on both Strictly and Dancing With the Stars, said: “Heartbroken, my dear friend and partner for 19 years, the one and only ballroom legend Len Goodman, passed away.

“I will treasure the memory of our incredible adventures and hundreds of shows we did together... [There] will never be anyone like you. We will miss you.”

Claudia Winkleman, who co-presents Strictly, tweeted: “I’m so sad about Len. He was one of a kind, a brilliant and kind man. Full of sparkle, warmth and wit. Sending all love to his family and friends. X”

Darcey Bussell, another Strictly judge, expressed her sorrow at Goodman’s passing. “Very sad to hear about the death of dear, wonderful gentleman, Len Goodman,” she tweeted. “My heart goes out to his family & dear Sue. He gave me such support on my time at Strictly. I feel so lucky to have worked with such a professional, funny, loveable man. Thank you for the special memories x”

Very sad to hear about the death of dear wonderful gentleman, Len Goodman. My heart goes out to his family & dear Sue. He gave me such support on my time at Strictly. I feel so lucky to have worked

with such a professional, funny loveable man.

Thank you for the special memories x [pic.twitter.com/0Y4TVVx9Si](https://pic.twitter.com/0Y4TVVx9Si)

— Darcey Bussell (@DarceyOfficial) [April 24, 2023](#)

Tim Davie, the BBC director general, said in a statement: “Len Goodman was a wonderful, warm entertainer who was adored by millions. He appealed to all ages and felt like a member of everyone’s family. Len was at the very heart of Strictly’s success. He will be hugely missed by the public and his many friends and family.”

The Queen consort, Camilla – a longtime Strictly fan who danced with Goodman at the British Dance Council’s 90th anniversary celebration – was “saddened” to hear of his passing, according to PA Media. “Her Majesty was saddened to hear the news,” a spokesperson said.

Ballas has also paid her respects to her “dearest friend” and “past teacher”.

Many former contestants also paid tribute on social media. Robert Rinder, a criminal barrister and television personality who competed on the show in 2016, [shared a photo of Goodman](#) on Twitter and thanked him for “bringing so much joy”.

“A rare gentleman: Kind, charming, exacting, encouraging & danced like a dream. .. Thank you for bringing so much joy.”

A rare gentleman: Kind, charming, exacting, encouraging & danced like a dream. .. Thank you for bringing so much joy.

RIP Len Goodman.. It’s a 10 from us all. [pic.twitter.com/GrtJUMfPhY](https://pic.twitter.com/GrtJUMfPhY)

— Robert Rinder (@RobbieRinder) [April 24, 2023](#)

The journalist Dan Walker, who featured in the 2021 series, described Goodman on Twitter as [“an incredible man”](#).

He added: “He made everyone in his presence feel special and cared about all those around him. A proper old-school entertainer who will be greatly missed.”

So sad to hear about the death of Len Goodman.

He was an incredible man & an extraordinary talent.

Loved making telly with him, being daft with him, playing golf with him & will never forget the little tips he would send every week on Strictly.

All my love to his family ♥ [pic.twitter.com/UBrNNZbVtX](https://pic.twitter.com/UBrNNZbVtX)

— Dan Walker (@mrdanwalker) [April 24, 2023](#)

The TV presenter Susanna Reid, who was runner-up in the 2013 series with her dancing partner Kevin Clifton, [said on Twitter](#): “Oh, this is such an awful shock and so sad. Len was an absolute legend & the definition of a proper gent. He was a beautiful man with a huge sense of humour who had such a mischievous turn of phrase. I’ll never forget “all bounce, bum & bongos”. My love to his family ☐”

“Hold my gaze.”

Heart broken by the news of our dear friend and mentor Len Goodman.

Still hard to fully process but filled with gratitude knowing I had the privilege of working beside this absolute legend.

We will miss you dearly Len.

We love you ♥

Rest In Peace my friend [pic.twitter.com/hG6pIBrqIs](https://pic.twitter.com/hG6pIBrqIs)

— Derek Hough (@derekhough) [April 24, 2023](#)

The celebrity chef Ainsley Harriott, who competed in Strictly's 2015 series and starred alongside Goodman in BBC One's Len and Ainsley's Big Food Adventure, said he was "so sad" to find out about his colleague's passing.

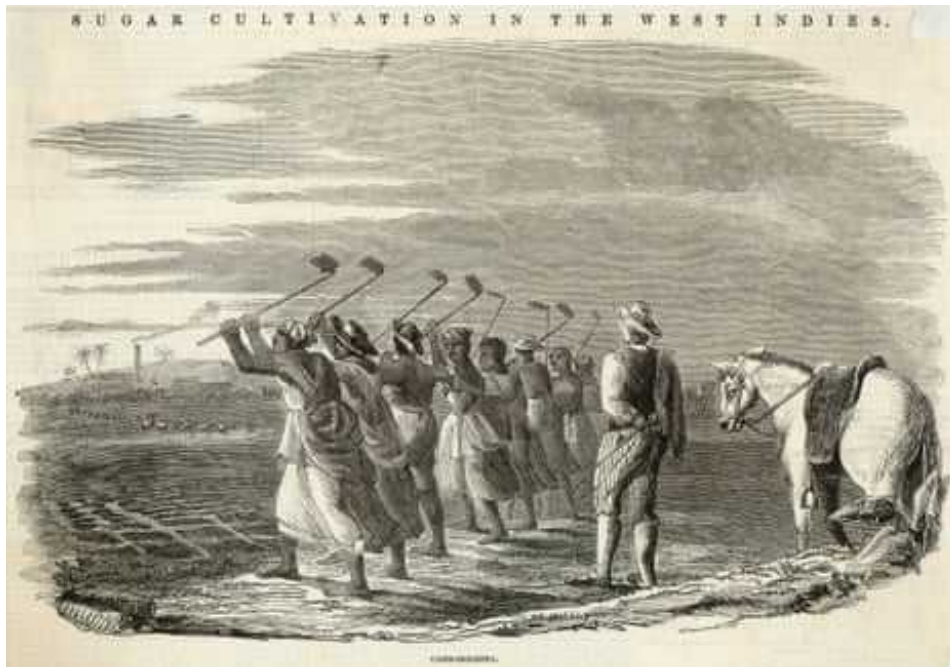
Derek Hough – the American Dancing With the Stars alum who co-judged the show for several seasons alongside Goodman – shared his heartbreak alongside smile-filled photos of the pair.

"Still hard to fully process, but filled with gratitude knowing I had the privilege of working beside this absolute legend," he continued. "We will miss you dearly, Len.

We love you [...] Rest In Peace my friend."

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A sugar plantation in Jamaica. Members of the group acknowledge their families' wealth was derived in part from profits made on plantations worked on by enslaved Africans. Photograph: Mary Evans Picture Library

[Slavery](#).

## Descendants of UK slave owners call on government to apologise

Heirs of Slavery body wants restorative justice to tackle ‘ongoing consequences of this crime against humanity’

[Amelia Gentleman](#)

[@ameliagentleman](#)

Mon 24 Apr 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 24 Apr 2023 05.52 EDT

The descendants of some of Britain’s wealthiest slave owners have launched an activist movement, calling on the government both to apologise for slavery and begin a programme of reparative justice in recognition of the “ongoing consequences of this crime against humanity”.



A second cousin of King Charles and a direct descendant of the Victorian prime minister William Gladstone have joined journalists, a publisher, a schoolteacher and a retired social worker, to create the [Heirs of Slavery](#) campaigning body, which will lobby the UK government to acknowledge and atone for its role in the transportation of 3.1 million enslaved African people across the Atlantic.

“British slavery was legal, industrialised and based entirely on race,” Alex Renton, one of the group’s founders, said. “Britain has never apologised for it, and its after-effects still harm people’s lives in Britain as well as in the Caribbean countries where our ancestors made money.”

The group includes the Earl of Harewood, David Lascelles, the retired social worker Rosemary Harrison, businessman Charles Gladstone, the former BBC correspondent Laura Trevelyan, her film director cousin, John Dower, the author and publisher Richard Atkinson, retired schoolteacher Robin Wedderburn, and the journalist Alex Renton. They hope descendants of other slave-owning dynasties will come forward to join them.

Members of the group acknowledge that their families’ wealth was derived in part from the profits made on plantations worked on by enslaved Africans. Their slave-owning ancestors all received compensation from the British government after slavery was abolished in Britain in 1833.

The group supports the plans for reparative justice devised by Caricom – the political union of 20 Caribbean countries. The Caricom Reparations Commission states that European governments instructed genocidal actions on indigenous communities and failed to acknowledge their crimes or to compensate victims and their descendants. Its 10-point plan for reparatory justice asks for a full formal apology, debt cancellation, and calls for former colonial powers to invest in their health and education systems.

Asked if the descendants of families who received compensation from the British government in 1833 should be encouraged to pay some of that money back, Lascelles, whose ancestors received about £26,000, said: “That certainly should be part of the discussion.”

In a written statement, Charles Gladstone said: “I joined this group in an attempt to begin to address the appalling ills visited on so many people by my ancestor John Gladstone.” John Gladstone, father of the prime minister William Gladstone, was paid £106,000 compensation after abolition (worth at least £17m today).



Laura Trevelyan said last month she was leaving the BBC to become a full-time slavery reparations campaigner. Photograph: David Levenson/Getty Images

Last month, [Trevelyan](#) said she was leaving the BBC to become a full-time slavery reparations campaigner and announced that she and relatives had donated £100,000 to education projects in Grenada.

Renton, the son of a Conservative cabinet minister, said the group wanted to use their inherited privilege to put pressure on the government for change. “As descendants of wealthy families, we inherited disproportionate influence and power in modern Britain. We’re encouraging everybody who finds themselves in this position to look at what they can do to help,” he said.

Renton’s 2021 book, [Blood Legacy](#), investigating his family’s slave-owning past, prompted other descendants of slave-owning families to contact him



asking for advice on what they should do. As well as directing people to charities, he hopes that the new group will work to support existing campaigns, seeking apologies and reparative justice.

“We’re keen not to do what people like me are educated to do, which is to take centre stage and try to take charge of things, but instead to offer our skills to support the hard work others are doing,” Renton said.



Richard Atkinson: ‘It’s too big a subject to be just down to individuals.’  
Photograph: Steven May/Alamy Live News/Alamy Live News.

Richard Atkinson, a publisher with Penguin, has also researched his family’s slave-owning past. “There must be tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of families in this country who have a version of that history. Individuals should give money, according to their means and their conscience, but it’s too big a subject to be just down to individuals,” he said. Political parties should be writing commitments to reparative justice into their manifestoes, he said.

Olivette Otele, distinguished research professor of the memory of slavery at SOAS, University of London, was cautiously welcoming. She said: “It is an important initiative and potentially transformative but it needs to be more

than half a dozen people. There are many, many other people who ought to be on that list.”

She stressed it was important to make sure the group collaborated with already existing movements, to avoid being labelled white saviours, “trying to tackle racism on their own ... But I want to applaud it. It reminds me of the movement to abolish the slave trade, where you had enslaved people in the Caribbean fighting for their own freedom but also you also had abolitionists in European capitals, and it was this collaboration that brought slavery to an end,” she said.



Olivette Otele called it ‘an important initiative and potentially transformative’ but said it needed to be ‘more than half a dozen people’. Photograph: Phil Lewis/Sopa Images/Rex/Shutterstock

The announcement follows a recent surge in support for the reparations movement. Last December, the Netherlands became the first major national government to apologise for its role in enslaving African people; Mark Rutte, the prime minister, made a formal apology and pledged to commit £200m of government funds towards restoration work in the former Dutch colonies.

The Guardian has this month published [research](#) into its founders' links to slavery and King Charles has recently signalled his support for research into the British [monarchy](#)'s historical links with transatlantic slavery. The all party parliamentary group on Afrikan reparations is hosting a meeting on Monday to debate "why now is the time for official apologies for African enslavement".

This article was amended on 24 April 2023. The APPG on Afrikan reparations is hosting a meeting on Monday 24 April, not Tuesday 25 April as stated in an earlier version.

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## [Politics live with Andrew Sparrow](#)Politics

# Starmer condemns Diane Abbott comments, saying they were antisemitic and ‘hierarchy of racism’ never acceptable – as it happened

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Italian citizens board an aircraft during their evacuation from Khartoum in this photo obtained by Reuters on 24 April. Photograph: Reuters

[Sudan](#)

## RAF plane lands in Sudan as UK assesses options for further evacuations

Armed forces minister says ‘job isn’t done’ in evacuating as many as 4,000 Britons and dual nationals trapped in war zone

[Patrick Wintour](#), [Dan Sabbagh](#) and [Zeinab Mohammed Salih](#) in Khartoum

Tue 25 Apr 2023 00.47 EDTFirst published on Mon 24 Apr 2023 03.34 EDT

The British military is assessing a highly fraught operation to rescue some of the thousands of British nationals stranded in [Sudan](#) after the Foreign Office was deluged by cross-party criticism for missing a window of opportunity on Sunday to evacuate more than just British diplomats and their families.

An RAF plane has landed at Port Sudan in the north-east of the country with some troops to look at the option of taking nationals who have attempted to drive – some in UN-protected convoys – from Khartoum and elsewhere. The landing ship RFA Cardigan Bay and the frigate HMS Lancaster are also being lined up as options to [help people out of the war-torn country](#), as the UK desperately considers its restricted options.

It was announced on Monday evening that the two opposing forces in the civil war had [agreed a three-day ceasefire](#).

“Following intense negotiation over the past 48 hours, the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces have agreed to implement a nationwide ceasefire starting at midnight on 24 April, to last for 72 hours,” said the US secretary of state, Antony Blinken.

### [Map of how UK diplomats were rescued](#)

There are an estimated 4,000 British nationals and dual nationals in Sudan. One British national trapped in their home told the Guardian they were not receiving any messages from the Foreign Office, describing the evacuation operation as “a shitshow”.

France has airlifted 491 people from 36 countries, including 12 EU nations, to Djibouti since Sunday, according to the foreign ministry. They included two Greeks and one Belgian who had been wounded, as well as the German and Swiss ambassadors, it said.

Two Italian military planes landed in Rome carrying 83 Italian nationals and 13 citizens of different nationalities, who had first been evacuated to Djibouti.

James Heappey, the minister for the armed forces, said in a briefing that the UK recognised “the job isn’t done” when it came to rescuing the 4,000 or more British and dual nationals trapped in Sudan.

The armed forces minister also told LBC’s Tonight With Andrew Marr show on Monday night: “The danger is that other than the very tight and

controlled mission that we did Saturday into Sunday to extract the diplomats over which we had a very tight degree of control ... beyond that we would effectively be inserting foreign troops, not just us, there'll be other countries that would want to do it, into the parts of Khartoum that has been the most hotly fought over.”

Of the government’s latest discussions on the crisis, he said: “It’s not for me to tell you what decisions have been made, but obviously whatever decisions have been taken, we will now be resourcing overnight, so that once the solution is in place, if the prime minister chooses to go with it, he can then announce it.”

Heapey told Marr that any plan to deploy armed forces in Khartoum would be “unhelpful and unrealistic” but sought to assure “a number of other options” were discussed in Rishi Sunak’s emergency Cobra meeting on Monday.

A minister who attended the government’s Cobra meeting on Monday evening said there was “no current plan” for evacuation of British citizens from Sudan.

Andrew Mitchell MP told Channel 4 News: “The Foreign Office’s messaging has been absolutely consistent throughout. We have said that there is no current plan for evacuation and we are working on finding a plan.”

Mitchell, under pressure from his own backbenchers in the Commons earlier in the day, added that the UK was not following the US policy of rescuing only its diplomatic staff.

The minister for development and [Africa](#) said the UK government’s advice to nationals had changed from “stay at home” to asking them to exercise their own judgment on whether to flee – but those who do so will be acting at their own risk.

Mitchell did not deny that the UK ambassador, Giles Lever, and his wife, the deputy ambassador, had both been out of the country since 14 April. He insisted the development director had been in post, and that the UK, as the



pen-holder for Sudan at the UN, had not been caught flatfooted by the speed with which the crisis had escalated.

There were also reports that even during the period the UK was advising residents to shelter in their homes, UK diplomatic staff were attaching themselves to UN convoys leaving Khartoum, ignoring the official advice from their own employers.

The [violence in Sudan](#) has pitted army units loyal to its military ruler, Gen Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, against the Rapid Support Forces, led by Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, known as Hemedti. Battles have been raging in Khartoum and its twin city of Omdurman, and a series of ceasefires have failed to hold.

In the Commons, Mitchell was repeatedly challenged to explain how other countries had evacuated their nationals, and whether the UK had wasted a window of opportunity to extract large numbers on Sunday, during a brief lull in the fighting.

The French foreign ministry had reported that after meetings between emissaries of the two warring camps in Abu Dhabi, calls from around the world and strong advice from Saudi diplomacy and the presidency of South Sudan, the two rivals left a brief space on Sunday to allow the various evacuation plans to be put in place. It is not clear whether a second pause can be negotiated.

Share your experience

### **How have you been affected?**

If you are a UK national who has been affected by the clashes in Sudan, you can tell us about it using the form below.

Please share your story if you are 18 or over, anonymously if you wish. For more information please see our [terms of service](#) and [privacy policy](#).

Your responses, which can be anonymous, are secure as the form is encrypted and only the Guardian has access to your contributions. We will



only use the data you provide us for the purpose of the feature and we will delete any personal data when we no longer require it for this purpose. For true anonymity please use our [SecureDrop](#) service instead.

Name

Where do you live?

Tell us a bit about yourself (e.g. age and what you do for a living) Optional

Share your experience here - what is your current situation?

Include as much detail as possible

How have you been affected? Optional

Include as much detail as possible

Tell us about your concerns Optional

If you are happy to, you can upload a photo of yourself here Optional

Choose file

Can we publish your response?

Yes, entirely

Yes, but contact me first

Yes, but please keep me anonymous

No, this is information only

Phone number Optional

Your contact details are helpful so we can contact you for more information.  
They will only be seen by the Guardian.

Email address

Your contact details are helpful so we can contact you for more information.  
They will only be seen by the Guardian.

You can add more information here Optional

If you include other people's names please ask them first.

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The Foreign Office points out is that it is dealing with a larger number of nationals than most other countries, and in the case of France, one special forces soldier was shot and is gravely ill.

But Alicia Kearns, the Conservative chair of the foreign affairs select committee, said time was running out, while Labour warned that the UK's handling of the crisis suggested the Foreign Office had learned nothing from the Afghanistan fiasco.

The UN secretary general, António Guterres, warned that the violence in Sudan “risks a catastrophic conflagration within Sudan that could engulf the whole region and beyond” and called on security council members to exert maximum leverage.

Heapey said [Sunday's rescue involving two RAF planes](#) – an Airbus A400M and a Hercules C-130 – operating via the Akrotiri base in Cyprus “went without a hitch”. Planes landed at an airfield at Wadi Seidna, which is about 30km north of Khartoum, and the UK worked with France and Germany to fly in and out this weekend.

Asked why diplomats but not citizens had been evacuated, Mitchell said: “We have a specific duty of care – a legal duty of care – to our own staff

and our diplomats.” He added that there had been “a very specific threat to the diplomatic community” in Khartoum.

Eiman Bribo, who was visiting her extended Sudanese family with her husband and two children from Swansea, said she believed the UK had discriminated in not taking all nationals. “We are all citizens of the UK, but they took the ones they believe are more important and they are first-class citizens, and left us who are second-class citizens behind.”

She said she had chosen not to leave Khartoum with her Sudanese relatives because she believed her family would be evacuated by the UK.

Tobias Ellwood, the chair of the Commons defence committee, called for a “clearcut plan” to get British passport holders out. “If that plan does not emerge today, then individuals will then lose faith and then start making their own way back,” he told GB News, saying that could lead to “some very difficult situations”.

Some Sudanese people have expressed anger that western countries have seemingly prioritised evacuating their people over trying to stop the fighting.

Speaking after the announced ceasefire, the former British diplomat Dame Rosalind Marsden told the BBC’s Newsnight: “Over the last 48 hours there’s been enough of a brief lull in the fighting to allow diplomats and other foreign nationals to get out, so let’s hope that this latest announcement means it’s going to be possible to build on that, and of course move forward to try to negotiate a more permanent cessation.”

## 2023.04.24 - Spotlight

- [The hell of somniphobia On a bad night I get zero to two hours' sleep](#)
- [John Cooper Clarke's honest playlist The thrill of Elvis has never gone away](#)
- ['We all want to be Steve McQueen' Gary Lineker on his MotD style, baggy jeans and who'll win the league](#)
- [A lost Ukraine The photographs that show the calm before the carnage](#)

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‘I just had to know it was almost time to go to bed and I would start getting nervous.’ Illustration: Sean O'Brien

[Sleep](#)

**The hell of somniphobia: ‘On a bad night I get zero to two hours’ sleep’**

The fear of falling asleep can have many causes, from trauma to sleep apnea, and the effects are debilitating. But there are effective treatments



[Amy Fleming](#)

Mon 24 Apr 2023 05.00 EDT

When Elizabeth Johnson tries to fall asleep, anxiety often takes over. After going to bed, she starts to relax, but feels as though she is losing control. “Instead of continuing,” she says, “I get a sense of panic, a shot of adrenaline and I’m fully awake again.” She is describing what it is like to have somniphobia – the fear of falling asleep. “Then I have to do the whole process of trying to sleep again, or give up for the night.”

Johnson, 38, from Kansas, has had trouble sleeping and staying asleep since she was seven. It started out as insomnia and a fear of not sleeping, progressing by 12 to a fear of [sleep](#) itself. As a young child, she recalls, it was a case of, “When you get to a place where you can mentally fall asleep, you’re scared that it’s not going to happen this time. Or you’re scared that you’re going to have nightmares. And then, later, there was another layer of being afraid to fall asleep: because you’re no longer aware of what’s going on, so you’re not safe.”

The problems continued into adulthood, peaking when she was 31, waxing and waning according to stress and anxiety levels between being terrified of sleep and what she calls “regular insomnia. Now that things are a little bit better, a good night is five hours, but a bad night is zero to two.”

There have been stretches where I haven’t been able to sleep for several days in a row. Staying awake at work is hard

Johnson teaches English and history to students with behavioural differences. She also has two children, aged seven and 11, and having a family helps her cope. “I just gotta keep going,” she says. “There have been stretches where I haven’t been able to sleep for several days in a row. Staying awake at work is hard. And it makes it hard as a parent.”

It is not known how many people are affected by somniphobia, because it’s not a primary diagnosis. It comes as part of other conditions, from sleep disorders to [PTSD](#). One known cause, says Dr Alanna Hare, a consultant in the department of sleep and ventilation at north-west London’s Royal Brompton hospital, is sleep paralysis, “and up to 40% of the population have had that at least once. It can be very frightening to be paralysed and wide awake. You can’t call out.”

Hare describes this as a “physiological mis-signalling issue, and it probably relates to a slight disturbance in the way in which the body moves into paralysis, which is a normal part of sleep, but it occurs in early sleep or in lighter sleep stages when that shouldn’t be happening”. It is normal to have it occasionally and it’s more likely to happen if you’re overtired or stressed. “If it’s happening very frequently then that would require further investigation.”

As someone who has experienced this from time to time, I can confirm how terrifying it is. The aural and physical force of it overwhelms every nerve ending, but you can’t pinch yourself to wake up.

Sleep apnea – when your breathing stops and starts during sleep – can be another cause of somniphobia, says Hare, with sufferers having “dreams about drowning, or they wake up feeling they can’t breathe at all”.

Treatment depends on the underlying problem, says Hare, with a GP being the first port of call, for a referral to the most appropriate service. “If it’s a nightmare disorder, sleep paralysis, acting out in sleep such as sleepwalking, or suspected sleep apnea, it would be a sleep specialist,” she says.

These range from respiratory doctors to psychiatrists and neurologists. “If it was felt to be related to panic disorder, generalised anxiety or even part of obsessive compulsive disorder, then that might be more appropriately treated in psychology or psychiatry services. The important thing is that people know how to seek help, and that this can be managed, addressed and improved.”

Brandy Clear, 37, is a mother of five who works in customer service and lives in New York. She [writes](#) about her mental health experiences, including heroin addiction as a teenager, and her lifelong struggle with somniphobia. “I recover loudly, so that those who are suffering in silence know they are not alone,” she says.

She was afraid of going to sleep from the age of six or seven. When she was nine her mother took her to a doctor, who prescribed an antihistamine and sedative. “It would help me fall asleep and stay asleep, but it was hard to wake me up in the morning and I didn’t like taking it.” So she stopped. “I started forcing myself to stay awake, because I didn’t want to fall asleep. Eventually, my body would get so tired that I would just fall asleep. There was no fighting it; I would just shut down and pass out. But I would never sleep for longer than about six hours.”

Reach out to friends or to your doctor or a therapist. You’re not the only one in this situation

When she was 13, however, she slept so little over a week that she became delirious and was hospitalised. “They sedated me for two days. I eventually got into counselling for some other behavioural issues I was having, and I told the counsellor I don’t sleep, that I’m afraid. What if my house is on fire and I don’t wake up? Or what if a bad guy comes and kills my whole family



while I'm sleeping? What if my mom dies on the couch and I sleep through it? I started to have an anxiety attack just talking about it."

At 15 she was prescribed "a very powerful sedative. It's also an antipsychotic, so it stops you from dreaming." This affected her ability to focus while awake, and by 17 she had stopped taking it and was back to resisting sleep for as long as she could.

As the anxiety disorder progressed into later life, she says, "I didn't have to be lying in bed to be afraid. I just had to know it was almost time to go to bed and I would start getting nervous." She has developed some coping mechanisms over the years and says it's not as bad as it used to be. Hypnosis didn't work for her, but meditation does. Bedtime stretching, listening to rain sounds and reading have helped, too. "I still wasn't sleeping for long periods of time because I would realise I was dreaming and would force myself awake."

None of the above solutions works every time, but one thing Clear can count on most of the time is David Attenborough. "I have seen just about everything that man has ever created," she says. "I love all things nature, and if a David Attenborough documentary goes on my TV, I am probably trying to fall asleep."

For Johnson and Clear, trauma exacerbated sleep problems that had already set in. Clear was sexually abused by her late father. "What I was going through made it twice as hard for me to go to sleep at night, because the amount of times I would wake up to him at the end of my bed became ingrained in my brain."

Johnson had a traumatic experience when she was nine, two years into her sleep problems. "I think that's why it got worse. It went from hypothetical fear to having knowledge of things to be afraid of in reality."

Johnson has had multiple diagnoses: "PTSD, depression, anxiety, insomnia for medical reasons, insomnia for mental health reasons, and narcolepsy. They're not sure if the narcolepsy is the result of having insomnia or part of it, because sometimes narcolepsy can cause insomnia."

In the seven years since her somniphobia peaked, Johnson has seen sleep specialists and psychiatrists. Through talking therapy she has worked on coping skills and learning to let go of the things that she can't control. "I sat with my therapist and we made a list of the things in my head that my brain roots out to keep me from going to sleep, and we came up with logical counters to those, like: the doors are locked."

Another step was to find ways to relax her brain when she wasn't trying to sleep, "to separate the association between relaxing and being vulnerable in sleep".

Johnson is now on medication to help with her sleep and anxiety. She has set up a [support group](#) on Facebook, and her advice to others struggling with sleep is to avoid getting stuck in your head. People may start with insomnia, which triggers other worrying experiences, and then turn to Google and scare themselves even more, she says.

"Reach out to friends or to your doctor or to a therapist. You're not the only one in this situation, and it doesn't have to be long term or every night. It doesn't have to be your whole life, even though it feels like it when you're in the middle of it. And it doesn't mean you're crazy or that you will never sleep again."

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

Information and support for anyone affected by sexual abuse issues is available from the following organisations. In the UK, [Rape Crisis](#) offers support on 0808 500 2222 in England and Wales, 0808 801 0302 in [Scotland](#), or 0800 0246 991 in [Northern Ireland](#). In the US, [Rainn](#) offers support on 800-656-4673. In Australia, support is available at [1800Respect](#) (1800 737 732). Other international helplines can be found at [ibiblio.org/rcip/internl.html](http://ibiblio.org/rcip/internl.html).

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |



‘If I like a song, I can defend it, every time’ ... John Cooper Clarke.  
Photograph: Wolfgang

[Honest playlist](#)[Music](#)

## **John Cooper Clarke’s honest playlist: ‘The thrill of Elvis has never gone away’**

The poet grew up listening to Bill Haley & His Comets and plays northern soul to kickstart a party, but whose blues does he find too painful to hear?



*As told to [Rich Pelley](#)*

Mon 24 Apr 2023 02.00 EDT

**The first song I remember hearing**

I remember my mum singing along to You Belong to Me by Jo Stafford. She'd have the radio on doing the housework and would sing along to the classics from the Great American Songbook, like Bei Mir Bist Du Schön by the Andrew Sisters, which I always thought was called My Beer Mr Shane. Phonetically, it's quite an intelligent mistake.

**The song I secretly like, but tell everyone I hate**

I don't really have guilty pleasures. If I like a song, I can defend it, every time. I'm no stranger to shame, but I wouldn't liken it to music.

**The first single I bought**

I bought Rock Around the Clock by Bill Haley & His Comets on 78 with my cousins, Frankie and Sid, who lived across town, so we each part-owned it. The first plastic 45 I bought was Diana by Paul Anka, from Oldfield Electrics in Higher Broughton, Salford.

**The song I inexplicably know every lyric to**

Stardust, written by Hoagy Carmichael, recorded by many people – my favourite version is by Nat King Cole. It was also covered by doo-wop groups like Billy Ward and His Dominoes. It's inexplicable because, if you read the lyrics, it doesn't have a hookline, a chorus or read like a song; it reads like a poem. It's the only song I can think of that includes the word "reverie", which is obviously a very important word to anyone who writes poetry.

**The song I can no longer listen to**

Strange Fruit by Billie Holiday. It goes for any protest song. If it's effective, any song that alerts you to some kind of injustice, you've only got to hear once. To revisit such misery is kind of sick.

**The best song to play at a party**

Something northern soul – Turnin' My Heartbeat Up by the MVPs or You Can't Have Your Cake by Lela Martin are terrific floor-fillers. If it's more of a bacchanalian free-for-all, I would go for Angelina by Louis Prima and Keely Smith.

**The song I wish I'd written**

White Christmas. It'd be a payout on an annual basis.

**The song that changed my life**

All Shook Up by Elvis Presley. I first discovered it on a fairground in Salford. It was like nothing else I'd heard. The thrill of Elvis as a whole package has never gone away.

**The song that gets me up in the morning**

Achy Breaky Heart by Billy Ray Cyrus.

**The song I want played at my funeral**

I don't want to think about it, but if I have to, Peace in the Valley by Elvis.

*John Cooper Clarke is currently on tour. See [johncooperclarke.com](http://johncooperclarke.com)*

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |



Lineker in ‘super garish suit’ with the Fair Play award at the 1990 World Cup, alongside England manager Bobby Robson. Gary Lineker modelling for Next. Composite: Getty Images/PR

[Men's fashion](#)

[Interview](#)

## ‘We all want to be Steve McQueen’: Gary Lineker on his MotD style, baggy jeans and who’ll win the league

[Lauren Cochrane](#)

As the presenter of Match of the Day, Lineker is renowned for his footballing insight and sharp dressing. He talks about wardrobe choices, being tempted to wear white trousers – and why he’d probably send that tweet again





Mon 24 Apr 2023 03.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 25 Apr 2023 08.23 EDT

If you were to ask anyone interested in fashion to nominate a stylish male footballer in 2023, they might – depending on their generation – namecheck Héctor Bellerín, Dominic Calvert-Lewin or David Beckham. But for most men watching Match of the Day on a Saturday night, it would probably be Gary Lineker. The former footballer and host of the highlights show for almost 25 years is a style icon for millions, whether he's wearing a crisp shirt and Clark Kent glasses on the pundit couch or [Blundstone boots](#) on a walk with his dog, Filbert.

Lineker has, of course, been in the headlines for more than his style recently. Thanks to his tweet [criticising the government's asylum policy](#), he was suspended by the BBC. With Alan Shearer and Ian Wright boycotting the show in solidarity, Match of the Day was broadcast [without any presenters on 11 March](#). Now back on the couch, Lineker can settle into less controversial territory – like working on an [edit of clothes for Next](#). Here, he chats about his outfit choices over the years, Match of the Day wardrobe policies, that tweet and who is going to win the Premier league.

**Do you think you've become a style icon for a certain kind of guy?**

I would never say that of myself. I've always been interested in clothes and fashion. I look at some pictures and I think: "What the hell were we thinking?" But I might even think that about [what I'm wearing today] in 20 years, if I'm still alive. Most footballers are into fashion, though. We're a metrosexual lot. Look at the players or people I work with – Ian Wright loves his clothes, Micah Richards loves clothes. I would never describe myself as an icon, but I'm very pleased that you put the question to me.

### **Are there any outfits you regret?**

When you've been a player in the public eye for a long time, there are quite a lot. There's one in particular at the 1990 World Cup. It was the final week. We got to the semis and lost. I stayed on with Bobby Robson to receive the Fifa fair play award. I wore this super garish suit, like a Versace number, so not me. That's the thing with fashion – you look back on things, some of the jumpers [we wore]. There was also a shoot from when I was at Barcelona, [when I am in cycling.gear](#). It's quite easy to find [on the internet].

### **Do you think it's more acceptable as a player to be more into fashion now?**

They are young people who are on decent money and can afford to splash out. It's always been the case that people would dress to care what they look like; footballers are vain. There was George Best, Bobby Moore. Now you have people like Dominic Calvert-Lewin, who is quite outlandish, Héctor Bellerín, James Maddison. It's not what I would wear but I am 40 years older than some of these players. You have to think about that a little as you get older.



Gary Lineker wearing his famous Blundstone boots. Photograph: Neil Hall/EPA

### **Calvert-Lewin has said he has been ribbed by his teammates ...**

That would also go on. That's just part of football, and it keeps footballers grounded. There's so much mickey-taking, but I quite admire the fact he wears what he wears.

### **How do you decide what you wear on Match of the Day?**

We have no wardrobe. Everyone dresses themselves. We just get told to go for "casual" – they don't want jackets and ties – and it's left to us. I always wear my own clothes and it's the same for everyone else on the show. For an FA Cup final or the World Cup final, it's a big night, it's like the Oscars, so we wear a suit and tie. I actually prefer wearing a tie to just a suit and shirt because when you're sitting down on TV, it tightens it up a bit. I lean forward a lot and when I do that, the shirt buttons can come open. The tie hides that.

### **Is there anything you have to avoid?**

Match of the Day is a green screen so it's like a virtual reality show. You can't wear green, you can't wear white, you can't wear patterns. That means it's unbelievably restrictive. The cameras can't cope. You've basically got plain dark colours, or light blue.



Lineker in presenting mode, wearing a jacket and shirt. Photograph: BBC

### **Do you plan ahead together?**

There's no planning. We don't have a WhatsApp group talking about the clothes that we're going to wear for the show. Last week, Alan Shearer and Danny Murphy both wore exactly the same thing – off-white trousers with a black shirt. They looked like the same person, and I ribbed them about it. We don't go: "Should someone get another shirt?"

### **Who is the best-dressed pundit?**

Ian Wright. He really cares and brings in two or three outfits. Micah and Jermaine are really into their clothes. Wrighty always looks really cool – like he hasn't made an effort – but he looks good.

### **Does he have various glasses?**

Yes, as do I. I did something a while ago with Vision Express and I've got about 40 pairs so I match them with what I wear. Because I wear them all the time now, it just becomes another fashion item.

**How is everything on Match of the Day? Are you all friends again?**

We're all friends. We were always friends. It was my friends who helped me out; it was beautiful. But it shouldn't have happened like that, it was disproportionate.

**Would you send a tweet like that again?**

Probably. I can't help myself, if it's something I care about. I'm fairly careful about what I say, and I'll continue to be. I think I am on the right side.

**Saturday night wasn't the same on 11 March, without presenters.**

It was very different. I watched the first minute, like everyone else. There was no sound, it was so bizarre.

**Who do you think is going to win the Premier League?**

I tipped Arsenal from about November, but now I think it's 50/50 between them and Man City. I still think they've got a real chance. If they can get anything on Wednesday, I think they'll win it. If they don't, it's difficult. City can win every game because they're so good. People are saying Arsenal are bottling it and that's nonsense. Two away draws is not bottling it. [This interview took place before Arsenal's 3-3 draw to Southampton on Friday night]. I suppose they have given away leads, but away from home [those things can happen]. But they're a good side, a really good side. If it's not this season, it will come. They're well-managed, good recruitment, great young players, they'll be fine.

**How would you describe your style these days?**

I think I am fairly conservative. I'm not really garish – because of my age, I don't think I could get away with it. Wrighty can because he's naturally that

way. We've gone through years of tight jeans and now I'm so relieved they've gone baggy. I feel much more comfortable and better in them. We all want to be Steve McQueen. It's never going to happen, but we can keep trying.

**You must get asked to work with brands all the time. Why did you decide to work with [Next](#)?**

I think it's because it's British – from Leicester. And then they came to us with a range and I kind of liked it. I never thought I would go with white trousers, [but I'm tempted]. It's quite flattering that, in my grand old age, I can still do something like this.

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

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Poised ... Turczan has chosen to present her images uncaptioned and her subjects unnamed. Photograph: Katherine Turczan

[Photography](#).

[Interview](#)

# A lost Ukraine: the photographs that show the calm before the carnage

[Sean O'Hagan](#)

Katherine Turczan grew up in the US listening to her family of Ukrainian exiles talk about home. In the 90s, she finally visited the country, taking gentle, bucolic pictures that now feel tragic



Mon 24 Apr 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 25 Apr 2023 08.22 EDT

Born in the US to Ukrainian parents, Katherine Turczan grew up on a farm near the town of Paterson in New Jersey. “It only took three ballerina-like leaps to cross the lawn and reach my grandfather’s screen door,” she writes in her new photo book, [From Where They Came](#), which features evocative monochrome portraits made in Ukraine between 1991 and 2008.

As a child, Turczan had listened intently to her grandfather’s stories of the country he had fled in the wake of the second world war. “My whole family were storytellers,” says Turczan, “and they created vivid descriptions of the life they had left behind. But my grandfather’s were the most vivid.” He told her how he had been wounded fighting the Bolsheviks, how his brother had died of typhoid during the conflict, and how he had made his way to the



US, leaving behind his parents and siblings. As he talked, he would often sketch the remembered likenesses of his lost family members on scraps of paper torn from Svoboda, or Freedom, a newspaper for Ukrainian exiles.



An image in *From Where They Came*. Photograph: Katherine Turczan

Throughout her childhood, Turczan's cultural links with her family's homeland were strong: she attended Saturday school to learn Ukrainian and was part of a Ukrainian-American girls' scout troupe – but it was her grandfather who was her most important influence. With hindsight, she sees a deep connection between the drawing lessons her grandfather gave her as a child – “his careful direction to observe things closely” – and her quiet, but penetrating, photographic gaze. “He was a folk artist, who worked on the railroads,” she says. “He collected roadkill, birds and squirrels, which he would hang on our barn door with old toys, wire and driftwood to make interesting compositions. Occasionally I would draw these still lifes. I had a long childhood of looking.”



Dima, Lviv, Ukraine, 1991. Photograph: Katherine Turczan

In the summer of 1991, Turczan travelled to [Ukraine](#) for the first time, supported by a grant from Yale University. Her grandfather had died and both her parents had just been diagnosed with early stage dementia. “Looking back, I really did not know how to grapple with it all,” she says, quietly. “But I had always imagined what my life would have been like had my family stayed there.”

Her first, uncertain trip to her family’s homeland coincided with an attempt by hardline Soviet communists to oust Mikhail Gorbachev, the Russian reformist leader, in what became known as the August Coup. The attempted coup failed and, four months later, the USSR began to fragment. The Ukraine that Turczan held in her imagination from so many family stories, many of them marked by war and tragedy, was suddenly, almost unbelievably, an independent country with a palpable sense, as she puts it, “of things loosening up”.

From *Where They Came*, her collection of images, is the end result of her many subsequent visits to Ukraine over the following two decades. It is a deeply personal undertaking: portraits of the extended family she met there – the uncles, aunts, cousins she had heard so much about as a child. “I began in Lviv by contacting family I had there who are musicians and quite

well known,” she says. “They completely understood what I was doing, and I began living with them.”



An image in *From Where They Came*. Photograph: Katherine Turczan

From there, she made contact with two other branches of her extended family, but also made portraits of other people she encountered and was instinctively drawn to. They included Orthodox nuns, whose convents were supported by donations from exiled Ukrainians, and the children of Chernobyl who attended secular summer camps far away from the zones of contamination caused by the 1986 nuclear disaster. “I was interested in women and children,” she says. “Women held the households together and the children were often the innocent victims of one tragedy after another.”

The view is gentle. They balance the dreadful images of horror and suffering coming out of Ukraine

Her images are not tragic. But with their poised, quiet presence, they inevitably exude a melancholy sadness given the destruction wreaked by Russia’s invasion. They evoke a place that seems almost pre-modern, the sense of bucolic calmness now loaded with the weight of history. “It did feel to me then that the world I encountered on those early trips had not

advanced in 30 or 40 years. Which in a way was true. The view is gentle and one of the main reasons to show the pictures now is to balance the dreadful images of horror and suffering coming out of Ukraine.”

Nevertheless, you cannot look at these images without wondering what has happened to the people in them. When I mention this, Turczan draws my attention to a portrait of a young girl in a car who, it turns out, is her cousin. Since the invasion, she has lived in Poland. They were reunited in Berlin last Christmas.



An image in *From Where They Came*. Photograph: Katherine Turczan

Turczan has made the aesthetic choice to present her images uncaptioned and her subjects unnamed. “What I like about it,” she says, “is that you are not distracted by all that information.” She uses a large format, 8x10 camera that is “a labour of love requiring patience and time” as well as “talking and negotiation” between her and her subjects.” Formally, her portraits have a similar aura to those of the great [Judith Joy Ross](#), who, it turns out, encountered Turczan’s work at Yale and encouraged her with the project. “She is one of my heroes,” says Turczan, who also counts [Andrea Modica](#) and [Lois Conner](#) among her influences. “I like fearless women travelling alone with big cameras,” she says, laughing.



Child at Camp for Children of Chornobyl, Bryukhovychi, Ukraine, 1991.  
Photograph: Katherine Turczan

When she first arrived in Ukraine, she recalls that one of her relatives, on seeing her camera, said: “I wish you were a writer.” The inference was that a photograph could not go as deep into history, memory and human experience as a story. “I think there are different things that photography can do,” she counters. “My images are essentially a reflection of my own complex family history as well as my relationship to a country that, before I went there, was based on received information – so much so that, when I did go there for the first time, I felt like I was returning.”

- [From Where They Came](#) is available from Stanley/Barker

## 2023.04.24 - Opinion

- [Learning-disabled and autistic people are being neglected and tortured. How much longer?](#)
- [My ancestors profited from slavery. Here's how I am starting to atone for that](#)
- [Rishi Sunak's wife's business links tell the story of Britain's broken childcare system](#)
- [Trump committed treason and will try again. He must be barred from running](#)



Illustration by R Fresson

[Opinion](#)[Social care](#)

**Learning-disabled and autistic people  
are being neglected and tortured. How  
much longer?**

[John Harris](#)



Across the UK, revelations of institutional abuse keep mounting up, yet people are still being denied basic respect

Mon 24 Apr 2023 03.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 24 Apr 2023 03.11 EDT

Imagine a chain of scandals focused on a huge number of very vulnerable and fragile people. Picture a horrific mixture of mistreatment and neglect that is institutional, subjecting hundreds of people to completely the wrong “care”, and ensuring that many of them are effectively locked up, often for years. Then add an element that is even more horrific: seemingly endless acts of violence and torture.

Now think about the prospect of such stories piling up: by rights, you would expect some kind of tipping point. But in this case, the sheer number of scandals seems to somehow normalise them, so that even some of the most awful remain overlooked, even among people who think of themselves as progressive and socially concerned. We think we care, but our concern and empathy fall woefully short.



This is the very real story of over a decade of horror inflicted on learning-disabled and autistic people. Self-evidently, it is part of a much longer saga of cruelty, neglect and bigoted attitudes that goes back centuries. But this latest phase has a clear recent timeline, [starting with](#) the BBC's [exposure](#) of hideous abuse at the privately run Winterbourne View hospital near Bristol in 2011 and the great outpouring of anger and official remorse that followed it, largely to no avail. Even more scandals have been revealed since then, traceable to a glaring lack of accountability, let alone any meaningful action.

The places where they have happened are scattered across the UK: [Devon](#), [Norfolk](#), Lincolnshire, [Essex](#), [County Antrim](#), [Cardiff](#), Greater Manchester and more. Last week, the story reached another awful milestone, with the [publication](#) of a second official report triggered by what happened between 2018 and 2021 at three residential schools in and around Doncaster. They were run by the [Hesley Group](#), which is owned by Antin Infrastructure, a multinational private equity group chiefly known for investing in gas pipelines. About 82% of the children concerned were autistic; 76% had a learning disability. Two-thirds of them were more than 50 miles away from their family home. Their families had presumably been lulled into agreeing to their placements with promises of nuanced and sensitive care; for each child, the local councils in charge of the relevant budgets had paid the Hesley Group about £250,000 a year.

The three homes had been closed by government inspectors in 2021, but it took longer for details of what had happened in them – which is now the subject of a criminal investigation by police – to be made public. In October 2022, an official [review found that](#) children had suffered “direct physical abuse” and “various forms of neglect”, and that staff “had seriously breached sexual boundaries”. Then, in January this year, [documents](#) leaked to the BBC shone more light on the horrors that lay behind such words. Vinegar had been poured into children's open cuts. One child had been locked outside in freezing temperatures, while they were naked. Others were punched and kicked in the stomach, made to sit in cold baths and force-fed chilli flakes.

More recently, there have been [further details](#) of the abuse of adults and children at Hesley Group facilities, spanning 10 years. By way of a response, last week's forensic and exhaustive [report](#) by the government's child safeguarding practice review panel cited more of the Doncaster homes' failings (staff, for example, [shaved black girls' heads](#), seemingly to avoid having to comb their hair), and laid bare a broken national system of care and education. It set out proposals for change including radically reformed inspections and oversight, and changes to the way staff are recruited and trained. One cold fact, however, shows how dysfunctional everything is: the Hesley Group – which insists that it has undergone a major restructuring and made senior management changes – [still runs](#) educational and supported living services for people with autism and learning disabilities.

The Doncaster story sits alongside the continuing scandal centred on children and adults trapped and mistreated in facilities classified as hospitals. Winterbourne View was a case in point; so was the story of [Whorlton Hall](#) in County Durham, which was broken by a BBC Panorama documentary in 2019, and is now the subject of an ongoing criminal trial. Only a month ago, Channel 4 aired a [Dispatches](#) programme that exposed the appalling treatment of young people with autism in hospitals and treatment centres across England – which included a hospital in Kent where 18 reports of sexual assault and 24 of rape were [made to the police](#) between 2020 and 2023, but no charges have yet been brought. We should [never forget](#) Connor Sparrowhawk, the autistic and learning-disabled young man who was the victim of failings relating to vital risk assessments and who drowned in a bath at an NHS care unit in 2013; it was subsequently discovered that the NHS trust concerned had failed to properly investigate the deaths of more than 1,000 patients with learning disabilities or mental health problems over a period of four years.

Every story is horrifically vivid: I have a 16-year-old son who has autism and learning disabilities, and when each new one emerges, it heightens a sharp and nagging anxiety about what might lie ahead. The failures behind the scandals, by contrast, are rooted in systems that are massively opaque. In the case of children's homes and residential schools, the bodies responsible include Ofsted (which [failed to intervene](#) in the Doncaster case

for three years, despite hundreds of complaints), local councils and a tangle of profit-making companies. When it comes to hospitals and mental health facilities, notwithstanding improved regulatory work by the Care Quality Commission, huge questions need to be asked about the NHS, more private providers and the commissioners who staff England's new system of integrated care boards. In both sectors, neglect and abuse often highlights what people who work in this field call "closed cultures": secretive, shut-off ways of working that sometimes attract people with the most twisted intentions.

Late last week I spoke to Pam Bebbington, one of the key people in an [inspirational organisation](#) called My Life My Choice. She is involved in "quality checks" of supported living facilities in Oxfordshire, "making sure people are safe and happy, and not overmedicated" – and such campaigns as [Don't Lock Us Away!](#), founded on the straightforward insistence that "we want to get people out of the hospitals, so they can live in their own places and have support there".

She has a learning disability, and direct experience of being incarcerated in institutions where she was terrorised. In one facility dedicated to people with learning disabilities, she told me, she was "beaten up, kept in locked rooms and restrained: when they bend your arms behind your back, they sit on you, they stand on you – no one should have that done to them".

These things happened to her about 30 years ago – which only makes those more recent scandals seem all the more abhorrent. "It's getting worse and worse," she said, "and nothing's getting done."

How, I wondered, would she sum up what needs to change? "Respect," she said. "That's a word we use all the time." We chatted on, but those seven letters had done their work, crystallising what has been denied to so many people, opening the way to all those outrages and human catastrophes. As you read this, more will be happening, in darkened rooms and locked-up wards. Here, clearly, is hideous proof of enduring prejudices and blind spots, and the fact that all our modern talk about diversity, inclusion and human rights regularly collapses into nothing. How much longer?

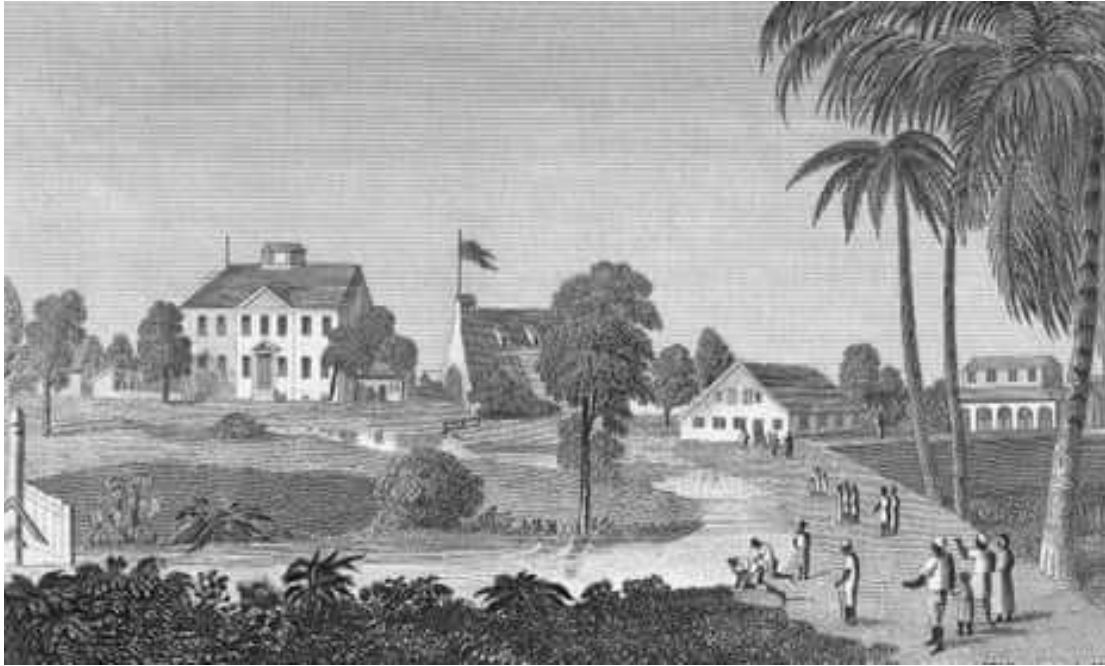
- John Harris is a Guardian columnist

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |



‘Guyana, once one of the richest of the British sugar colonies, is now among the poorest countries in the northern hemisphere.’ Coffee plantation in British Guiana in the early 1800s. Photograph: Granger Historical Picture Archive/Alamy

[OpinionSlavery.](#)

**My ancestors profited from slavery.  
Here’s how I am starting to atone for  
that**

[Alex Renton](#)



Families like mine have listened to the descendants of enslaved people. Today we launch a new lobbying group, Heirs of Slavery

Mon 24 Apr 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 25 Apr 2023 08.38 EDT

How many people in Britain today have benefited from industrialised slavery in the Caribbean? A vast and many-stranded enterprise, it was responsible for [11% of British GDP](#) at its height in 1800. Wealth and privilege seeps down the generations, and British slavery ended only [185 years ago](#): there must be hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of Britons whose lives are touched by the money it generated.

“You aren’t responsible for what your ancestors did. You are responsible for what you do,” says the writer on culture and racism Emma Dabiri. I examined my ancestors’ involvement in [a book](#) published two years ago. Now I, and others with similar histories, have decided we should go further.

We’ve tried to listen and learn from the descendants of those who were enslaved. Today, we launch a new lobbying group – [Heirs of Slavery](#). We hope to support the existing movements asking nations and institutions for apology and discussions about repair. First on that list is the [Caricom group](#)



[of nations](#) and its 10-point [action plan](#) for reparative justice, delivered to Britain and other European nations in 2014. That request for talks has been [derided and ignored](#) in Britain (though not by the governments of Denmark and the Netherlands).

Acknowledgement, repair and reconciliation: these are good things to work for in modern Britain. We hope more heirs will join us.

They are many. Records from the 1830s show that [46,000 individuals](#), including two of my three-times great-grandfathers, received British governmental compensation for “giving up their slaves” at abolition, which was completed in 1838. Some put the money into land, or into shares in railways and the other tech startups of the British industrial revolution. That huge injection of cash seeded new fortunes: some of those families remain among the richest and most powerful in our country today.

You can check if your ancestors were among those compensated after abolition, [sharing some £17bn](#) in today’s money, through University College London’s Legacies of British Slavery project (LBS), and its [searchable database](#). I know many people who have had a big shock after looking through it, their notions of their family history and of themselves turned upside down.



‘We hope to support the existing movements asking nations and institutions for apology and discussions about repair, chief among them the [Caricom group of nations](#).’ Caricom meeting in Nassau, Bahamas, February 2023.  
Photograph: Dante Carrer/Reuters

But LBS’s list is just of the people who held the 700,000 enslaved of the Caribbean as property at abolition – it is only a snapshot of an industry that went on for 250 years. There were a host of ways to make a fortune, or a living, out of the vast enterprise of exploiting the free labour of enslaved human beings – most without ever setting eyes on the horror that was a sugar plantation or a slave ship.

Shipbuilders, gunmakers, rum distillers, cutlery manufacturers all profited. As ever, the big money was made by the financiers – money-lenders, mortgagers and insurers – many of whose companies were gobbled up later by the banks whose names we know today.

Looking at my own family’s history, you see just how wide the economic reach of their business was. Every year they shipped out basic British manufactured goods – from salted herring and beef to cloth woven in the east of Scotland – to feed and clothe the enslaved Africans and the hired Scots men who ran their plantations.

The profits from sugar were so great that it was cheaper for the plantation owners to manufacture everything – from bricks to saddles – back in Britain and buy new enslaved people from Africa when they had worked those they had to death. The life expectancy of an African adult newly arrived in the Caribbean colonies at the height of the trade was just four years.

And at the other end of the story is government. My ancestors’ records show they paid more in tax on their slavery businesses than the family ever made from them. It is clear, too, that involvement in banks that lent money to slavers was far more lucrative than the business of running a sugar plantation. The men who helped found the Manchester Guardian for the most part made their fortunes not from slave ownership, but from manufacturing with [slave-grown cotton](#). Obviously, that makes the people behind those institutions no less culpable.



What do you do with this knowledge? People have been getting in touch with me since I published my not-for-profit book. Like me, many are aware that though not directly wealthy from slavery, we have privilege that derives from our recent ancestors' comfortable and empowered lives, and the violence and greed that enabled those.

"I can't feel guilty about something I had no part in, but I do feel shame," such people say. There's much to feel ashamed of, then and now. But there is atonement of a sort available.

The obvious thing is to ask people who are descended from those who were enslaved what we should do. In my experience, the first answer is almost always "apologise". Britain has apologised for its part in the Irish famine of the 1840s, for the murder of civilians in Kenya in the 1950s – why not for this great crime against humanity? Apology has power: those who mock proposals for reparation and reconciliation with west Africa and the Caribbean fear it.

And then there's justice and money. Simply put, how can it be fair that those descended from the enslaved are so much poorer today than those descended from the enslavers? That's generally true in unequal Britain and in the Caribbean. Guyana, once one of the [richest of the British sugar colonies](#), is now among the poorest countries in the northern hemisphere.

Some of my family, and others I'm in touch with, give to educational projects and other organisations here and in the Caribbean. [Glasgow University](#) and the [Scott Trust](#), owner of the Guardian, have started their own multimillion pound reparations projects. Lloyds of London and Greene King brewers have made [promises](#). Hundreds of other institutions are watching.

We all understand this work is a token. In our case, how can you compensate for the 900 or so people who died on the plantations, and for their descendants, left to live in poverty? How to calculate the worth of a ruined life?

Charitable giving is just the easiest of many options: coalition is more interesting. Our privilege and influence can be put to use in the work that

our institutions and our nation should do.

Britain's governments and the [royal family](#) legitimised and encouraged British transatlantic slavery; it is for the whole country to address the racism, poverty and inequality that derive from it. We who are the heirs of slavery's wealth have a part to play in that. "We cannot change the past," [says Sir Geoff Palmer](#), the Jamaican-born Scottish campaigner for acknowledgment of the legacies of slavery, "but we can change the consequences of the past." That is inspiring.

- Alex Renton's *Blood Legacy: Reckoning With a Family's Story of [Slavery](#)* is published by Canongate. He is a co-founder of [Heirs of Slavery](#).
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Akshata Murty with her husband Rishi Sunak in Belfast, 19 April 2023.  
Photograph: Paul Faith/AFP/Getty Images

[OpinionChildcare](#)

## Rishi Sunak's wife's business links tell the story of Britain's broken childcare system

[Dalia Gebrial](#)

Koru Kids is one of many digital platforms positioning themselves as 'technofixes' to costly and oversubscribed providers

Mon 24 Apr 2023 05.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 24 Apr 2023 10.13 EDT

Rishi Sunak is being investigated over a potential [breach of rules](#) for failing to declare the financial interest of his wife, Akshata Murthy, in Koru Kids, one of six childminder agencies that benefited from a policy change in last month's budget.

Whether or not Sunak broke the rules by failing to declare his wife's interest will be decided by parliament's commissioner for standards. But beneath this technocratic tale of government bureaucracy is a much deeper story about the depletion of Britain's childcare infrastructure over a decade of austerity, the proliferation of childcare apps, and the enrichment of those who have stepped in to fill gaps in provision.

Koru Kids is one of many digital sites to emerge in the past five years, positioning themselves as "technofixes" to Britain's childcare crisis. Through their digital matching service, these apps – which also include Bubble, [childcare.co.uk](https://childcare.co.uk) and [care.com](https://care.com) – allow parents to book a childcare worker online, by the hour.

Bubble and [childcare.co.uk](https://childcare.co.uk) lean more towards an "on-demand" model, where parents can recruit a worker at short notice and sporadically. Others, like Koru Kids, focus more on regular arrangements – similar to an agency, but with less oversight: they do not directly match workers with clients and are not responsible for the terms of the contract.

As any parent or guardian knows, childcare in this country [is unaffordable](#) and often inaccessible. Local authorities have the power to provide cheap or free services, but budget cuts mean that in practice, provision is minimal. [Only half of councils](#) in England have enough childcare places to meet the demand of full-time working parents. While [Scotland](#) and [Wales](#) have slightly more free childcare provision, it is still not enough to meet demand – and the problem of staff retention and availability remains.

Most parents have to turn to private providers instead – and are at the mercy of the market's soaring prices. The government provides some cash support for parents seeking private care provision through the 15-30 hours free childcare scheme for 38 weeks a year. But this isn't enough given that provision is currently limited to [three- and four-year-olds](#), when most parents go back to work after a maximum of one year of leave, and work more than 38 weeks a year. The policy is to be extended to all children between nine months and five years old [from September 2024](#), but that doesn't help in the present moment. Even those able to make full use of

government provision still find themselves paying private providers to fill the gaps in the current system.

In this landscape, childcare apps provide cheap, convenient and accessible care, which sounds ideal; but the reality is that you get what you pay for to the detriment of workers, children and their families. During my research on app-based childcare, I have spoken to dozens of nannies, babysitters and childminders working on different platforms. Many share stories of precarity, low wages and anxiety-inducing worker surveillance via rating systems. Koru Kids is the best of a bad bunch: it does, unlike some other platforms, require the use of some form of contract and, after costs, workers are paid minimum wage. That's less a credit to Koru Kids and more an indictment of the increasingly gig-like conditions being normalised in the sector. Groups such as the Nanny Solidarity Network are campaigning for better conditions, but the fight is tough for such an unprotected workforce.

We know long-term relationship-building is essential to a healthy care relationship – but with the proliferation of on-demand apps and “patchwork” care models, consistency is almost impossible. [Children](#) with physical and learning disabilities are especially impacted, as many parents struggle to find consistent specialist care at an affordable rate. In a marketplace model, workers with special educational needs (SEN) experience and expertise understandably charge more. This cost should be covered by the government – not by parents who happen to have children with SEN. Platforms also do not guarantee the provision of SEN workers – you just have to hope someone happens to be available when you need them. In my conversations with workers, many described instances where they were hired to take care of a child with specialist needs, despite not being equipped to do so. Sometimes, parents were so desperate to find a carer, they did not tell the worker beforehand.

The sad thing is, the system does not need to be this way. The relatively meagre amount of public money earmarked for childcare subsidises the activities of for-profit childcare companies. This means that government money is going into the pockets of shareholders and directors whose priority is profit, not provision. And the profits are big. Britain has one of the most expensive childcare systems in the developed world – costs for the

average family have increased at [three times the rate of wages](#) since 2010. Indeed, the government scheme Koru Kids benefited from uses public money for [cash incentives](#) to get more childminders working for private providers.

Countries like Germany, where childcare is not a for-profit commodity but a government-provided service, show that an alternative is possible. For as little as €50 a month, parents can access all manner of services: childminders, day nurseries, after-school clubs. In Britain, that would not cover a week of the same provisions.

At one point, it looked like we were heading in a different direction. In the early 2000s, Sure Start centres, delivered via local authorities, provided free early years childcare for a minimum of 10 hours a day to those most deprived areas. For the rest of the country, they provided breakfast clubs, drop-in sessions, stay and plays and study support. Workers in these centres had job security and full employment rights. However, these provisions were never fully integrated into the public service system like, say, the NHS, and so did not survive the austerity wave that was to come.

Austerity has turned our essential care services into profitable markets to be exploited. When talking about the undeclared interests that govern economic decision-making in this country, the problem goes far deeper than one prime minister and one company. The shared *class* interest between politicians who implement austerity and market forces exploiting the fallout are deeply intertwined. In the case of Murthy and Sunak, they have become indistinguishable.

- Dalia Gebrial is a writer and political economist at the LSE, working on race, labour and digital capitalism



Donald Trump eats pizza after speaking in Fort Myers, Florida, on Friday.  
Photograph: Chris Tilley/AP

[OpinionDonald Trump](#)

**Trump committed treason and will try again. He must be barred from running**

[Robert Reich](#)





The 14th amendment to the US constitution clearly disqualifies the former president from returning to office. States must act

Mon 24 Apr 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 24 Apr 2023 06.27 EDT

The most obvious question in American politics today should be: why is the guy who committed treason just over two years ago allowed to run for president?

Answer: he shouldn't be.

Remember? Donald Trump lost re-election but refused to concede and instead claimed without basis that the election was stolen from him, then pushed state officials to change their tallies, hatched a plot to name fake electors, tried to persuade the vice-president to refuse to certify electoral college votes, sought access to voting-machine data and software, got his allies in Congress to agree to question the electoral votes and thereby shift the decision to the [House of Representatives](#), and summoned his supporters to Washington on the day electoral votes were to be counted and urged them to march on the US Capitol, where they rioted.



This, my friends, is treason.

But Trump is running for re-election, despite the explicit language of [section three of the 14th amendment to the constitution](#), which prohibits anyone who has held public office and who has engaged in insurrection against the United States from ever again serving in public office.

The reason for the disqualification clause is that someone who has engaged in an insurrection against the United States cannot be trusted to use constitutional methods to regain office. (Notably, all three branches of the federal government have described the January 6 attack on the US Capitol as an “insurrection”.)

Can any of us who saw (or have learned through the painstaking work of the January 6 committee) what Trump tried to do to overturn the results of the 2020 election have any doubt he will once again try to do whatever necessary to regain power, even if illegal and unconstitutional?

Trump tried these tactics once. The likelihood of trying again is greater because loyalists are in stronger positions

Sure, the newly enacted [Electoral Count Reform Act](#) (amending the Electoral Count Act of 1887) filled some of the legal holes, creating a new threshold for members to object to a slate of electors (one-fifth of the members of both the House and the Senate), clarifying that the role of the vice-president is “solely ministerial” and requiring that Congress defer to slates of electors as determined by the states.

But what if Trump gets secretaries of state and governors who are loyal to him to alter the election machinery to ensure he wins? What if he gets them to prevent people likely to vote for Joe Biden from voting at all?

What if he gets them to appoint electors who will vote for him regardless of the outcome of the popular vote?

What if, despite all of this, Biden still wins the election but Trump gets more than 20% of Republican senators and House members to object to

slates of electors pledged to Biden, and pushes the election into the House where Trump has a majority of votes?

Does anyone doubt the possibility – no, the probability – of any or all of this happening?

Trump tried these tactics once. The likelihood of him trying again is greater now because his loyalists are now in much stronger positions throughout state and federal government.

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Yes, they were held back in the 2022 midterms. But in state after state, and in Congress, [Republicans](#) who stood up to Trump have now been purged from the party. And lawmakers in what remains of the Republican party have made it clear that they will bend or disregard any rule that gets in their way.

In many cases, the groundwork has been laid. As recently [reported](#) in the New York Times, for example, the Trump allies who traveled to Coffee county, Georgia, on 7 January 2021 gained access to sensitive election data. They copied election software used across Georgia and uploaded it on the internet – an open invitation to election manipulation by Trump allies in 2024.

If anything, Trump is less constrained than he was in 2020.

“In 2016, I declared I am your voice,” Trump said last month at the Conservative Political Action Conference, a line he repeated at his first 2024 campaign rally, in Waco, Texas, a few weeks later. “Today, I add: I am your warrior. I am your justice. And for those who have been wronged and betrayed, I am your retribution.”

Filing deadlines for 2024 presidential candidates will come in the next six months, in most states.

Secretaries of state – who in most cases are in charge of deciding who gets on the ballot – must refuse to place Donald Trump’s name on the 2024 ballot, based on the clear meaning of section three of the 14th amendment to the US constitution.

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

## 2023.04.24 - Around the world

- [Kenya cult deaths Toll from suspected starvation cult reaches 47](#)
- [Credit Suisse \\$68bn left bank in lead-up to rescue by UBS](#)
- [Burkina Faso Sixty killed in village by raiders 'wearing military uniforms'](#)
- [Human rights UN experts begin US tour focusing on racial justice and policing](#)
- [China Beijing says don't 'hype up the so-called threat narrative' after Australian criticism](#)

Kenya cult deaths: relative of victim speaks as death toll rises to 47 – video

[Kenya](#)

## Kenyan police recover 67 bodies of suspected starvation cult members

Search continues for dead and alive as Kenyan Red Cross says 112 people have been reported missing

*[Caroline Kimeu](#) in Nairobi and agencies*

Mon 24 Apr 2023 09.44 EDTFirst published on Sun 23 Apr 2023 19.40 EDT

The death toll from a Christian cult in [Kenya](#) that practised starvation has risen to 67, after more bodies were recovered from mass graves in a forest in the south-east of the country.

A major search is under way in the Shakahola forest near the coastal town of Malindi, where dozens of corpses were exhumed over the weekend. The bodies are thought to be those of followers of a cult who reportedly believed they would go to heaven if they starved themselves.

Police began combing a 325-hectare (800-acre) area of woodland surrounding the Good News International Church last week after receiving tipoffs from human rights activists and local people about the cult's activities. An increasing number of people had gone missing in the area.

“We impressed on the police [the need] to go to more homes and find out what is happening,” said Hussein Khalid of human rights group [Haki Africa](#).

The church leader, Paul Mackenzie Nthenge, reportedly encouraged his followers to fast to death in order to “meet Jesus”. He is in custody pending

a court appearance. It is believed some of his devotees could still be hiding in the bush around Shakahola.

Kenya's interior minister, Kithure Kindiki, said initial findings suggested that "large-scale crimes" under national and international laws had been committed. "While the state remains respectful of religious freedom," those responsible should face "severe punishment", he tweeted.

In one grave an entire family of three children and their parents were found.

### [Map of Kenya and the area of the reported cult deaths](#)

The quickly rising death toll has prompted concern and outrage from the country's public and leadership.

Kenya's president, William Ruto, said there was "no difference" between rogue pastors like Nthenge and terrorists. "Terrorists use religion to advance their heinous acts. People like Mr Mackenzie are using religion to do exactly the same thing."

"I have instructed the agencies responsible to take up the matter and to get to the root cause and to the bottom of the activities of ... people who want to use religion to advance weird, unacceptable ideology."

The latest incident is not the first controversy concerning Nthenge, who [faced allegations](#) in 2017 and 2018 of radicalising school-age children and keeping his church open through corrupt means. Rights activists believe that the cult has been engaged in unlawful activities "for years".

Amason Kingi, the speaker of the Kenyan senate, said: "The unfolding horror that is the Shakahola cult deaths should and must be a wake-up call to the nation, more particularly the National Intelligence Service and our community policing programme.

"How did such a heinous crime, organised and executed over a considerable period of time, escape the radar of our intelligence system?"

Nthenge was arrested last month after two children starved to death in the custody of their parents. He was released on bail of 100,000 Kenyan shillings (£590), but surrendered to police after the Shakahola raid.

Moves to regulate religion in the majority-Christian country have been fiercely opposed in the past, viewed as attempts to undermine constitutional guarantees for a division between church and state.

*Agence France-Presse and Reuters contributed to this report*

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |



Credit Suisse clients rapidly started pulling money out of the bank after it was ensnared in market turmoil before it collapsed. Photograph: Pierre Albouy/Reuters

[Credit Suisse](#)

## Credit Suisse says £55bn left bank in lead-up to rescue by UBS

Results reported for what is likely to be the last time as lender's takeover by Swiss rival nears completion

[Kalyeena Makortoff](#) *Banking correspondent*

[@kalyeena](#)

Mon 24 Apr 2023 04.09 EDTFirst published on Mon 24 Apr 2023 01.50 EDT

Credit Suisse said customers pulled more than 61bn Swiss francs (£55bn) worth of assets from the bank at the start of the year, laying bare the scale of the panic that contributed to its failure and [emergency takeover by its rival UBS](#) last month.



The Swiss lender said the “significant withdrawals” were partly to blame for its poor financial performance in the first quarter, with its adjusted pre-tax loss ballooning to 1.3bn Swiss francs for the first three months of the year. That compares with a profit of 300m Swiss francs during the same period in 2022.

The figures were detailed in what is likely to be the 167-year-old bank’s last set of standalone financial results, as it prepares to be subsumed by UBS in the coming months.

While the outflows over the first three months of the year were lower than the 111bn Swiss francs that were withdrawn by customers between October and December, it was the speed at which money left the bank in the latter half of March that raised serious concerns.

“In the second half of March 2023, [Credit Suisse](#) experienced significant withdrawals,” the bank said. “These outflows, which were most acute in the days immediately preceding and following the announcement of the merger, stabilised to much lower levels, but had not yet reversed as of 24 April.”

Credit Suisse released figures showing that customers from the bank’s flagship wealth management division – which managed funds on behalf of rich clients – pulled 9% of their assets during the first quarter alone. That accelerated what had been a months of withdrawals by clients, with the division having reported assets under management of 502.5bn Swiss francs at the end of March, compared with 707bn Swiss francs a year earlier.

Credit Suisse said the overall drop in assets and deposits in the first quarter would knock income and fees, contributing to what is likely to be a “substantial loss before taxes” for the group in the second quarter and 2023 overall. That could spell trouble for Credit Suisse staff, who are at risk of job cuts as UBS considers the future shape of the business after the takeover.

Analysts at the New York investment bank Keefe, Bruyette & Wood said the magnitude of losses and outflows at Credit Suisse was “alarming”.

“While some may argue not as bad as feared, we would remind investors Credit Suisse has been running as a standalone entity since the end of March. There is more to come,” they said.

KBW said that even if UBS was able to cut 8bn Swiss francs worth of costs over the next four years, the potential for revenue growth was “so damaged” that the deal could end up dragging on UBS’s finances. That is, unless, it unveiled a “deeper” restructuring plan. “The deal is not as accretive as investors may think”, the analysts said.

Customers started to pull money from Credit Suisse at a clip last month amid growing concerns over the health of the global banking market, after the surprise collapse of the California-headquartered tech and venture capital lender Silicon Valley Bank.

While Credit Suisse had for years been mired in scandals, panic over its future grew after its largest shareholder, Saudi National Bank, ruled out any extra funding for the Swiss lender despite the growing turmoil.

The crisis of confidence first forced Swiss authorities to [offer emergency loans](#), before eventually orchestrating a shotgun takeover by Switzerland’s largest bank, UBS, which bought the lender for a cut price of 3bn Swiss francs.

The bank disclosed on Monday that it had borrowed about 168bn Swiss francs from the Swiss National Bank as of the end of March as part of an emergency loan facility meant to help support the bank’s operations as uncertainty mounted. It has so far repaid about 70bn Swiss francs of that total.

Credit Suisse, which did not hold any media or analyst calls after the release of the first-quarter results, said it would “work closely with UBS to ensure that the transaction is completed in a timely manner”.

UBS will report its own first-quarter results on Tuesday.

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |



Displaced families near Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, last year after fleeing jihadist attacks in the country's north and east. About 60 people were reportedly killed on Thursday in northern Yatenga province. Photograph: Issouf Sanogo/AFP/Getty Images

### [Burkina Faso](#)

## **Sixty killed in Burkina Faso village by raiders 'wearing military uniforms'**

More than 100 people invaded the village in northern Yatenga province, survivors say, amid increasing attacks blamed on suspected jihadists

*Agence France-Presse in Ouagadougou*

Mon 24 Apr 2023 00.05 EDTLast modified on Mon 24 Apr 2023 00.06 EDT

About 60 civilians were killed in a village in northern [Burkina Faso](#) by men wearing military uniforms, a local prosecutor has said, announcing an investigation into the latest bloodshed.

Attacks blamed on suspected jihadists are on the rise in the west African country, which is battling an insurgency that spilled over from neighbouring Mali.

“About 60 people were killed by people wearing the uniforms of our national armed forces” on Thursday in the village of Karma in northern Yatenga province, the Ouahigouya high court prosecutor, Lamine Kabore, said late on Sunday, citing the police.

“The wounded have been evacuated and are currently being taken care of within our health facilities,” he said in a statement, adding that the perpetrators had “taken various goods”.

The village of Karma is near the Malian border and attracts many illegal goldminers.

According to residents contacted by AFP, survivors said more than 100 people on motorbikes and pickup trucks raided the village.

Dozens of people were killed by the men, who were dressed in military uniforms, they said.

The latest bloodshed occurred a week after 34 defence volunteers and six soldiers were killed in an attack by suspected jihadists near the village of Aorema, about 15km from the provincial capital, Ouahigouya, and 40km from Karma.

Following that attack, Burkina Faso’s military junta declared a “general mobilisation” to give the state “all necessary means” to combat a string of bloody attacks blamed on jihadists affiliated with al-Qaida and the Islamic State group.

The decree states that anyone aged over 18 and physically fit who is not in the armed forces will be “called to enlist according to the needs expressed by the competent authorities”.

The government had already announced a plan to recruit 5,000 more soldiers to battle the insurgency that has gripped Burkina Faso since 2015. The country, landlocked and in the heart of West Africa's Sahel, is one of the world's most volatile and impoverished.

Ibrahim Traore, Burkina's transitional president, has declared a goal of recapturing the 40% of the country's territory which is controlled by jihadists.

The violence has left more than 10,000 people dead, according to non-governmental aid groups, and displaced 2 million people from their homes.

Anger within the military at the mounting toll sparked two coups in 2022, the most recent of which was in September, when Traore seized power. He is standing by a pledge made by the preceding junta to stage elections for a civilian government by 2024.

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The panel will examine law enforcement practices and whether they are aligned with international human rights standards. Photograph: Megan Varner/Getty Images

[United Nations](#)

## UN human rights experts begin US tour focusing on racial justice and policing

Panel established in response to George Floyd killing will visit Washington DC, Atlanta, LA, Chicago, Minneapolis and New York

[Maya Yang](#)

Mon 24 Apr 2023 02.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 24 Apr 2023 08.48 EDT

A team of [United Nations](#) experts has arrived in the US on a tour that will focus on racial justice, law enforcement and policing.

On Monday, the Expert Mechanism to Advance Racial Justice and Equality in the Context of Law Enforcement, an independent panel appointed by the



UN human rights council, began its two-week visit to the US.

The panel, which was established in response to widespread outcry following the killing of the Black man George Floyd in 2020 by a white police officer, is set to visit [Washington DC](#), Atlanta, Los Angeles, Chicago, Minneapolis and New York City.

Floyd's death was just one of many instances of racist killings by police in the US but – spurred by powerful video shot by bystanders – it triggered widespread protests across America, which then spread internationally.

The UN trip is to “further transformative change for racial justice and equality in the context of law enforcement for Africans and people of African descent”, said the UN.

In addition to visiting government officials at federal, state and local levels, the team will also visit law enforcement authorities, civil society organizations and places of detentions.

“We look forward to gaining first-hand insight about the lived experiences of people of African descent in the United States, and to offer recommendations to the government at all levels, to support efforts in combating systemic racism and excessive use of force, and ensure accountability and justice,” Juan Méndez, a panel member said in a statement.

The panel will examine laws and practices surrounding the use of force by law enforcement officials and whether they are aligned with international human rights standards.

Activists in [Atlanta](#) are especially looking forward to the panel, especially as many are opposing the [construction](#) of a \$90m police and fire department training center known as “Cop City” in a forest south-east of the city.

“Of particular interest is that the EMLER chose to locate their hearing in the very city where so many are saying ‘No to Cop City’ and where a



younger generation of political prisoners accused of domestic terrorism is at risk,” an activist in [Atlanta](#) told the Guardian.

In recent months, numerous activists protesting against Cop City have been [charged](#) with domestic terrorism by prosecutors in what critics call a “complete politicization of the law” and a “judicial pogrom”.

The panel, which will visit Atlanta on Wednesday, will hear testimonies discussing families affected by state violence, the school-to-prison pipeline, political prisoners and access to justice.

“Extrajudicial killings have become increasingly routine in American policing,” said Collette Flanagan, the founder of Mothers Against Police Brutality, whose unarmed son Clinton Allen was killed by police in Dallas, Texas, in 2013.

“They happen literally every day. This deadly police brutality represents a massive human rights violation that falls most heavily on people of African descent. We welcome the Expert Mechanism to Atlanta in the name of our martyred children. We hope this visit will help us move our country to live up to its obligations under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights agreements,” she added in a statement.

As part of its visit, the panel will make recommendations to “ensure access to justice, accountability and redress for excessive use of force and other human rights violations by law enforcement officials against Africans and people of African descent in the United States,” the UN said.

The panel will then present a report about its visit to the UN human rights council at its 54th session this fall.



Chinese spokesperson Mao Ning at a briefing at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Beijing on Monday: ‘We do not pose any challenge to any country.’ Photograph: Andy Wong/AP

[Australia news](#)

## Beijing says don’t ‘hype up the so-called China threat narrative’ after Australian criticism

Call comes after Australia’s defence review says activities in South China Sea ‘threaten rules-based order’

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

Mon 24 Apr 2023 05.23 EDTLast modified on Mon 24 Apr 2023 06.39 EDT

The Chinese government has urged countries not to “hype up the so-called China threat narrative” after a [major Australian defence review](#) criticised its activities in the South China Sea.

The Australian government’s defence strategic review, released on Monday, labelled the intense competition between [China](#) and the United States as “the defining feature of our region and our time”.

The public version of the final report did not label China a direct military threat to Australia, but said its assertion of sovereignty over the contested South China Sea “threatens the global rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific in a way that adversely impacts Australia’s national interests”.

The document also described China’s military buildup as “the largest and most ambitious of any country since the end of the second world war” and said it was “occurring without transparency or reassurance to the Indo-Pacific region of China’s strategic intent”.

A Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson, Mao Ning, was asked to respond to Australia’s plans at the daily press conference in Beijing on Monday.

Mao said China was “committed to maintaining peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific and the whole world”.

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“We do not pose any challenge to any country and hope relevant countries will not hype up the so-called China threat narrative,” Mao said.

Mao’s relatively cautious response did not include any direct criticism of the Australian government, which has attempted to “stabilise” the relationship since coming to office last year.

The defence minister, Richard Marles, told the ABC’s 7.30 program that the world was “witnessing the biggest conventional military build-up we have

seen in the world since the end of the second world war”.

“It’s true that is China,” Marles said. He said this build-up was “part of the landscape” but “far from the only factor here”.

Some observers of the relationship have argued the broad contours of Australia’s defence policy – [including Aukus](#) – were already factored in to Beijing’s calculations when it ended the freeze on high-level dialogue after the May election.

Sources confirmed that an official from the Chinese embassy attended a briefing on the defence strategic review in Canberra on Monday.

Guardian Australia understands more than 30 countries were offered briefings by the Australian government. Officials from China and other countries including Indonesia were briefed on Monday.

A spokesperson for Marles said the government had “engaged comprehensively with our regional neighbours and key partners about the release of the defence strategic review”.



Anthony Albanese speaks to reporters after the release of the defence strategic review. Photograph: Lukas Coch/AAP

The prime minister, Anthony Albanese, gave a cautious response when asked on Monday about a possible future conflict over Taiwan, which Beijing claims as a province despite that being rejected by Taiwan's government and people.

Albanese said there was no shift in Australia's position of opposing any unilateral changes to the status quo. "We call for peaceful resolution through dialogue," he said. "That's not changed by this."

Albanese said Australia faced "the most challenging strategic circumstances since the second world war". But he said at the same time the government was investing in its military capabilities, it was also investing "in our relationships to build a more secure Australia and a more stable and prosperous region".

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## **Review warns of 'radically different' security environment**

The report, by the former defence force chief Angus Houston and former Labor defence minister Stephen Smith, warned that the Australian defence

force was structured for “a bygone era”. It said the security environment was now “radically different” from the period at the end of the cold war.

The review called for the ADF to develop the ability to precisely strike targets at longer range and develop a stronger network of bases, ports and barracks across northern Australia.

The government estimated the cost of implementing the review would be about \$19bn over the initial four-year budget period.

But it said this initial amount was fully funded, through a combination of existing budget allocations and \$7.8bn in new savings within the defence portfolio.

That funding shuffle sparked criticism from the Coalition, which said the government was engaging in “strategic doublespeak” by talking up the threats without adding a single dollar in the four-year budget period.

The Coalition’s defence spokesperson, Andrew Hastie, said the government had “failed to deliver the sort of action that our circumstances require”.

He took aim at the decision to slash the number of infantry fighting vehicles to be ordered from 450 to 129, saying “army capability is being cannibalised”.

“Our troops will have less protection in close combat,” Hastie said.

“Even with the promised expansion of long range strike capability, you still need to provide security to those assets and forces.”

The government has promised to increase overall defence spending over the medium to long term.

The Greens senator David Shoebridge, the party’s defence spokesperson, said the review has Australia spending “countless billions on projecting lethal force into the South China Sea apparently to keep us safe, but it fails to explain how our key national interests are served by Australia joining a US-led war in the South China Sea”.

“The ‘threat’ from China’s increased military capabilities is said to be its assertion of sovereignty over the South China Sea. This is doubtless a serious issue but how is it an existential threat to Australia’s sovereignty and why are we gambling our future on a US-led war there?”

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

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# Calls for Boris Johnson's role in Richard Sharp's BBC appointment to be examined – as it happened

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Richard Sharp resigns as BBC chair – video

[Richard Sharp](#)

## Richard Sharp resigns as BBC chair after failing to declare link to Boris Johnson loan

Investigation says Sharp broke rules on public appointments, creating ‘potential perceived conflict of interest’

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Fri 28 Apr 2023 06.04 EDTFirst published on Fri 28 Apr 2023 05.01 EDT

Richard Sharp has resigned as BBC chair after he breached the rules on public appointments by failing to declare his connection to a secret £800,000 loan made to Boris Johnson.

Sharp quit on Friday morning after concluding his continued presence at the [BBC](#) “may well be a distraction from the corporation’s good work”.

An investigation by the UK commissioner of public appointments concluded Sharp had broken the rules by failing to declare his link to Johnson’s loan, creating a “potential perceived conflict of interest”.

The investigation also found that Johnson – when he was prime minister – had personally approved Sharp’s appointment as BBC chair, while the individuals running the supposedly independent recruitment process for the job had already been informed that Sharp was the only candidate whom the government would support.

Although this breach of the rules does not necessarily invalidate an appointment, Sharp said his position was no longer tenable and he had to quit. He intends to step down at a board meeting in June, at which point an acting chair will be appointed. Rishi Sunak's government will then start recruitment process to find a full-time successor.

Earlier this year, the Sunday Times revealed that [Sharp had secretly helped an acquaintance, Sam Blyth, who wanted to offer an £800,000 personal loan guarantee for Johnson](#). The prime minister's personal finances were in poor shape while he was in Downing Street with his new wife, Carrie, and baby son, and was going through an expensive divorce.

Sharp decided to introduce Blyth to Simon Case, the head of the civil service, so they could discuss a potential loan. But the BBC chair insists he took no further role and there is no evidence "to say I played any part whatsoever in the facilitation, arrangement, or financing of a loan for the former prime minister".

He added that he did not realise he had to declare the introduction during the recruitment process for the BBC job, saying: "I have always maintained the breach was inadvertent."

It is still not known who ultimately provided Johnson with the loan, which became public only after he left office.

Sharp's resignation comes at a tricky time for the BBC, which has been [hit by criticisms](#) it has become too close to the Conservative government – and faces questions over whether it has been too heavily influenced by ministers.

Labour's Lucy Powell said the incident had "caused untold damage to the reputation of the BBC and seriously undermined its independence as a result of the Conservatives' sleaze and cronyism".

She added: "Rishi Sunak should urgently establish a truly independent and robust process to replace Sharp to help restore the esteem of the BBC after his government has tarnished it so much."

The investigation into Sharp's appointment was particularly damning on the way the application process for the job was handled. Other candidates were put off from putting forward their names for the BBC job by the perception it was already lined for Sharp. Government-friendly media outlets were briefed that Sharp was the government's preferred candidate for the job before the application window had even closed.

"Leaks and briefing to the press of 'preferred candidates' for public appointments (referred to as 'pre-briefing') should be prohibited by ministers," the report concluded. "In this case such pre-briefing may well have discouraged people from applying for this role. It can also undermine efforts made to increase diversity."

MPs had already criticised Sharp, a financier and Tory donor, for "significant errors of judgment" in failing to declare the potential conflict of interest.

Sharp told MPs he had been attending a private dinner at Blyth's house in September 2020 when the Canadian businessman said he had read reports that Johnson was in "some difficulties" and that he wanted to help. Sharp said he had warned Blyth about the ethical complexities of this.

At the time, Sharp was working in Downing Street on Covid projects, and [told Johnson and Sunak of his aim to be BBC chair](#). He told the culture, media and sport committee in February: "I communicated to the prime minister and to the chancellor that I wished to apply and submitted my application in November."

The government will now be able to select a new BBC chair on a four-year term, depriving a potential Labour government of making its own appointment until late 2027.

The part-time position involves overseeing the BBC's operations and managing relationships with the government.

In his resignation statement, Sharp said that "for all its complexities, successes, and occasional failings, the BBC is an incredible, dynamic, and world-beating creative force, unmatched anywhere".

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Richard Sharp addresses questions about BBC impartiality at a committee hearing. Photograph: Parliament TV

[Richard Sharp](#)

## **Richard Sharp has friends everywhere – but ultimately left BBC on his own**

Ex-banker who helped Boris Johnson secure £800,000 loan could not survive investigation into appointment as chair

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



[Daniel Boffey](#) *Chief reporter*

Fri 28 Apr 2023 05.48 EDTFirst published on Fri 28 Apr 2023 02.00 EDT

Richard Sharp, 67, is a man of many friends. Until now – at the point of his [resignation as chair of the BBC](#) over a conflict of interest that had emerged from these cosy relationships – this had suited him just fine.

Some of those friends – like [Sam Blyth](#), the Canadian businessman, bon vivant and distant cousin of Boris Johnson – Sharp has spoken of knowing since leaving the University of Oxford “some 40 years ago”. Others, such as Johnson, who came to benefit from an £800,000 loan guarantee facility from Blyth via Sharp, are more recent in the making, born of a shared politics and the two men’s joint determination to oust Ken Livingstone from his post as London mayor in 2008.

Then there is the former banker’s relationship with [Rishi Sunak](#), which could be said to be somewhere in between in its tenure and type. Sunak, “fresh out of university” Sharp has recalled fondly, was his financial modeller at Goldman Sachs in the early 2000s. The older man had once advised that the prime minister was not cut out for the “dirty” business of politics.

In September 2020, this swirl of friendships, these apparently effortlessly secured connections, fatefully aligned. At the end of a dinner at Blyth's home, the colourful Canadian entrepreneur had expressed alarm at press reports that his tousled-haired relative was in some financial discomfort due to divorce payments, childcare costs and bills for the refurbishment of his Downing Street flat. Sharp had a word with the cabinet secretary, Simon Case, about the possibilities.

Around the same time, due to Sharp having taken a position as an adviser to Sunak, who was then chancellor, he had also been mixing among high-ups in the media world, as he was seeking to prop up Britain's film industry during the pandemic. It was, Sharp told the culture select committee in February as they investigated his appointment, at this point that some new media "friends" had suggested he throw his hat in the ring for the role of [BBC](#) chair. Sharp had thought nothing of any ethical issues posed by these various connections at that point, he told the committee. "It is almost hard to recall." These were the circles in which he had always mixed, perhaps. Friends helping each other out. They were, however, seemingly unable to help Sharp on Friday as he announced he was standing down over his breach of the governance code for public appointments.

Son of Marion and Eric – the boss of the privatised Cable & Wireless telecoms network in the 1980s, who received a life peerage as Lord Sharp of Grimsdyke in 1989 – Sharp was educated at state schools up to sixth form, after which he joined the fee-paying Merchant Taylors. From there it was up to Christ Church, Oxford, to read philosophy, politics and economics before entering the City with a job at JP Morgan in 1978. He moved on to Goldman Sachs where he made partner at the age of 38.

His twin sister is Dame Victoria Sharp, a court of appeal judge and the first woman to be president of the king's bench. Sharp's first wife, Victoria, is a niece of John Gutfreund, the US banker who was known as the "king of Wall Street" in his prime. Sharp lives in Holland Park, dines at Oswald's, a private members' club in Mayfair, and has a holiday home in Ibiza.

He told the select committee he was prompted to apply for the role of BBC chair, replacing David Clementi, after the former Daily Telegraph editor, Charles Moore, decided to pull out of the running, citing family health



issues. “Some of my friends at that time suggested to me that I should consider applying for the job. I was very interested in the prospect of submitting my application to be chair of the BBC and I did so.” He made sure to tell his friends Johnson and Sunak about his intentions first, of course. Downing Street subsequently conveyed Johnson’s backing for Sharp’s candidacy to the department for culture, media and sport, while intervening to effectively veto the independent members of the panel who would conduct the process.

When he was appointed in February 2021, Sharp was nevertheless concerned that it might be a struggle to win over the corporation, worrying that he would be seen as just the latest incarnation of the “pale, male, stale” chairs of the past. A card-carrying Tory, he has donated more than £400,000 to the party, from an estimated £200m fortune. He voted for Brexit.

Sharp’s first move, however, had been to announce that he would be giving his £160,000 BBC salary to charity, and in 2021 he [defended the recruitment](#) of Jess Brammar, the head of the BBC’s news channels, after a board member, Robbie Gibb, who was once Theresa May’s Downing Street director of communications, attempted to block it.

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Regarded as a canny and smooth operator, with powerful friends in Downing Street, there seemed to be little standing in the way of a successful tenure. The road did promise, however, to be that bit more bumpy due to the need to secure the long-term sustainability of the corporation before charter renewal at the end of 2027, and at a time when some in the cabinet were questioning the future of the licence fee. Then on 21 January a Sunday Times story dropped: “The BBC chairman, the prime minister and the £800,000 loan guarantee”.

Sharp, the newspaper reported, had been involved in talks about financing Johnson’s Downing Street lifestyle in November and December 2020. He had, it said, already submitted his application to become chair of the public service broadcaster. The select committee that had interviewed Sharp before his appointment by the prime minister had known nothing of it.

Sharp has explained that he did not feel a need to disclose all this to the committee as he had already done so to the cabinet secretary, “the most senior civil servant in the land”. It was, perhaps, the level at which he has always felt most comfortable. But as a report by the barrister, Adam Heppinstall KC, found against Sharp on Friday, those friends were apparently powerless or unwilling to help. Sharp stood alone as he announced his departure.

This article was amended on 28 April 2023. An earlier version said that Dame Victoria Sharp was a high court judge. She is a court of appeal judge.

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## 2023.04.28 - Spotlight

- 'I was really shocked' Would-be UK homebuyers describe their mortgage battles
- You be the judge Should my phone-addicted friend go on a mobile detox?
- 'Decadent, stupid, a fool' The dark days of Donna Summer
- Experience I'm the world's oldest female standup comedian



A file photograph showing homes in Brighton, Sussex, where one buyer who earns £220,000 was turned down for a £254,000 mortgage. Photograph: Andy Rain/EPA

### [Mortgages](#)

## **‘I was really shocked’: would-be UK homebuyers describe their mortgage battles**

Even high earners being hit by harsh bank affordability tests in wake of crisis caused by mini-budget

[Jedidajah Otte](#)

Fri 28 Apr 2023 03.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 28 Apr 2023 09.48 EDT

Violet\*, an advertising manager from Oxfordshire in her mid-40s, had confidently enquired about mortgage options to buy a new property last August.

“We had found a property we liked and had a meeting with [Barclays](#), who our current mortgage is with. After discussing options to port our mortgage [keeping an existing mortgage deal but buying a new property], and additional borrowing to buy the new house, the bank basically tick-boxed it all and even would have lent us considerably more than we needed,” she said.

But the following week, Kwasi Kwarteng’s mini-budget came, [triggering a domestic financial crisis](#) and higher mortgage costs for millions.

“Our chain collapsed because of it, we lost the property we wanted to buy. We found a new house in the new year, for a whole £100,000 less than the one we wanted previously. Hurrah, we thought!,” Violet said.

Despite the much lower mortgage request for the cheaper property, and although all the family’s other incomings and outgoings remained the same, their bank reduced the amount they were prepared to lend by £250,000.

When pressed, Barclays explained that the bank’s affordability algorithm had changed. “They said basically, ‘Because of everything that’s gone on in the economy, we’ve pretty much doubled the amount needed for the average cost of living per person’.

“The moment we confirmed our number of dependents – only two, we’re not the Baldwins! – a huge chunk of our monthly income was ringfenced to cover the cost of living: food, utilities, petrol.”

The couple are now hoping to secure a mortgage with a loan-to-value of 78% with a different provider. “But with the interest rates and affordability calculations changing constantly, the stress continues. It’s all become a bit of a nightmare.”

Violet is one of a number of prospective homebuyers who shared their unexpected struggles getting approved for residential mortgages.

Last August, the Bank of England [abolished a key mortgage affordability test](#) that forced borrowers to be able to afford a three-percentage-point rise in interest rates, raising hopes that thousands of potential homebuyers would find it easier to get on the property ladder.

But in the nine months since, growing numbers of people have had difficulties obtaining the mortgages they need: in January, UK mortgage approvals [were the lowest since January 2009](#), excluding the period when the housing market ground to a halt during the pandemic.

Despite some stabilisation of the market since the disastrous Liz Truss-Kwarteng mini-budget and approvals [having risen for the first time in six months](#) in February, mortgage lenders are expected to reduce the supply of home loans in the second quarter of 2023, the Bank of England's recent [latest credit conditions survey](#) showed.

Experts predict that even well-earning, middle-class homebuyers could have a hard time getting a mortgage in coming months, as UK lenders continue to tighten their lending criteria amid [stubbornly high inflation levels](#), high interest rates and economic uncertainty.

"It is true that lenders are tightening their credit criteria, which will make it harder to secure a mortgage," UK housing market analyst Anthony Codling said.

"With demand outstripping supply, lenders will be able to 'cherrypick' those they believe to be the best applicants."

Although many of those who came forward to share their experiences were in high-earning professional jobs, had excellent credit histories and did not seek to stretch themselves financially, their mortgage applications were rejected because of tougher affordability checks they did not manage to pass.

Lenders, they said, had downgraded their affordability dramatically because of high costs they associated with having children, refused to count income that might not be guaranteed in future, such as from contracted or flexible

work, and had no confidence in their ability to repay short-term loans, even for relatively modest sums.

As a result, they reported, banks and building societies offered vastly reduced lending amounts – if anything at all – forcing applicants to come up with tens of thousands of pounds at short notice to make up the shortfall, or to abandon their mortgage plans altogether.

## **‘If they aren’t lending to me, who are they lending to?’**

Among them is Alison, a single mother-of-one and a partner in an architecture firm earning £220,000 annually, who tried to port a mortgage to a new property at the end of last year, but was unable to get approved for a £254,000 loan.

When she complained, she was told she had failed the bank’s affordability test because she was now a mother with childcare costs, despite her income having doubled since she took out her previous mortgage in 2021, and that the bank could only consider guaranteed income.

Eventually, she was approved for a £207,000 mortgage, about 60% of the value of her new property.

“I had to come up with shy of £50,000 extra. If they aren’t lending to me, with my significant income, no credit card debt, and cash savings of £72,000 when I applied, I don’t know who they are lending to.”

## **‘They would not count any of my earnings’**

Sandra, 62, and her husband, from Doncaster, could not get past their high street lender’s opaque affordability checks for a loan to fund home improvements – despite a joint household income of more than £100,000.

“We wanted a small mortgage over £40,000 to build an extension. Our home is mortgage free, we never missed a payment for 30 years. We’re both



still working, but because I'm self-employed and in receipt of two small private pensions they would not count any of my earnings."



Doncaster city centre, where a couple earning £100,000 could not get a £40,000 mortgage for home improvements. Photograph: eye35.pix/Alamy

At the time of application, Sandra had been a contractor for the Ministry of Justice's tribunal service for five years, working three days a week on average with a day rate of £310-£410. "They treated that as if it was a zero hours job."

When the couple was turned down, it took a formal complaint before they found out the rationale, Sandra said. "I then made a complaint to the financial ombudsman, but they found nothing wrong, and said it was a 'business decision' to not count my self-employed income of almost £40,000."

They decided to not bother reapplying. "We were able to save almost £30,000 in 10 months without trouble, which clearly shows we could have easily afforded the mortgage. If we can be turned down like this, what chance does anyone have? It's crazy."

**'My credit rating was excellent'**



An attempt to remortgage by Nicola, a self-employed international development consultant from Brighton who has owned property for 20 years and has an adult daughter living at home, similarly resulted in rejection on affordability grounds, shortly after the mini-budget.

“I provided three years of tax returns, the mortgage was twice my annual income of around £120,000, my loan-to-value was 39%, my credit rating was excellent,” the 54-year-old said.

“I formally complained. They just said it was ‘the computer’, an algorithm. I was really shocked.”

Codling said: “Lenders are cautious about the economic outlook. Inflation has yet to be tamed and therefore the costs of living are still rising, and with employment levels so high, one might argue that their next move [may be down](#). Lenders are therefore trying to manage the risks that they perceive are ahead of them.”

\* Name has been changed

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Illustration: Joren Joshua/The Guardian

[You be the judge](#)[Smartphones](#)

**You be the judge: should my phone-addicted friend go on a mobile detox?**

Marley says she uses TikTok for work; her flatmate says 12 hours a day is too much. You decide if this social media habit is antisocial

- [Find out how to get a disagreement settled or become a You be the judge juror](#)



[Georgina Lawton](#)  
[@georginalawton](#)

Fri 28 Apr 2023 03.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 28 Apr 2023 20.48 EDT

## **The prosecution: James**

*My housemate and best friend spends every waking minute on TikTok*

I've known Marley for about seven years and she's always been quite reliant on her phone as she works in social media, but she's now seriously addicted to it, even after she's clocked off.

If she puts it down for 10 minutes she gets agitated. I hid her phone once to see how long it would take before she flipped and she couldn't hack it for

more than two minutes. She was like “Where is it?!” It was like watching a smoker cluck for their next fag.

I hid her phone once to see how long it would take before she flipped and she couldn’t hack it for more than two minutes

We moved in together in 2020 just before the pandemic, and that’s when I really noticed how bad her phone addiction was. Marley never has the phone out of her hand and she constantly scrolls when we are watching TV or having a conversation. I find it a bit rude. It’s also annoying when you’re trying to concentrate on a TV programme and she’s got her phone on full volume, watching reels.

When she’s working from home at the same time as me, I can hear her videos from the next room. I get disturbed by these weird songs on repeat, and she constantly quotes trending videos. When there was a viral video about a boy eating corn a while back, she’d just randomly burst into song, singing “It’s corn! A big lump with knobs” around the flat about 50 times a day.

Marley will look up literally everything on TikTok. We got a new coffee maker recently and she spent four hours researching people’s video reviews before deciding on which brand to get. I was fine with just reading some Amazon reviews. I asked to see her screen time the other day. I couldn’t actually believe it when it said 12 hours – *a day*. I told her she’s going to get square eyes, but she just laughed. Actually, her eyesight isn’t great, and I wonder if this is making it worse.

Marley needs to ease off on the phone usage for her own good, but she could also stop blasting videos around the house when I’m trying to watch TV or have a chat. I can deal with a bit of singing but I’m not on TikTok myself so I can’t really relate.

## **The defence: Marley**

*My job means I have to be on the ball with what’s trending online*

My phone is permanently glued to my hand, I agree with James there. But I don't think it's got much to do with him. If I want to make myself blind by spending nine hours a day on TikTok, so what? He should just let me.

I don't go around blasting videos at full volume all the time; I think that's only happened a handful of times. When James asks me to turn something down when he's watching the telly, I oblige. And I'm not socially inept – I don't watch things when someone is talking to me. He's exaggerating there.

This month my usage is down to seven hours a day which I think is actually quite good

But yes, I was shocked when James checked and saw that I was using my phone for 12 hours a day. That's not normal though. I checked and this month my usage is down to about seven hours a day, which I think is quite good seeing as I work in ads and socials for a big company. My job means I have to be on the ball with what's trending online. I literally get paid to research these things.

Sometimes I get sucked into the musicality of a viral video. CornTok was great. This kid went viral talking about how delicious sweetcorn is and someone remixed it into a catchy track, which took over TikTok. It was stuck in my head for weeks and I was singing it loads. I showed James the video, but I don't think he found it funny.

James and I work different hours so he's really not aware of the full extent of my phone habits. He's rarely in the house when I'm working, and this insinuation that he can hear me blasting videos from my room is far-fetched. I think he's jealous because I get to do this as part of my career, and he's got a rather boring job in accounting.

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I generally think TikTok is great and I'd be so upset if it got banned. It's great for finding out about new places when travelling, for product reviews from real people, and for entertainment. I've lost countless hours to the app, but I don't mind. I probably won't ever detox – and I don't think I need to. I'm also happy to make James a TikTok account too – if he's up for it.

## **The jury of Guardian readers**

### **Should Marley give TikTok a rest?**

James sees Marley as his best mate, but it's telling that not a single thing she says indicates she sees him in the same way. Marley needs to put her phone down, live in the moment and think less about her social media presence. She is guilty of not valuing a good and honest friend because she thinks a better life beckons on TikTok.

**Stewart, 62**

As a fellow phone addict, I do have sympathy for Marley. However, it's more than a little rude to have the sound turned on while watching TV together. And given how thin most flat walls are, it seems like headphones are called for too.

**Peter, 37**

The excessive use of antisocial media is a crime and an erosion of social values. Marley needs to get a grip on the social aspects of cohabitation.

However, the two of them are not in a relationship so her life is her own.  
**Steve, 64**

Marley is clearly addicted to TikTok, but if she wants her brain to turn to corn that is her choice. If James can't hack it, he should move out. People behave quite differently in their own home; I'm sure that if James and Marley were socialising as friends, not flatmates, she would engage with him more.

**Margo, 30**

While it sounds like Marley has a fairly serious addiction, ultimately it is up to her how she chooses to use her time. On the plus side, it makes gift ideas easy for her birthday. Do corn-shaped headphones exist? Maybe there will be a new trend by then

**Rob, 29**

## Now you be the judge

In our online poll below, tell us: should Marley get off Tiktok and get a life?

**The poll will close on Thursday 4 May, 10AM BST**

## Last week's result

Last week we asked: [should Amaan let Bree have the air-con on in the car?](#)

**92%** of you said yes – Amaan is **guilty**

**8%** of you said no – Amaan is **innocent**

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Queen of world-changing, bombastic pop ... Donna Summer in 1976.  
Photograph: Fin Costello/Redferns

[Donna Summer](#)

**‘I was decadent, I was stupid, I was a fool’: the dark days of Donna Summer**



In public she oozed glamour, but in private the disco star battled depression, self-loathing and suicidal thoughts. Her daughter speaks about the film she made to understand Summer's silent struggle

[Daniel Dylan Wray](#)

Fri 28 Apr 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 28 Apr 2023 06.37 EDT

In a New York hotel room in 1976, [Donna Summer](#) stepped towards the window ledge. She had become instantly famous the previous year for her pseudo-orgasmic vocals on her single Love to Love You Baby, which had reached No 2 in the US and Top 10 across most of Europe. But, unknown to her fans, she was horribly conflicted over the sexualised performance, and also in the grip of a violently abusive relationship. She began climbing up.

“Another 10 seconds and I would have been gone,” she later said – but her foot became entangled in a curtain and at that moment a maid entered. “I felt God could never forgive me because I had failed him,” she explained. “I was decadent, I was stupid, I was a fool. I just decided that my life had no meaning.”

These feelings were hidden from a public who knew her as one of US pop's most enchanting and formidably talented figures, the woman who would later sing [the world-changing I Feel Love](#), the strutting Hot Stuff and Bad Girls, the bombastic pop of She Works Hard for the Money, and [so many other effervescent hits](#). Even now, 11 years since she died of cancer, her producer and co-writer Pete Bellotte still regards her as “the best voice I've ever recorded. She'd sing with this incredible, intuitive feel. She would own a song immediately. Everything was always one take – she never struggled.”



Summer and her second husband, Bruce Sudano, in New York City, 1980.  
Photograph: Images Press/Getty Images

But – as explored in [a new documentary](#), *Love to Love You, Donna Summer* – behind her shiny queen-of-disco persona was a great deal of struggle. Summer was secretly racked with trauma, guilt and insecurities. “I have been changed for ever from this process,” says the film’s co-director – and Summer’s daughter – Brooklyn Sudano. “I feel grateful to be on this side of it, because it was very intense.”

When Summer sang in church as a child, she sometimes struggled to hit the high notes. Frustrated, one day she prayed: “God, please teach me how to sing better.” Church was a source of faith and hope for the young Summer. She grew up in a deeply religious household, but as a teen she was sexually abused by the pastor. “He did the devil’s work better than most,” says Summer’s brother Ricky Gaines in the film. “It became a defining moment in her life.”

Her father smacked her for wearing red nail polish because, he said, ‘that’s what whores wore’

This moment, which Summer didn't detail publicly until she published her memoirs in 2003, is the thread that runs through the documentary. "You're looking at me, but what you see is not what I am," we hear Summer say early on in the film. "How many roles do I play in my own life?"

It is a question that Sudano set out to ask with her co-director, Roger Ross Williams (who in 2010 became the first African-American director to win an Oscar, for his documentary short *Music by Prudence*). "We wanted to make a very personal, honest film," says Sudano. "To have a true understanding of the mom, sister and wife that we knew – a complex, artistic and colourful woman."

Much of the film is made up of Summer's own footage, as she was a keen amateur director who liked to shoot movies on the road or at home. There are films of her as a spoof fortune teller, at family Christmases, hotel-room dance parties, quietly sitting at a piano, and letting her voice ring out pristinely through the family home. Musical milestones pepper her life, including her eight US Top 5 hits in a whirlwind 18-month stretch in the late 70s.

Despite being endorsed by her family, the film is not glossy PR. "The first thing I asked Brooklyn was: are you willing to go to uncomfortable places and be brutally honest?" says Williams. The result is an intimate look at an artist who carried hidden darkness while publicly typifying glamour and sexuality.



Summer performing in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, in 2010. Photograph: Zuma Press/Alamy

Growing up in Boston, Massachusetts, Summer was subjected to racism from an early age and was beaten by gangs of white youths; a facial scar left her feeling “ugly” and “inadequate”. She also nearly died from drowning when she was eight. The person she grew into was funny and wildly talented, but also guarded and private. When she became a mother, she kept her bedroom locked, off limits even to her own children; when she was diagnosed with lung cancer in her final years, she told nobody outside her immediate family. “That was very hard,” says Sudano. “We respected her journey, but it was difficult, because people would ask questions and we’d have to go: ‘Oh, she’s fine.’”

This duality – of private sadness while pretending publicly that everything was rosy – became the film’s core theme. “After her passing, a lot of people came up to me and did not have closure,” says Sudano. “They wanted to understand why she would make that choice [not to tell them]. I thought: we need to tell the story – but really tell it.”

After moving to New York to be in the psych-rock band Crow, Summer landed a role in the musical Hair. The production took her to Germany in 1968, where five years later she ended up marrying the Austrian actor

Helmuth Sommer and having their daughter Mimi. Working as a backing singer in Munich, she met the producers Bellotte and [Giorgio Moroder](#).



Summer's daughter Brooklyn Sudano with Roger Ross Williams, the co-director of Love to Love You, Donna Summer. Photograph: Robby Klein/Contour by Getty Images

By 1975, the three of them had written Love to Love You Baby, the blueprint for sultry disco that was so literal in its performance of sexual moans and groans that the BBC banned it. But, as early as 1976, it was something Summer didn't want to define her. "I have so much more to offer," she told Rolling Stone.

The highly eroticised music was also fundamentally at odds with Summer's background – as a child, her father smacked her for wearing red nail polish because, he said, "that's what whores wore". Bellotte recalls going to a launch party for the raunchy single, but not being introduced to Summer's parents. "I think we were the enemies," he says.

You're looking at me, but what you see is not what I am. How many roles do I play in my own life?

*Donna Summer*

It created a deep inner conflict – and Summer’s rapid ascent to fame was matched by her mental decline. “The most dismal days of my existence were at the height of my career,” she said. As she struggled, Mimi was sent to live with her grandparents and Summer, now separated from her husband, endured an abusive relationship with the artist Peter Mühldorfer. One beating left her unconscious, with a black eye and broken ribs. By the end of 1976, Summer was contemplating killing herself in that hotel room.

“We were sometimes afraid going into these conversations with Brooklyn’s relatives – there were a lot of tears,” says Williams. They even tracked down Mühldorfer, who reflects: “I hit her and I never could forgive myself.”

“One of the foundational pillars of this film is that these hard conversations are necessary,” says Sudano. “I knew that my mother had forgiven him, so I felt comfortable with having the conversation, and by doing that you bring healing.”

When it is revealed that Mimi was also sexually abused as a child, in the family home by someone related to the housekeeper, the film moves even further away from traditional music documentary and into one exploring generational trauma and the complexities of that when entangled in family, faith and fame. “Mimi’s story was integral,” says Sudano. “It’s so intertwined with my mother’s life and her struggles with motherhood and how to reconcile her own trauma. There has been a lot of healing for Mimi personally, but also us as a family. Even if nothing had happened with the film, the biggest gift was to be able to help facilitate that process for her.”



Summer with the producer Giorgio Moroder, one of the co-writers of her 70s mega-hit Love to Love You Baby. Photograph: Echoes/Redferns

Aside from being a form of family therapy it could also be seen as a posthumous collaborative project with Summer herself, given the story is told through her words and footage. “We always made a joke: that she was directing from heaven,” says Sudano.

Summer’s commercial success peaked in 1979 with the multimillion-selling *Bad Girls*. In 1980, she married Bruce Sudano and by 1982 had two more daughters, Brooklyn and Amanda. Another hit album landed in 1983 with *She Works Hard for the Money*, but family life became more of a focus. So did faith, with Summer becoming a born-again Christian.

I’m trying to figure out the many pieces of who Mom was

### *Brooklyn Sudano*

At a 1983 concert, it was reported that she said: “God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve,” which caused significant upset among her LBGTQ+ fans – a community that had played a significant role in her breakout success. It was also reported – but strongly and tearfully refuted later by

Summer in Advocate magazine – that she said Aids was God’s punishment for homosexuality.

Williams, who is gay, recalls that period. “I was so impacted and hurt by the ‘Adam and Steve’ comment. So I wanted to explore that in this film and know why.” Summer attempted to make amends and performed at Aids benefits, while publicly stating: “What people want to do with their own bodies is their personal preference.” While she still retains icon status for many LGBTQ+ people, Summer felt her relationship with her gay fans had been tarnished. “To have this asterisk on your legacy was devastating,” Sudano says. “That was very difficult for her to get over, because she loved people and particularly that community. Again, it’s about healing. It’s acknowledging that this was a terrible thing that was super-hurtful.”

In the film, Sudano says she is “trying to figure out the many pieces of who Mom was”. Has she? “I now have so much more understanding,” she says. “It was really new to grasp how instrumental these moments were in her life and how she felt like she couldn’t talk about so much of it just in order to survive. She did so much with not a lot of tools.”

Love To Love You, Donna Summer is on HBO and HBO Max in the US and Sky Documentaries in the UK next month

*In the UK and Ireland, [Samaritans](https://www.samaritans.org) can be contacted on freephone 116 123, or email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org) or [jo@samaritans.ie](mailto:jo@samaritans.ie). In the US, the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](https://www.nationalsuicidepreventionlifeline.org) is at 988, or chat for support. You can also text HOME to 741741 to connect with a crisis text line counsellor. In Australia, the crisis support service [Lifeline](https://www.lifeline.org.au) is 13 11 14. Other international helplines can be found at [befrienders.org](https://www.befrienders.org)*





D'yan Forest: 'I hope to still be performing when I'm 100.' Photograph: Ben Zucker/The Guardian

[ExperienceComedy](#).

## Experience: I'm the world's oldest female standup comedian

At 88, I often get ignored when I first walk into comedy clubs. People assume I'm in the wrong place and are shocked to find out I'm on the bill

*D'yan Forest*

Fri 28 Apr 2023 05.00 EDT

I was 68 when I first stepped on stage as a standup comedian in 2003. I'd never set foot in a comedy club before. I've always been a performer – I've worked as a singer, actor and musician – but all that came to an end after 9/11. I live in New York, and we watched the twin towers fall from my apartment building. For a year afterwards, nobody wanted to go out or be entertained.

It was then that I started to think about comedy. I realised people needed to laugh, to enjoy themselves again, and thought that with a little training I could do it. I took a few classes, tried to work out a routine, and finally plucked up the courage to get up on stage. That first time was terrifying. I had no idea what the audience would make of me.

In New York, comedians are typically young men with beards. It's hard enough to break through as a woman, even harder as someone old enough to be their grandmother. As I stepped on stage that first time, people laughed nervously. They were clearly surprised to see me, wearing a cardigan and carrying my ukulele. I introduced myself, stated my age and tried my first joke. There was silence. But by the time I got to the third line, people were properly laughing. I was hooked.

Now my sets differ. I might be on stage for 10 minutes in front of a dozen people, or my one-woman show is a full hour in front of a crowd of 100. Even today, I'm nervous before I step out. My first line is, "Hello, everybody. I'm 88 and three-quarters years old. I'm telling you that in case I don't make it all the way through the show." Then people laugh and I relax.

I make jokes some people would consider risqué. I talk about "not having the energy for 69s". People are surprised to hear an older person talk about sex. I'm more of a puritan in real life, but I have an onstage persona. After a show, people young and old come up to me, saying what an inspiration I am. They say they want to be as active as me when they reach my age. I'm pleased I can show that as an older person you don't need to take a back seat in life.

One thing that has surprised me is the number of young men who hit on me after a show. I might make a joke about being a cougar and they'll stand outside afterwards, waiting to talk to me. They often ask me out and it's not my brain they're after.

My friends think I'm mad. They don't understand why I wouldn't choose to take it easy. But I like engaging with the world and you've got to be in touch to be funny. You can't stand on stage in New York or Paris and have

out-of-date opinions or any kind of prejudice. [Comedy](#) has changed hugely in the past 20 years. It's meant to push the boundaries, but what was considered funny then isn't seen as funny now. Audiences have changed, too.

I had heart surgery last year, aged 87, and I was back on stage the day after I came out of hospital. I was keen to get back to work, even if I was a little breathless that night. I've got a pacemaker and I'm on 12 pills and 1mg of steroids a day.

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As an older person in comedy, I do feel as if I've got more to prove. I have to convince people I'm worthy of being on that stage. I think the industry, and society as a whole, treats older women horribly. I often get ignored when I first walk into comedy clubs. People assume that I'm in the wrong place and are shocked to find out I'm on the bill. Some booking agents say, "The audience isn't gonna want to see an old lady." Then I go and perform, and all of a sudden it's, "Oh, you were so great."

Last year, I was recognised as the oldest female standup comedian in the world. Sadly, the title came to me only after my friend [Lynn Ruth Miller](#),

who was six months older than me, passed away. Drew Barrymore interviewed me and asked, “How does it feel?” And all I could think of was to say, “Old.”

I’ve no intention of stopping comedy. I’m taking all these pills, trying to stay alive, and I hope to still be performing when I’m 100. My goal is to still be up there making people laugh. It’s hard work, but it stops me being bored. I’d only be playing golf otherwise.

As told to Sophie Haydock

Do you have an experience to share? Email [experience@theguardian.com](mailto:experience@theguardian.com)

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## 2023.04.28 - Opinion

- Britain once rioted over the price of bread. What would it take for us to confront greedflation today?
- As a billionaire king is crowned, he urges us to do some charity work. Welcome to Britain
- The Met was ill prepared when Stephen Port began killing gay men – and it still is
- Betting nearly destroyed me. The industry must not be allowed to water down online gambling reform



Illustration: Nate Kitch

### Opinion

**Britain once rioted over the price of bread. What would it take for us to confront greedflation today?**

[Andy Beckett](#)



We seem to wearily accept corporate profiteering as a fact of life. But an ever poorer public can be pushed only so far

Fri 28 Apr 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 28 Apr 2023 07.13 EDT

This country's rate of [inflation](#), the worst in western Europe, is everywhere in most people's lives: in our anxious [shopping](#) and conversations, our late-night fears and fraught pay negotiations, our cancelled or rationed pleasures, and our sense of Britain's shrinking possibilities. After the pandemic, Brexit, and years of austerity and political chaos, to be experiencing the biggest sustained fall in the national [standard of living](#) for over 60 years can feel like the final straw.

Yet in the endless conversations about the price of everything there is a frequent absence. The role of increased profits in the cost of living crisis remains a relatively neglected topic: sporadically raised by leftwing activists, business analysts and economists, occasionally the reason for protests, but largely avoided by the main parties, and seemingly not a consistently important issue for the wider public. Brief periods of anger about profiteering, as happened [last year](#) with the energy companies, give way to fatalistic silence.

In some ways, this is a surprise. Over the past decade and a half, as the privatised utilities have provided ever poorer service, reckless banks have required expensive bailouts and executive pay has soared while average wages have stagnated, big business has lost much of the authority it used to enjoy during the Thatcher and Blair eras. To say that corporations are too greedy has become commonplace, on the populist right as well as the left.

And there is more and more evidence that aggressive profit-seeking has contributed significantly to the inflation surge. Research released in March by the trade union [Unite](#) showed that for the 350 largest companies listed on the London Stock Exchange, “Profit margins for the first half of 2022 were 89% higher than in the same period in 2019.” The [Financial Times](#) recently noted that across western economies “[profit] margins reached record highs” during 2022, and “remain historically high”. New terms have been coined to describe the phenomenon: “greedflation” and “excuseflation” – the exploitation of our era’s frequent crises to excessively hike prices.

The awkwardness of these terms may explain why they haven’t quite caught on. But there are deeper reasons why profiteering hasn’t become the issue it ought to be. These reveal a lot about the state of our politics, and about how we think of the economy.

Both Labour and the Conservatives, after being critical of business under Jeremy Corbyn and Boris Johnson, are now under more orthodox leaders, who are seeking economic “credibility”. In speeches and at more discreet gatherings, they are competing for the approval of the business establishment, seeing its support as essential to winning the election and reviving the economy afterwards.





The Peterloo Massacre, 16 August 1819, in Manchester, England – which began as a peaceful protest against the price of bread. Photograph: Classic Image/Alamy

Keir Starmer, it is true, has repeatedly and rightly attacked the [“excess profits”](#) of energy firms. Yet, tellingly, he has not extended that critique to other companies that, Unite’s research shows, have also been “profiteering”, such as some of Britain’s supermarket chains, port operators and road hauliers.

Understandably, from a party-political perspective, Starmer prefers to blame the government for inflation and our economic problems generally. He rarely talks about the current economy in a more fundamental and compelling way, as a rigged system for distributing resources and rewards – a perspective that was such a novel and welcome feature of Corbyn’s leadership. With Labour no longer providing a clear economic analysis, many Britons remain greedflation’s uncomprehending victims.

Yet the passivity about profiteering can hardly just be blamed on Starmer. There is a wider culture at work. In this country, it is generally believed that the main duty of businesses is to maximise returns for their shareholders, despite the fact that the 2006 [Companies Act](#) describes their duties much

more widely. This profit-fixated culture makes it hard to define what an excessive profit is, or even to argue that such a thing can exist.

Beyond these difficulties lies a more profound fatalism about the power of business. In his 2009 book [Capitalist Realism](#), the influential leftwing theorist Mark Fisher described a “widespread sense that not only is capitalism the only viable political and economic system, but also that it is now impossible even to imagine a coherent alternative”.

The accelerating climate crisis and drastically narrowed distribution of economic rewards since 2009 have damaged capitalism’s claim to long-term viability. But the difficulty for many people of imagining a different economy remains – which is one of the reasons Corbyn did not win a general election. The idea of a society where a cost of living crisis was not exploited by greedy companies would almost certainly be dismissed by many voters as a fantasy.

The succession of national crises and deterioration in living standards since the late 00s have also accustomed many Britons to the idea that the country and their individual lives are getting worse. Artificially inflated prices seem just another problem, to work around rather than protest about. In the 18th and 19th centuries, Britons regularly rioted when they thought the price of bread was unreasonably high, but nowadays, retail analysts tell us, consumers react to inflation in essentials by shopping around, buying them in smaller quantities or going without.

It’s just about possible to see a political side to these contemporary responses: that they are undeclared, individualised forms of consumer boycott. And they may be having some effect. In the supermarkets I use, there are suddenly lots of discounts on products that have had their prices hugely hiked over recent months. This week it was announced that the rate of grocery inflation has [fallen slightly](#). Perhaps some of Britain’s profit maximisers are beginning to realise that they have pushed their customers too far.

Yet if the profiteering of the past two years is not to recur as soon as the next global crisis gives cover, more collective and more official action will be needed: wider windfall taxes, moves by regulators to break up Britain’s

many undeclared pricing cartels, and perhaps even government-imposed price controls on essentials.

Is it conceivable that such things could happen? Under as corporate a premier as Rishi Sunak, it is very hard to imagine; and under the cautious Starmer, only a little less so. Yet as rulers across the centuries have discovered, an ever poorer public can ultimately become impossible to govern. If current or future prime ministers have to choose between limiting profits and being pushed from office, they probably won't opt for the latter.

- Andy Beckett is a Guardian columnist

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |



‘Asking the rest of us to celebrate his kingship by helping out at the local food bank feels, shall we say, a little ‘let them eat quiche’.’ Photograph: Reuters

[OpinionKing Charles coronation](#)

**As a billionaire king is crowned, he  
urges us to do some charity work.  
Welcome to Britain**

[Frances Ryan](#)



Charles' coronation initiative is no surprise – the royals seem to prefer ad hoc philanthropy to actually funding public services

Fri 28 Apr 2023 02.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 28 Apr 2023 13.26 EDT

Don't have plans for the coronation bank holiday? Fear not. The king invites you to join the [Big Help Out](#), a national day of volunteering designed to mark the new reign. Or as the [Telegraph](#) breathlessly describes it, a “tribute to Charles's many decades of public service”.

The Big Help Out will, according to the official website, “give everyone an opportunity to join in”. What acts of charity would Buckingham Palace like us to join in with, exactly? Squeezing out [toothpaste](#) for an elderly neighbour, perhaps. Or staffing a local art centre (do remember not to [take the art home](#) with you).

With the cost of living crisis leading to growing hardship across the country, especially in the poorest communities, there is said to be a national shortage of volunteers to meet the demand for them. Organisers were hoping the Big Help Out would inspire a new wave of volunteering, but some in the charity fear the event will be “[damp squib](#)”, due to lack of participants.

Is one really shocked? A man whose [car collection](#) alone is estimated to be worth more than £6m asking the rest of us to celebrate his kingship by helping out at the local food bank feels, shall we say, a little “[let them eat quiche](#)”.

Volunteering can be hugely rewarding, and many organisations are in desperate need of more help, but there may be better ways to promote the cause than an event that is literally about deference to hereditary privilege. People who are already working every hour just to put food on the table hardly need a billionaire to ask them to use their day off to do more.

As commentary on this country’s relationship with class goes, it could only be more crass if one of the volunteering jobs on offer was for families to scrub King Charles’s golden carriage with their electricity bills.

Charity, monarchy fans insist, is a longstanding personal interest of the royal family. In the runup to the coronation, the Princess of Wales made a “[previously unannounced](#)” visit to Windsor’s baby bank for deprived newborns (photographers were there entirely coincidentally, you understand). More than 850 community and charity representatives [have been invited](#) to the coronation to show the king’s deep respect for their work and 400 young volunteers will also watch from St Margaret’s church, Westminster Abbey.





Charles, complete with Aston Martin DB6 Volante, visits the car maker's new factory in St Athan, Wales, on 21 February 2020. Photograph: Chris Jackson/Getty Images

No news as yet as to whether any representatives from HMRC have been invited. Royals always seem to prefer ad hoc charity work to taxation, much like the [boss of Amazon](#) or the Victorians. The £1bn Duchy of Cornwall estate – previously inherited by Charles and recently [passed on](#) to Prince William – is not liable for either corporation tax or capital gains tax.

But don't worry, according to the duchy's website, under Charles's leadership, the estate's annual multimillion-pound revenue was used to fund his "public, private and charitable activities". Charles notably didn't [pay a single penny](#) of inheritance tax on the fortune the late Queen left him last year (the jewellery alone was estimated to be [worth at least £533m](#)), though he has "volunteered" to pay income tax, as he also did on the duchy estate. "Volunteering" to pay tax feels a little like a wanted criminal "volunteering" to hand himself over to the authorities. It doesn't seem to be something you typically get a choice in.

For the little people, tax isn't a hobby – it funds the key services we all rely on. Indeed, the "crisis in volunteering" that the Big Help Out hopes to fill has largely been created by years of government cuts, all while the richest

have hoarded and [increased their wealth](#). Over the last decade, local councils have faced £15bn in [real-terms cuts](#) with neighbourhood services such as parks, libraries and children's centres "[hollowed out](#)" since 2010.

There is apparently no money for [Sure Start centres](#) but you'll be relieved to hear ministers have [found £8m](#) to offer every public body a free portrait of King Charles. [Oliver Dowden](#), the new deputy prime minister and patriot in chief, says the portraits would bring the nation together. So would working hospitals.

The coronation itself is estimated to be costing the public purse anywhere from £50m to £100m. Charles's personal fortune is thought to be [almost £2bn](#), but as anyone who has ever gotten a £60 ticket to St Pancras on expenses knows, a [1.3-mile coronation procession](#) can very much be put down as a "work trip".

In the coming days, there will be endless commentators ready to declare that the coronation makes them "proud to be British", while anyone who criticises any aspect of it will be accused of "hating their country". I have never quite understood the mindset that feels more pride in producing Prince Andrew than the welfare state. At the very least, we should surely be allowed to ask some questions. Can a modern nation call itself democratic if it retains an unelected head of state? Is a growing reliance on charity a point of celebration or shame? Does sanitising the existence of royalty normalise wider inequality? As a diamond-encrusted crown is placed on the king's head, your packed local homeless shelter is desperate for help. Don't you feel proud to be British?

- Frances Ryan is a Guardian columnist





The victims of serial killer Stephen Port (clockwise from top left): Daniel Whitworth, 21, Jack Taylor, 25, Gabriel Kovari, 22, and Anthony Walgate, 23. Photograph: PA

[OpinionPolice](#)

## **The Met was ill prepared when Stephen Port began killing gay men – and it still is**

[Matt Parr](#)



I hoped to find a police force that had learned from its many mistakes, but even now I cannot give that assurance

- Matt Parr is HM Inspector of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services

Fri 28 Apr 2023 03.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 28 Apr 2023 03.46 EDT

Between June 2014 and September 2015, Stephen Port drugged, sexually assaulted and murdered four young gay men in east London, leading to a police response that was criticised by a coroner for a large number of “very serious and very basic [investigative failings](#)”. Eight years after Port murdered his last victim, what has changed in terms of the way the Metropolitan police might cope with similar circumstances? I have looked into that, and the sad answer is not enough.

What happened remains shocking. Anthony Walgate was [Port’s first victim](#). He was found dead outside the block of flats where Port lived, after Port rang 999 to report finding a young man collapsed. Anthony had died from an overdose of GHB, which is sometimes known as the “date rape” drug.

Port's next three victims, Gabriel Kovari, [Daniel Whitworth](#) and Jack Taylor, were all found in a churchyard close to Port's flat. Like Anthony, they had all consumed fatal levels of GHB.

The similarities were glaringly obvious, yet the Met failed to recognise that the deaths might be connected – or even that the four men had been murdered.

Port eventually admitted that he had met Anthony for sex. He claimed it was Anthony who had administered the drugs and that he had panicked after finding him dead and taken his body outside. It's hard to believe that the police accepted Port's version of events as the truth, when the circumstances should surely have set alarm bells ringing.

It is entirely possible that Gabriel, Daniel and Jack would still be alive had the police conducted a professional and thorough investigation after Anthony's death. This injustice must be unbearably hard for the victims' families to live with. To add insult to injury, the Met's interaction with the families was uncaring and, at times, virtually nonexistent. It was the families' persistence that eventually led to Port being identified as a suspect.

The families of Port's victims have accused the Met of [homophobia](#). We understand why. We also understand their desire to make sense of the wholly preventable deaths of their loved ones.

In fact, the police did not initially realise each victim was gay. This doesn't excuse their failings. But by the time they recognised the men were gay, the investigations were already doomed to fail. Almost immediately, and with little interrogation or curiosity, frontline officers had decided that each cause of death was a self-administered drug overdose. As a result, the deaths were not recorded as suspicious. This mistake was critical and hard to forgive. It affected everything that followed. It meant specialist homicide detectives did not become involved, and local officers didn't even consider the possibility of a serial killer.

The Met has apologised to the families. But in the hope that lessons can be learned, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue

Services has examined what has happened since. We find that the Met has not learned enough from its failings in the Port case – and it could happen again. Most worryingly, officers admitted to us that they still rely on luck to identify links between deaths.

[Our report](#) describes a police force that has struggled to overcome deep-rooted problems with competence and professionalism. We regularly hear that the Met is inexperienced and that its resources are stretched, which we accept. But that doesn't absolve the Met of its responsibility to meet basic requirements.

We have uncovered the five issues that we believe offer the most convincing explanation for why the Met's handling of the Port case was fundamentally flawed.

First, not enough training is provided to inexperienced police officers who respond to deaths, and not enough is done to instil an investigative mindset in officers.

Second, there is poor supervision and oversight of these same officers. A senior supervisor should attend all reports of a sudden death. But we found that it was common for supervisors to be “acting” or temporarily promoted sergeants rather than senior in rank.

Third, we found unacceptable record-keeping, confusing case management systems and poor handling of property and exhibits. Combined, these problems can lead to confusion, duplication and wasted time.

Fourth, the Met has an overwhelming amount of confusing policy and guidance.

And fifth, we found inadequate intelligence and crime-analysis processes, which make it difficult for the police to link deaths at a local level.

The Met has made some improvements since Port was finally charged with the four murders in 2015; these include better working arrangements between local officers and specialist homicide investigation teams, and

training and guidance for officers on [chemsex](#). We welcome these changes, but the force has still not done enough.

[Confidence in the Met](#) matters. It is the UK's largest police force by far, and for many is the face of British policing. And it desperately needs to recruit quality people – from all of London's communities – and retain the good ones currently serving.

To begin rebuilding public trust, the Met must act on the 20 recommendations we have made without delay. These include improving how the force investigates deaths and how it supports bereaved families. Frontline officers responding to deaths should make better use of available intelligence. Indeed, we encourage chief constables of all police forces to use this as an opportunity to reexamine how they investigate deaths.

If the police are willing to learn from past failings, they will be much better equipped to keep the public safe from predators like Stephen Port. That must be a priority. No other family should have to experience this injustice again.

- Matt Parr is HM Inspector of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services
- ***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](#).***



‘It wasn’t just a loss of money that led to a collapse in my mental health. It was what gambling had done to my brain.’ Photograph: Bet\_Noire/Getty Images/iStockphoto

### [OpinionGambling](#)

## **Betting nearly destroyed me. The industry must not be allowed to water down online gambling reform**

[Matt Zarb-Cousin](#)

This sector makes 86% of its profits from 5% of its customers. It will not change until it is forced to

Thu 27 Apr 2023 13.53 EDTLast modified on Thu 27 Apr 2023 14.11 EDT

Thirteen years ago, I was suicidal. I remember overwhelming feelings of guilt, and a loss of agency. I no longer felt in control of my own life, and while I had racked up significant debts that took many years to repay, it



wasn't just a gradual loss of money that led to a collapse in my mental health. It was what gambling had done to my brain.

I had been sucked in to [fixed odds betting terminals](#) (FOBTs), which [until 2019](#) permitted stakes of up to £100 a spin in betting shops. The rapid event frequency, high stakes and addictive roulette content were the factors that brought on a form of psychological dependence. My suicidal ideation came not because of the amount of money I had lost, but because I didn't have access to any more money to gamble with. I could no longer escape from the problems gambling itself had created.

I am fortunate to have not taken my own life, and to have repaired the damage my addiction caused to me and to others. But many are not so lucky. [Public Health England](#) estimates there is one gambling-related suicide every day, with the mental health consequences worsened by a stigmatising “responsible gambling” narrative that diverts the blame for addiction away from harmful gambling industry products and practices, instead locating it solely with the individual.

So the [reforms](#) announced to online gambling regulation by the culture secretary, Lucy Frazer, are long overdue. It is a sector that currently generates [86% of its profit](#) from the 5% of gamblers who are addicted or at risk, and has been subject to a government review since December 2020. In that time, online gambling firms have raked in [£13bn](#) from punters. So while the gambling white paper represents a big step forward in many areas, it's disappointing that after such a drawn-out process much of the measures will be subject to further consultation.

Having reduced the maximum stake on FOBTs to £2 in 2019, it's a no-brainer to now apply that to slots – especially given that the government claims to want to bring our analogue gambling laws into the digital age. Instead, the £2 limit will apply to those aged under 25, with stakes of between £2 and £15 to be consulted on. An improvement in any case, given there are currently no limits to stakes. Online slots carry a rate of problem gambling and at-risk gambling of about [45% of people](#) who use them, and generate half of the total losses to online gambling of £7bn a year.

While it's welcome that the government has recognised the need for affordability checks, the proposed loss thresholds that trigger them – £500 in a day for under-25s and £1,000 a day for everyone else – appear out of touch in a cost of living crisis, especially given the decline in average disposable income in this country. It is hoped that the consultation phase will iron out some of these inconsistencies, but this must arrive at a decision made on the basis of evidence and not gambling industry lobbying.

The Conservative MP Scott Benton had the whip suspended earlier this month after he was caught up in a Times [sting operation](#) offering to lobby ministers on behalf of the gambling industry. But the big win for campaigners is the statutory levy, which on implementation will provide £150m a year for research, education and treatment. This will be administered independently of the gambling industry, which had been lobbying vociferously to maintain a voluntary system that provided inadequate funding and allowed gambling firms to determine where the money went.

Anyone can get addicted to gambling, and through inadequate regulation the sector has grown reliant on revenues from those experiencing harm. The measures announced on Thursday must be implemented promptly: the industry cannot be allowed to slow down implementation or water down effective policy. Only then will consumers be protected and the sector restrained from the destruction it leaves behind in the pursuit of profit.

- Matt Zarb-Cousin is the director of [Clean Up Gambling](#)
- In the UK and Ireland, [Samaritans](#) can be contacted on freephone 116 123, or email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org) or [jo@samaritans.ie](mailto:jo@samaritans.ie). In the US, the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) is at 988 or chat for support. You can also text HOME to 741741 to connect with a crisis text line counselor. In Australia, the crisis support service [Lifeline](#) is 13 11 14. Other international helplines can be found at [befrienders.org](#)



- In the UK, support for problem gambling can be found via the NHS [National Problem Gambling Clinic](#) on 020 7381 7722, or [GamCare](#) on 0808 8020 133. In the US, the [National Council on Problem Gambling](#) is on 800-522-4700. In Australia, [Gambling Help Online](#) is available on 1800 858 858 and the National Debt Helpline is at 1800 007 007
  - ***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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## 2023.04.28 - Around the world

- 'A crying shame' Overdose deaths in San Francisco rise by 41% in three months
- Live Business: EU economy returns to growth despite surprise German stagnation
- Israel Gun-toting, prayer-reciting protesters throng Jerusalem to back judicial overhaul
- US Senate investigation into Brett Kavanaugh assault claims contained serious omissions
- Donald Trump E Jean Carroll pushes back in cross-examination: 'He raped me whether I screamed or not'

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A person walks through San Francisco's Tenderloin district. The city saw a spike in drug overdose deaths, which may have been linked to the closure of a drug outreach center. Photograph: Jeff Chiu/AP

[San Francisco](#)

## Overdose deaths in San Francisco hit 200 in three months: ‘A crying shame’

The 41% spike comes as the city closed an outreach center that stocked Narcan and allowed supervised drug use

[Erin McCormick](#)

Fri 28 Apr 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 28 Apr 2023 11.53 EDT

Drug-related deaths surged by 41% in [San Francisco](#) in the first quarter of this year – with one person dying of an accidental overdose every 10 hours, as the fentanyl crisis continues to ravage the US west coast.

San Francisco saw 200 people die of overdoses in the past three months compared with 142 in the same months a year ago, according to [reports by the city’s medical examiner](#).

Those living on the streets were particularly hard hit – with twice as many unhoused people dying of overdoses between January and March compared with a year earlier.

Fentanyl was detected in most of the deaths. The city’s minority populations were particularly hard hit. A third of the overdose victims were Black, despite Black people making up only 5% of the city’s population.

“It’s a crying shame that a city as wealthy as San Francisco can’t get its act together to deal with overdose deaths,” said Dr Daniel Ciccarone, a professor of addiction medicine at the University of [California](#) San Francisco, who said the city’s increasingly punitive approach to handling drug users has only heightened their overdose risks.

“We’re a politically divided city between the people who have a lot of money and want the streets swept and those who think a compassionate, science-based, health approach is appropriate,” he said.



In most of San Francisco's 200 overdose deaths, fentanyl was detected. Twice as many unhoused people died of a drug-related death as last year. Photograph: Balazs Gardi/The Guardian

The spike in deaths began in December and was particularly apparent in January, when 82 deaths put the city's overdose fatalities at an all-time high. This came just after the city government closed a key outreach center, where drug users were using with medical supervision, and increased policing in San Francisco's drug-plagued Tenderloin district.

Last summer, voters recalled the city's liberal district attorney and the San Francisco mayor, London Breed, appointed a new district attorney, Brooke Jenkins, who vowed to take a law-and-order approach to the problem and has since stepped up arrests of drug dealers.

Then in December, Breed closed the Tenderloin Center, a facility designed to provide daytime shelter for the unhoused, along with housing referrals, food, addiction treatment and health services. The center had unofficially allowed drug use in a supervised outside area. Attendants used Narcan to reverse more than 330 opiate overdoses in the 11 months the center was open, [according to city data](#).

The center, which served more than 400 people daily, was [opposed by some](#) in the community, who said it was drawing drug users to the already-affected neighborhood.

Breed [said](#) in December she had been disappointed by the low number of visitors at the center who ultimately accepted help to get off of drugs. According to the [San Francisco Chronicle](#), fewer than 1% of visits resulted in someone getting connected to addiction treatment services.

### [Chart of overdose deaths in San Francisco over time](#)

Since closing the center, Breed has sought \$25m to increase police overtime with the priority of arresting drug dealers.

“We are dealing with multiple serious public safety challenges locally, from a fentanyl-driven overdose epidemic, open-air drug dealing, property crime in our residential and commercial neighborhoods, increasing gun violence and prejudice-fueled incidents,” she said in [a March letter](#) seeking more federal help in policing and prosecuting cases.

Last week, the California governor, Gavin Newsom, promised to send in [resources and personnel](#) from the national guard and the California highway patrol to bolster policing.

Gary McCoy of HealthRIGHT 360, the non-profit that ran the drug overdose prevention portion of the Tenderloin Center, said the government’s law-enforcement focused approach is backfiring and is instead pushing drug users into isolation, where they are more at risk of overdose deaths.

“Something that has been sold to folks as a strategy that is going to work and help tackle the overdose crisis is having the exact opposite effect,” said McCoy, adding that the police tactics create dangers that go beyond the fact that health officials no longer have the chance to witness and reverse overdoses at the Tenderloin Center.

“When people don’t have a safe place to go, when they’re using in doorways and public places and they’re afraid of getting caught and put in

jail, they tend to rush and use more substance,” he said. “And when they rush, there’s a higher risk of overdose.”



The Tenderloin Center served more than 400 people daily before it was closed by the city. Without the center, drug users have been pushed into isolation. Photograph: Balazs Gardi/The Guardian

Ciccarone said other safe use centers around the world, including one in Melbourne Australia that opened five years ago, have shown to reduce overdoses, bring drug use off the streets and help get addicts into treatment. But he cautioned it takes far longer than 11 months to see the results.

“People expected too much from it too soon,” he said of San Francisco’s center. “It gave the outward appearance that people were congregating to consume drugs. But here we have it closed for three months and the first three months show a tremendous rise in overdose deaths.”

The city’s supervisors have pushed to replace the Tenderloin Center, which was designed as a temporary measure, with 12 smaller “wellness hubs” around the city. These would provide health and shelter services, as well as allowing supervised drug use to prevent overdose deaths.



But last summer, Newsom vetoed legislation that would have allowed supervised drug use centers in three California cities, including San Francisco. And the plan for the wellness hubs stalled, after San Francisco's city attorney raised the objection that the city could wind up bearing significant legal liability.

Breed has said she supports the wellness hubs.

“These are difficult situations because this involves legal advice, significant criminal liability which we cannot just ignore,” said the mayor, according to [KTVU news](#). Non-profits are now seeking a way to fund the overdose prevention portions of their operations without city funding.

In a statement, the San Francisco department of health (SFDPH) said it has undertaken a host of measures to prevent overdoses, including adding hundreds of new beds for addiction recovery treatment, expanding neighborhood street care teams and making Narcan and medication-assisted addiction treatment options more available.

“SFDPH recognizes that any overdose death is one too many and mourns the loss of each of these lives,” the department said. It added the department was also looking for legal ways to open supervised use clinics. “These deaths drive us to find more ways to prevent overdoses and reduce the harms caused by fentanyl.”





San Francisco city supervisors have pushed to replace the Tenderloin Center with ‘wellness hubs’ that would provide health and shelter services. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Breed and the new district attorney have touted increased arrests and jail time for drug dealers. In a [April blogpost](#), the mayor said police made 162 arrests for drug possession for sales in the last three months of 2022, an 80% increase, and are seizing dozens of kilograms of narcotics.

“These enforcement actions will continue, while our street outreach teams continue to go out and offer services and treatment,” wrote Breed.

But Alex Kral, an epidemiologist at the independent non-profit research institute RTI International, who led an evaluation of the Tenderloin Center, said the drug dealing arrests actually make the drug supply more dangerous by forcing users to go to people they don’t know for their drug supply and forcing users into hiding.

“You’re making an unpredictable drug market even more unpredictable,” he said.

“We’ve spent the last 50 years trying to arrest our way out of this and it’s clearly not working. The conditions on the streets are getting worse, the

drugs are becoming more dangerous and the health of the community is much, much worse with increased policing.”

According to San Francisco supervisor Hillary Ronen, who has championed the idea of wellness hubs, the city has failed to come up with any new tactics to deal with a “horrific crisis”.

“We closed the Tenderloin Center with no plan in place to replace it,” she said. “Fentanyl is corrupting every part of the drug supply and all the social problems that underlie the drug addiction crisis continue – widespread poverty, trauma with no access to mental health care, inequality, and homelessness.

“What did we expect to happen?”

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# EU economy returns to growth despite surprise German stagnation – as it happened

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Rightwing Israelis at the rally outside the Knesset on Thursday. Photograph: Ohad Zwigenberg/AP

[Israel](#)

## Gun-toting, prayer-reciting protesters throng Jerusalem to back judicial overhaul

Large numbers march on Knesset in biggest rightwing protest in Israel in nearly two decades

[Bethan McKernan](#) and *Quique Kierszenbaum in Jerusalem*

Fri 28 Apr 2023 08.12 EDTFirst published on Thu 27 Apr 2023 17.50 EDT

More than 150,000 Israelis in favour of the government's [divisive judicial overhaul](#) have taken part in a demonstration outside the Knesset in Jerusalem, in the biggest rightwing protest in the country in nearly two decades.

Protesters from all over [Israel](#), as well as settlers who travelled in buses from the [occupied West Bank](#), chanted “the people demand judicial reform” and danced and sang as the rally got under way at sunset on Thursday, sending a message before the beginning of the Knesset’s summer session next week. Exact numbers were hard to verify, but Israeli media reported between 150,000 – 200,000 people took part.

From a distance, the demonstration resembled those that have been held weekly against the judicial changes since the start of the year – some of which have drawn upwards of 120,000 people, making it the largest protest movement in Israeli history.

Pop music blasted over a sea of blue and white flags, and Thursday’s attendees, like those at the protests against the overhaul, also said they had come to “say no to dictatorship”.

But Thursday’s rare right-wing event, organised and funded by political parties and activists, had a more religious flavour, with people praying and reciting blessings.

Many men carried guns, and there were far more children than at the anti-reform protests. One group of young men brandished the rattlesnake Gadsden flag now associated with the Capitol riot in Washington DC on 6 January 2021.

“To all my friends who are sitting here, see how much power we have,” the far-right finance minister, Bezalel Smotrich, said in a speech. “They have the media and they have tycoons who will fund the protests, but we have the nation.”

Israel’s prime minister, [Benjamin Netanyahu](#), did not attend, but used Twitter to thank the protesters, writing that “your passion and patriotism moves me deeply”.

Noham, a 30-year-old from the illegal settlement of Geva Binjamin in the West Bank, attended the protest with his wife, Elia, 25, and their two small daughters. He called the atmosphere “powerful”.



An aerial view shows the demonstrators. Photograph: Ilan Rosenberg/Reuters

“We are praying for the reforms to happen. We can’t let a minority on the left impose themselves on everyone else,” he said.

After a brief stint in opposition, Netanyahu was [re-elected in November 2022](#) at the head of a coalition of ultra-Orthodox and extremist rightwing parties.

The new administration’s planned reforms will limit the powerful supreme court’s ability to overturn laws, and give politicians more control over judicial appointments. Critics have denounced it as a transparent power grab.

A February poll commissioned by the Jewish People Policy Institute found that while 84% of Israelis believe the judicial system is in need of change, only one in four support the government’s proposals in their current form.

Many of those opposed to the overhaul say the public was jaded by five elections in less than four years triggered by [Netanyahu’s corruption trial](#), and that they did not wake up to the prospect of the far-right in government until it was too late.



“I have many leftwing friends, and they say they are scared. They think the reforms will amount to a dictatorship,” said a 67-year-old woman from the affluent Tel Aviv suburb of Ramat Gan, who gave her name as Tzipi.

“There are some elements out there that think our votes don’t count. Israel is a very young country and I guess there is still a feeling that we are still in tribes of ashkenazi, mizrahi, religious, secular.

“At the end of the day we are one people. We unite in hours of trouble and war. We have to figure it out.”

Netanyahu was forced to [announce a freeze to the judicial overhaul](#) in late March, after wildcat protests and strikes in response to a decision to fire Yoav Gallant, his dissenting defence minister, almost completely shut down the country.

During the month-long Passover recess, Israel’s figurehead president, Isaac Herzog, has mediated negotiations between the government and the opposition in hopes of arriving at a compromise.

The Knesset is set to reconvene on Sunday, but it is still not clear how much, if any, progress has been made.

With budget deliberations pending and the question of how to deal with a [spike in violence with the Palestinians and Lebanon](#) on the government’s agenda, some supporters of the changes fear the legislation could be kicked into the long grass.

“The supreme court has been an issue for a long time, it is corrupt and biased and makes us [rightwingers] second-class citizens,” said Mikhael, a 19-year-old yeshiva student from the settlement of Eli.

“The left wing have the right to protest; I think they still support the country. But they are living in an illusion if they think they are the majority.”

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |





Then supreme court nominee Brett Kavanaugh speaks at the Senate judiciary committee hearing in September 2018. Photograph: Michael Reynolds/EPA

[Brett Kavanaugh](#)

## Revealed: Senate investigation into Brett Kavanaugh assault claims contained serious omissions

The 2018 investigation into the then supreme court nominee claimed there was ‘no evidence’ behind claims of sexual assault

[Stephanie Kirchgaessner](#) in Washington  
[@skirchy](#)

Fri 28 Apr 2023 03.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 28 Apr 2023 08.30 EDT

A 2018 Senate investigation that found there was “no evidence” to substantiate any of the claims of sexual assault against the [US supreme](#)

[court](#) justice Brett Kavanaugh contained serious omissions, according to new information obtained by the Guardian.

The 28-page report was released by the Republican senator Chuck Grassley, the then chairman of the Senate judiciary committee. It prominently included an unfounded and unverified claim that one of Kavanaugh's accusers – a fellow Yale graduate named Deborah Ramirez – was “likely” mistaken when she alleged that Kavanaugh exposed himself to her at a dormitory party because another Yale student was allegedly known for such acts.

The suggestion that Kavanaugh was the victim of mistaken identity was sent to the judiciary committee by a Colorado-based attorney named Joseph C Smith Jr, according to a non-redacted copy of a 2018 email obtained by the Guardian. Smith was a friend and former colleague of the judiciary committee's then lead counsel, Mike Davis.

Smith was also a member of the Federalist Society, which strongly supported Kavanaugh's supreme court nomination, and appears to have a professional relationship with the Federalist Society's co-founder, Leonard Leo, whom he thanked in the acknowledgments of his book *Under God: George Washington and the Question of Church and State*.

Smith wrote to Davis in the 29 September 2018 email that he was in a class behind Kavanaugh and Ramirez (who graduated in the class of 1987) and believed Ramirez was likely mistaken in identifying Kavanaugh.

Instead, Smith said it was a fellow classmate named Jack Maxey, who was a member of Kavanaugh's fraternity, who allegedly had a “reputation” for exposing himself, and had once done so at a party. To back his claim, Smith also attached a photograph of Maxey exposing himself in his fraternity's 1988 yearbook picture.

The allegation that Ramirez was likely mistaken was included in the Senate committee's final report even though Maxey – who was described but not named – was not attending Yale at the time of the alleged incident.

In an interview with the Guardian, Maxey confirmed that he was still a senior in high school at the time of the alleged incident, and said he had never been contacted by any of the Republican staffers who were conducting the investigation.

“I was not at Yale,” he said. “I was a senior in high school at the time. I was not in New Haven.” He added: “These people can say what they want, and there are no consequences, ever.”

The revelation raises new questions about apparent efforts to downplay and discredit accusations of sexual misconduct by Kavanaugh and exclude evidence that supported an alleged victim’s claims.

A new documentary – an early version of which [premiered at Sundance](#) in January, but is being updated before its release – contains a never-before-heard recording of another Yale graduate, Max Stier, describing a separate alleged incident in which he said he witnessed Kavanaugh expose himself at a party at Yale.

It has [previously been reported](#) that Stier wanted to tell the FBI anonymously during the confirmation process that he had allegedly witnessed Kavanaugh’s friends push the future judge’s penis into the hand of a female classmate at a party. While Republicans on the Senate committee were reportedly made aware of his desire to submit information to the FBI, he was not interviewed by the committee’s Republican investigators.

The committee’s final report claimed there was “no verifiable evidence to support” Ramirez’s claim.

It is not clear how the film’s director, Doug Liman, obtained the recording, or whom Stier was speaking to when it was recorded.

Stier, the chief executive of a Washington nonprofit who formerly served in the Clinton administration, declined to comment to the Guardian.

He is married to Florence Pan, a prominent judge on the US court of appeals in Washington. Pan sits in the seat that was vacated by Ketanji

Brown Jackson, the US supreme court justice, and is seen as a possible future candidate for the US high court.

Maxey adamantly denied any allegation that he exposed himself to Ramirez at any time. Asked if he had ever visited Yale at the time of the alleged incident, Maxey said he had visited his older brother, Christopher, who was an older student at Yale, on a limited number of occasions when he was a senior in high school, but that they had not attended any freshmen parties.

Maxey, a Republican activist, has gained prominence in conservative circles for his role in sharing a portable hard drive of data from Hunter Biden's laptop with members of the media, including the Washington Post. When he was reached by the Guardian, Maxey said he was in Europe and claimed he had "just" given the hard drive to Viktor Orbán's government in Hungary.

Maxey has said he obtained the hard drive from Rudy Giuliani. He previously worked as a researcher for Steve Bannon's War Room podcast but the two have since had a falling out.

While Maxey seemed in his interview with the Guardian to have been annoyed that Smith – whom he said he didn't know or recall interacting with – named him in an accusatory email, he also separately defended Kavanaugh, who he said had behaved like a "choir boy" while attending Yale.

Smith's email arrived in Davis's inbox six days after the New Yorker first published details of Ramirez's accusation. In the article, Ramirez described how Kavanaugh had allegedly exposed himself drunkenly at a dormitory party, thrusting his penis in her face in a way that caused her to touch it without her consent in order to push him away. Ramirez, who was raised as a devout Catholic, described feeling ashamed, humiliated and embarrassed after the alleged assault, and recalled how Kavanaugh had allegedly laughed as he pulled his pants up.

Kavanaugh has denied the incident took place.

Ramirez, through a spokesperson, declined to comment.

Smith did not respond to several requests for comment.

It is not clear whether Smith, a Denver-based partner at Bartlit Beck, knew or had a relationship with Kavanaugh while or after both attended Yale as undergraduate students, or what prompted him to send Davis the email, which was an apparent attempt to clear Kavanaugh of suspicion.

According to his online biography, Smith attended the University of Chicago's law school after graduating from Yale and – like Kavanaugh – was part of the legal team that represented George W Bush in the 2000 presidential recount in Florida.

Redacted emails show that Smith also appears to have shared his accusation about Maxey with federal investigators. While the name of the accuser and the accused were redacted, records released by the FBI show that an individual made the exact same claim as Smith made to Davis to the FBI shortly after the email was sent to Davis. In it, the individual wrote: “I submitted this same information to a staff member of the Senate judiciary committee, Mike Davis, because I know him, and he suggested I also submit it to you.”

Davis declined to comment. The Republican staff on the Senate judiciary committee declined to respond to a request for comment.

The FBI was at the time involved in its own review of sexual assault allegations against Kavanaugh. The investigation, conducted under FBI director Christopher Wray, another Yale graduate, has widely been derided as a “sham” by Democrats led by the Rhode Island senator Sheldon Whitehouse, a member of the Senate judiciary committee.

Whitehouse's office is expected to release a report into the FBI's handling of the Kavanaugh investigation by the end of this year.



The former Elle magazine advice columnist E Jean Carroll answers questions from Donald Trump's lawyer Joe Tacopina during the civil trial. Photograph: Jane Rosenberg/Reuters

[Donald Trump](#)

## E Jean Carroll pushes back in Trump cross-examination: 'He raped me whether I screamed or not'

The advice columnist denied that politics or book sales motivated her to make the accusation against Donald Trump

[Chris McGreal](#) in New York

Thu 27 Apr 2023 14.19 EDTLast modified on Fri 28 Apr 2023 11.34 EDT

The advice columnist E Jean Carroll has denied that she falsely accused [Donald Trump](#) of raping her in order to sell books and for political ends.

On the third day of Carroll's civil suit against the former president for battery and defamation, Trump's lawyer, Joe Tacopina, put it to her that she made her allegation the centrepiece of a book proposal she was trying to sell.

Carroll is seeking damages for the [alleged rape in a New York department store](#) changing room in the mid-1990s and for defamation after Trump accused her of lying when she went public with her accusations in the book.

Carroll, who spent most of the day under cross-examination, said she was motivated to speak up after the [New York](#) Times' exposure of Harvey Weinstein's crimes prompted women across the US to relate their own experiences of sexual assault and fired the #MeToo movement.

But she did acknowledge that she decided to sue Trump for defamation following a conversation at a party with George Conway, then the husband of one of Trump's top White House aides, Kellyanne Conway, but also a prominent Trump critic.

"George Conway does not like Donald Trump," said Carroll, without elaboration.

Asked why she did not speak up when Trump was running for president in 2016, Carroll said it did not occur to her.

"I was never going to talk about what Donald Trump did," she said. "Never."

Tacopina sought to discredit Carroll's account by dwelling on why she didn't scream during the alleged attack, and why she admits laughing about it immediately afterwards.

Carroll stuck by her account that she went into the dressing room with Trump because she thought she was playing out a joke by telling him to put on the lingerie that he had been urging her to wear.

"If a man tells me to try on some lingerie, I tell him to go try it on," she said. "I had no concept of how this would turn out. I thought this funny



conversation would continue.”

Carroll said that when Trump suddenly attacked her in the changing room, she instinctively laughed.

“Laughter is a very good weapon to calm a man down if he has any erotic intention,” she said.

Tacopina then pressed Carroll repeatedly about why she didn’t scream.

“I was in too much of a panic to scream,” she responded. “You can’t beat up on me for not screaming.”

Carroll said that women who report rape are frequently asked why they didn’t scream, which was one of the reasons they do not go to the police.

Tacopina continued to press the issue, including what he said were differing accounts Carroll had given over the years for not screaming including that she “isn’t a screamer”, that she didn’t want to make a scene and that she was too full of adrenaline.

Carroll said all of those things could have been at play, and in any case it did not matter.

“I’m telling you he raped me whether I screamed or not,” she said, her voice breaking.

Tacopina also confronted Carroll over the fact she did not call police and instead called a friend, Lisa Birnbach.

Trump’s lawyer pressed Carroll about why, by her own account, she was laughing as she spoke to Birnbach. Carroll said that she was looking for reassurance that what she had just gone through was not as bad as she feared.

As Carroll began describing the assault, Birnbach told her to stop laughing.

“If Lisa had laughed I would have felt so much better. I was disoriented,” she said.



Instead, Birnbach told Carroll: “He raped you.”

“Those are the words that brought the reality to the forefront of my mind,” said Carroll.

Later, another friend told her not to go to the police because Trump was too powerful to take on.

“That’s the advice I wanted so that’s the advice I followed,” said Carroll.

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She said it was not odd to avoid going to the police. “Many women do not go to the police. I understand why,” she said.

Tacopina put it to Carroll that her view of Trump was of a “brutal, dangerous man”.

“Yes, he is,” she replied without hesitation.



E Jean Carroll, right, leaves federal court with her lawyer Roberta Kaplan on Thursday. Photograph: Beбето Matthews/AP

Tacopina also confronted Carroll with a part of the draft of her book written a couple of years into his presidency that was not included in the final version, but which appeared to indicate a political motive for her going public with her accusations.

“But now after two years of watching the man in action, I became persuaded that he wants to kill me. He’s poisoning my water. He’s polluting my air. And as he stacks the courts, my rights over my body are being taken away state by state. So, now I will tell you what happened,” she wrote.

Tacopina also focused on an email sent by Carol Martin, a key witness in the trial who Carroll said she told about the alleged rape shortly after the attack.

In September 2017, Martin sent an email critical of Trump: “This has to stop. As soon as we’re both well enuf [sic] to scheme, we must do our patriotic duty again.”

Carroll replied: “TOTALLY!!! I have something special for you when we meet.”

Asked what that something special was, Carroll said she had no idea but added that the two women often bought “funny gifts” for each other.

Tacopina put it to Carroll that she started the book only two weeks after the email exchange. Carroll said that was not true.

Tacopina also latched on to a chapter in Carroll’s book – entitled What Do We Need Men For? A Modest Proposal – in which the author advocates for all men to be shipped to Montana “for retraining”.

Trump’s lawyer appeared to be suggesting this was evidence of an anti-male bent when the judge, Lewis Kaplan, waded in to tell him it was satire modeled on A Modest Proposal, the renowned Jonathan Swift satirical essay from 1729 which suggested that impoverished Irish people should sell their children as food to the rich.

“Move on,” said the judge.

Trump is not expected to testify. But he has claimed the encounter never happened, that he does not know Carroll and she is not his “type”. On Wednesday, he called the case “a made-up scam” and Carroll’s lawyer a political operative, an outburst that [drew a warning](#).

Carroll told the court about online abuse she received after accusing Trump and again when he posted messages on social media denying the accusations and accusing her of being a liar.

The jury was shown some of the messages, which included misogynistic epithets and other personal attacks.

Asked if she regretted the lawsuit, Carroll said: “About five times a day. It doesn’t feel pleasant to be under threat.”

The trial resumes on Monday with Tacopina continuing his cross-examination of Carroll.

*The Associated Press contributed reporting.*

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

## Headlines thursday 27 april 2023

- [King Charles Direct ancestors of monarch owned slave plantations, documents reveal](#)
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- [Live Sudan crisis: calls to help people left in the country as hundreds of foreign nationals airlifted to safety](#)
- [UK British nationals should leave Sudan immediately, says foreign secretary](#)
- [Sudan conflict Army says it is willing to extend ceasefire amid plans for talks](#)
- [Sudan explainer Why is there fighting and what is at stake in the region?](#)

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[Cost of the crown](#)[Slavery](#)

**Direct ancestors of King Charles owned  
slave plantations, documents reveal**

Records show direct ancestor of king was involved in buying at least 200 enslaved Africans

[David Conn](#) and [Rachel Hall](#)

Thu 27 Apr 2023 01.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 27 Apr 2023 16.31 EDT

Direct ancestors of [King Charles III](#) and the royal family bought and exploited enslaved people on tobacco plantations in Virginia, according to new research shared with the Guardian.

A document discovered in archives reveals that a direct ancestor of the king was involved in buying at least 200 enslaved people from the Royal African Company (RAC) in 1686.



The Right Honourable  
The Countess of  
Strathmore and Kinghorne  
(formerly Miss Frances Smith)  
(1832–1922)

Frances Bowes-Lyon, Countess of Strathmore and Kinghorne Photograph: Creative Commons

The document instructs a ship's captain to deliver the enslaved Africans to Edward Porteus, a tobacco plantation owner in Virginia, and two other men. Porteus's son, Robert, inherited his father's estate before moving his family to England, in 1720. Later a direct descendant, Frances Smith, married the aristocrat Claude Bowes-Lyon. Their granddaughter was Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, the late queen mother.

The documents establishing these royal roots were found by the researcher [Desirée Baptiste](#), while investigating links between the Church of England and enslavers in Virginia, for a play she has written.

The revelation follows the Guardian's [publication of a document earlier this month](#) that linked the slave trader Edward Colston to the British monarchy. The latest discovery, which Baptiste made deep in the RAC archives, reveals a direct line up the Windsor family tree to the trafficking of enslaved Africans.

[Download original document](#)

The RAC, which [traded almost 180,000 enslaved people](#), was granted royal charters by successive English kings. In the newly published document, senior RAC officials, describing themselves as “your loving friends”, instructed the captain of a ship to deliver “negroes” to Edward Porteus.

### [Graphic](#)

“You are with your first opportunity of wind and weather that God shall send after receipt hereof to sett sail out of the River of Thames on the Shipp of Speedwell and make the best of your way to James Island on the River of Gambia,” the instruction stated. It added: “ ... our said Agent to put aboard the Shipp Two Hundred Negroes and as many more as he shall get ready and the ship can conveniently carry ... and then proceed ... to Potomac River in Maryland, and deliver them to Mr Edward Porteus, Mr Christopher Robinson and Mr Richard Gardiner.”

The will of Edward Porteus, another document examined by Baptiste, referred to “negroes”, whom he left to his son Robert. Edward Porteus also left to his wife, Margaret, “my negroe girl Cumbo”.

Virginia is a landmark state in the history of US slavery, because of an infamous landing of enslaved African people at Jamestown in 1619. Laws developed in the state to maintain slavery and crush uprisings included whipping, and dismembering people by cutting off a foot. A [study of these laws](#) states that: “A slave giving false evidence would ... receive his 39



lashes and then have his ears nailed to the pillory for half an hour, after which they would be cut off.”

An uprising by enslaved people in 1663 in Gloucester County, where Porteus was based, was [mercilessly put down](#), according to an account by the [Colonial Williamsburg Foundation](#): “Several bloody heads dangled from local chimney tops as a gruesome warning to others.”

Earlier this month, in response to the Guardian’s reporting, Charles [signalled for the first time](#) his support for research into the links between the British monarchy and the transatlantic slave trade.

A Buckingham Palace spokesperson said at the time that Charles took “profoundly seriously” the issue of slavery, which he has described as an [“appalling atrocity”](#). Support for the research was part of Charles’s process of deepening his understanding of “slavery’s enduring impact”, the spokesperson said, which had “continued with vigour and determination” since his accession.

Race equality and reparations campaigners told the Guardian that while they mostly welcomed the support for research, they believed [Charles must go further](#), and acknowledge the established history now.

A palace spokesperson said in response to questions about the Windsor family’s heritage in Virginia that they were unable to comment until after the coronation. A spokesperson explained that the media operation was under “intense pressure” dealing with global interest in the coronation.



Frances Bowes-Lyon. Photograph: National Portrait Gallery London

However, last week the bishop of London, Sarah Mullally, issued an apology relating to the same Virginia family. A son of Robert Porteus by a second marriage, a lineage separate from the royal family, was Beilby Porteus, who was bishop of London for 22 years from 1787. In January, [Fulham Palace Trust](#), which maintains the historic London bishops' residence, [published research on the Porteus plantations](#). It acknowledged that Bishop Porteus and a brother inherited their father's large Virginia estate, and continued to profit from it as "absentee plantation owners and enslavers".

Mullally marked the opening of a [new Fulham Palace exhibition](#) on transatlantic slavery and resistance by [issuing an apology](#) relating in part to Porteus. "I am profoundly sorry for the harm that was inflicted by my predecessors through their involvement with the transatlantic slave trade," Mullally said in a statement. "It continues to be a source of great shame to us as a diocese."

Quick Guide

**What is Cost of the crown?**

Show



Cost of the crown is an investigation into royal wealth and finances. The series, published ahead of the coronation of King Charles III, is seeking to overcome centuries of secrecy to better understand how the royal family is funded, the extent to which individual members have profited from their public roles, and the dubious origins of some of their wealth. The Guardian believes it is in the public interest to clarify what can legitimately be called private wealth, what belongs to the British people, and what, as so often is the case, straddles the two.

- [Read more about the investigation](#)
- [Fund Guardian investigative journalism that uncovers the secrets of the powerful that we all need to know](#)

Photograph: Universal History Archive/Universal Images Group Editorial  
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In the play that Baptiste developed from her historical research, the lead character calls on Charles to apologise for the monarchy's institutional and family involvement in transatlantic slavery.

“The Royal African Company document shows the current king’s direct ancestor trafficking newly arrived Africans, and profiting from the confiscated lives of enslaved people, like the ‘Negroe girl Cumbo’ left in Edward’s will,” Baptiste said. “This means the royal links to slavery are more than just institutional, they are in their family heritage.”

Prof Trevor Burnard, the director of the Wilberforce Institute for the Study of [Slavery](#) and Emancipation at the University of Hull, said: “Charles has given an encouraging response to further research, and this new information shows that further research should be done, showing how extensive the links are of the royal family, aristocracy and all parts of Britain, to slavery.”

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*A staged reading of Desirée Baptiste’s play, Incidents in the Life of an Anglican Slave, Written by Herself, will be performed at [Lambeth Palace Library](#) on 27 April.*

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## [Ukraine war live](#)Russia

# Forced deportation of children from Ukraine by Moscow is genocide, Council of Europe says – as it happened

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## [Sudan](#)

# Sudan crisis live: rival factions agree to extend ceasefire for a further 72 hours – as it happened

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First plane carrying Sudan evacuees lands at Stansted Airport – video

[Sudan](#)

## UK says nearly 900 evacuated from Sudan amid hopes of further flights

Foreign secretary welcomes ceasefire but cites need for haste as Tory MP presses him over fate of Britons' Sudanese parents

[Dan Sabbagh](#) , [Patrick Wintour](#) and [Alexandra Topping](#)

Thu 27 Apr 2023 18.14 EDTFirst published on Thu 27 Apr 2023 04.33 EDT

Britain said it had evacuated nearly 900 people from [Sudan](#) and was hoping to continue evacuation flights overnight, although violence flared as the country's warring factions agreed to extend a ceasefire.

The foreign secretary was under pressure over a refusal to allow Britons trying to flee to take elderly parents with them, amid fears that renewed fighting between the army and paramilitaries [could halt the airlift at any time](#).

James Cleverly told MPs on Thursday that the UK “will endeavour” to keep going with flights, but he advised Britons to try to make a risky journey to the airfield north of Khartoum from where the airlift was being conducted immediately.

A total of 897 people had been evacuated by the RAF by 6pm on Thursday, with two more flights leaving Sudan for a stopover in Cyprus during the day. The Foreign Office said “further flights” would be coming.

That came ahead of an announcement of a 72-hour extension to a ceasefire that had been due to run out overnight, a decision welcomed by the US, the

UK, Saudi Arabia and others hoping to end the fighting between the Sudanese army and paramilitaries.

In a joint statement, the allies said they “welcome the announcement by the Sudanese armed forces and Rapid Support Forces (RSF) to extend the current ceasefire for an additional 72 hours and call for its full implementation”.

Cleverly urged all UK nationals wishing to flee to hurry to the airport north of the capital, Khartoum. “I urge all British nationals wishing to leave to proceed to the airport as quickly as possible to ensure their safety.”

Earlier, a senior Conservative had called on Cleverly to relax the evacuation requirements to allow Britons to take elderly Sudanese parents with them, amid reports that some were refusing to leave infirm mothers or fathers behind.

“Children we treat as dependants but very elderly sick parents should also be treated as dependants,” said Alicia Kearns, the chair of the foreign affairs select committee, adding it was not clear whether the Home Office or the Foreign Office was determining the criteria.

A British doctor [has told the Guardian](#) that her father, a retired 67-year-old doctor who worked for the NHS for more than 30 years, has decided to remain in Sudan despite being shot in the thigh because he cannot take his 87-year-old mother with him. He had been visiting her for Ramadan.

“Our primary duty is to traditionally recognised dependants,” Cleverly responded, adding “it would be a real challenge to extend the criteria”. He said he wished instinctively to be as supportive as possible.

'We're just lucky': Sudan evacuees reach safety – video

[Britain has been evacuating civilians](#) from the Wadi Seidna airbase north of Khartoum since Tuesday, in a series of flights going via Cyprus to the UK, but it will only pick up British nationals, their spouses and children under 18.



Military planners say the airfield is relatively secure under the control of the Sudanese army.

“We will endeavour to keep evacuating people ... but we cannot guarantee our ability to do so,” Cleverly told MPs. However, the unpredictability of the situation meant that “we are encouraging those who wish to travel to make their way to the airport today”.

The minister acknowledged that Foreign Office officials had no means of knowing how many of the 2,000-plus who had registered to leave on UK government flights had in reality taken other routes out of the country.

A contingent of Royal Marines is at Port Sudan, 500 miles north-east of Khartoum, ready to help open up a potential new evacuation point. Maritime trackers showed that the frigate HMS Lancaster had arrived at the city to help with a possible rescue if the airlift has to stop.

The foreign secretary had earlier called on both sides – the Sudanese army and the paramilitary RSF – to extend the ceasefire, although he acknowledged: “Our ability, as in the case for all outside powers, to determine the course of events inside Sudan is limited.”

But he added: “Anyone, if they aspire to be a leader of Sudan, demonstrating a willingness to protect the people of Sudan would be a good starting point.”

The UK government has faced criticism about being behind Germany and France in evacuating civilians, and from some Britons caught up in the outbreak of fighting about a lack of communication and planning as they attempt to leave the country.

Speaking on BBC Radio 4’s Today programme, Cleverly said: “I understand how frustrating it must be when you are not able to get communication or get updates of what’s happened.”

The minister acknowledged mobile phone coverage in Khartoum was inconsistent and UK representatives had been broadcasting messages through social media channels and WhatsApp groups.

Asked why other countries, such as Germany, China and the US had evacuated more people, Cleverly said UK nationals were more dispersed than other expatriate communities.

But he refused to discuss the possibility of safe and legal routes for non-UK nationals fleeing Sudan to get to the UK.

“There is war and conflict all over the world,” he said. “There are literally millions upon millions of people who are in countries plagued by war. We recognise that we cannot host everybody who is in a country plagued by war.”

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Sudan's army has indicated it is willing to extend a 72-hour ceasefire that appears to have reduced the intensity of hostilities around Khartoum. Photograph: El Tayeb Siddig/Reuters

## [Sudan](#)

# Sudan conflict: renewed clashes raise fears ceasefire will not be extended

UK military chiefs say flights will continue as long as conditions are safe

[Jason Burke](#) *Africa correspondent*

Thu 27 Apr 2023 06.00 EDTFirst published on Thu 27 Apr 2023 00.08 EDT

Renewed clashes in Khartoum and in south-west [Sudan](#) have raised fears that the current three-day ceasefire due to expire on Thursday night will not be extended and fighting will instead intensify

A surge in violence would threaten the evacuation of thousands of foreign nationals who remain in Sudan. UK military chiefs said [flights would](#)

[continue as long as conditions were safe](#), although the foreign secretary, James Cleverly, said the UK “cannot guarantee” how many would depart once the ceasefire ends.

The [violence in Sudan](#) has pitted army units loyal to its military de facto ruler, Gen Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, against the Rapid Support Forces, paramilitaries led by a warlord called Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, known as Hemedti.

The Sudanese army said on Wednesday that Burhan had given initial approval to a plan to extend the truce for another 72 hours and send an army envoy to the South Sudan capital of Juba for talks.

There was no immediate response from the RSF to the proposal from the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (Igad), a regional bloc.

The Sudanese military said the presidents of South Sudan, Kenya and Djibouti had worked on a proposal that included extending the truce and talks between the two forces.

“Burhan thanked the Igad and expressed an initial approval to that,” the army statement said.

'We're just lucky': Sudan evacuees reach safety – video

The move comes amid frantic efforts to stop Sudan, Africa’s third largest country, sliding into greater chaos.

Since [fighting erupted on 15 April](#), airstrikes and artillery have killed at least 512 people, wounded nearly 4,200, destroyed hospitals and limited food distribution in the vast nation where a third of the 46 million population was already reliant on humanitarian aid. The true death toll is thought to be much higher.

The World Health Organization said only 16% of health facilities were functioning in Khartoum and predicted “many more deaths” as a result of

disease and shortages of food, water and medical services including immunisation.

Sudan unrest: footage shows scale of destruction in Khartoum – video

An estimated 50,000 acutely malnourished children have had treatment disrupted because of the conflict, and those hospitals still functioning are facing shortages of medical supplies, power and water, according to a UN update on Wednesday.

Though the ceasefire has led to a reduction in violence, there were clashes in Omdurman, a city adjoining Khartoum where the army was fighting RSF reinforcements from other regions of Sudan, on Wednesday.

In Khartoum, which together with two bordering cities is one of Africa's largest urban areas, there was widespread looting.

Deadly clashes broke out in Geneina in West Darfur on Tuesday and Wednesday resulting in looting and civilian deaths and raising concerns about an escalation of ethnic tensions.

The crisis has sent growing numbers of refugees across Sudan's borders, with the UN refugee agency estimating 270,000 people could flee into South Sudan and Chad alone.

Foreigners evacuated from Khartoum have described bodies littering streets, buildings on fire, residential areas turned into battlefields and young people roaming with large knives.

"It was horrible," said Thanassis Pagoulatos, the 80-year-old Greek owner of the Acropole hotel in Khartoum, after arriving in Athens to be greeted by relatives.

"It has been more than 10 days without any electricity, without water, and five days nearly without food," he added, describing shooting and bombing. "Really, the people are suffering, the Sudanese people."

Aid agencies have called for the international focus to now switch from evacuations to the broader humanitarian crisis.

“While swift evacuations from Sudan have helped thousands, what about the ... Sudanese who remain in the country? A rapid surge of humanitarian aid is the key to helping millions in Sudan,” said David Miliband, president and CEO of the International Rescue Committee.

“European leaders are focused on evacuating their citizens, but there is no time to waste in shifting focus on supporting and protecting those who remain.”

Civilian groups fear the violence will enable the military to tighten its grip and revive the sway of an ousted autocrat’s loyalists. Hopes for a democratic transition in Sudan were raised when Omar al-Bashir, the 79-year-old former dictator was ousted in 2019 after months of popular protest.

Bashir has been in prison, with spells in hospital, on Sudanese charges related to the 1989 coup that brought him to power. He is also wanted by the International Criminal Court to face charges of war crimes related to widespread abuses during counter-insurgency campaigns in Darfur 20 years ago.

Why violence has broken out in Sudan – video explainer

On Wednesday, the army said Bashir had been [transferred from Khartoum’s Kober prison](#) to a military hospital, along with at least five of his former officials, before hostilities started.

Analysts said the move was part of a broader hope of many loyal to Burhan that they would be able to reinstate many aspects of Bashir’s repressive regime under a new leader.

Over the weekend, thousands of inmates were freed outright from prison, including a former minister in Bashir’s government who, like him, is wanted on war crimes charges by The Hague.

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Fighting between Sudan military rivals breaks out in Khartoum amid power struggle – video

[Sudan](#)

[Explainer](#)

## Sudan conflict: why is there fighting and what is at stake in the region?

Power struggle between military factions erupted after faltering transition to civilian-led government

[Adam Fulton](#) and [Oliver Holmes](#)

Thu 27 Apr 2023 05.15 EDTFirst published on Sun 16 Apr 2023 05.45 EDT

Intense clashes between Sudan's military and the country's main paramilitary force have killed hundreds of people and sent thousands fleeing for safety, as a burgeoning civil war threatens to destabilise the wider region.

### What's behind the fighting?

The [clashes erupted in the middle of April](#) amid an apparent power struggle between the two main factions of the military regime.

The Sudanese armed forces are broadly loyal to Gen Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the country's de facto ruler, while the paramilitaries of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a collection of militia, follow the former warlord Gen Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, known as Hemedti.

The power struggle has its roots in the years before a 2019 uprising that ousted the dictatorial ruler [Omar al-Bashir](#), who built up formidable security forces that he deliberately set against one another.



When an effort to transition to a democratic civilian-led government faltered after Bashir's fall, an eventual showdown appeared inevitable, with diplomats in Khartoum warning in early 2022 that they feared such an outbreak of violence. In the weeks before clashes broke out tensions had risen further.



Sudan's armed forces are broadly loyal to Gen Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the country's de facto ruler. Photograph: Ashraf Shazly/AFP/Getty Images

## **How did the military rivalries develop?**

The RSF was founded by Bashir to crush a rebellion in [Darfur](#) that began more than 20 years ago due to the political and economic marginalisation of the local people by Sudan's central government. The RSF was also known by the name of Janjaweed, which became associated with widespread atrocities.

In 2013, Bashir transformed the Janjaweed into a semi-organised paramilitary force and gave their leaders military ranks before deploying them to crush a rebellion in South Darfur and then dispatching many to fight in the war in Yemen, and later Libya.

The RSF, led by Hemedti, and the regular military forces under Burhan cooperated to oust Bashir in 2019. The RSF then dispersed a peaceful sit-in that was held in front of the military headquarters in Khartoum, killing hundreds of people and raping dozens more.

A power-sharing deal with the civilians who led the protests against Bashir, which was supposed to bring about a transition towards a democratic government, was interrupted by a coup in October 2021.

The coup put the army back in charge but it faced weekly protests, renewed isolation and deepening economic woes. Hemedti swung behind the plan for a new transition, bringing tensions with Burhan to the surface.

Hemedti has huge wealth derived from the export of gold from illegal mines, and commands tens of thousands of battle-hardened veterans. He has long chafed at his position as official deputy on Sudan's ruling council.



The paramilitary Rapid Support Forces are loyal to Gen Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, known as Hemedti. Photograph: Ashraf Shazly/AFP/Getty Images

## **What are the faultlines?**

A central cause of tension since the 2019 uprising has been the civilian demand for oversight of the military and integration of the RSF into the regular armed forces.

Civilians have also called for the handover of lucrative military holdings in agriculture, trade and other industries - a crucial source of power for an army that has often outsourced military action to regional militias.

Another point of contention is the pursuit of justice over allegations of war crimes by the military and its allies in the conflict in Darfur from 2003. The international criminal court is seeking trials for Bashir and other Sudanese suspects.

Justice is also being sought over the killings of pro-democracy protesters in June 2019, in which military forces are implicated. Activists and civilian groups have been angered by delays to an official investigation. In addition, they want justice for at least 125 people killed by security forces in protests since the 2021 coup.

## **What's at stake in the region?**

Sudan is in a volatile region bordering the Red Sea, the Sahel region and the Horn of [Africa](#). Its strategic location and agricultural wealth have attracted regional power plays, complicating the chances of a successful transition to civilian-led government.

Several of Sudan's neighbours – including Ethiopia, Chad and South Sudan – have been affected by political upheavals and conflict, and Sudan's relationship with Ethiopia, in particular, has been strained over issues including disputed farmland along their border. Sudanese refugees have fled the recent fighting to the country's neighbours, including thousands who have crossed into Chad.

Major geopolitical dimensions are also at play, with Russia, the US, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and other powers battling for influence in Sudan.

The Saudis and the UAE have seen Sudan's transition as an opportunity to push back against Islamist influence in the region. They, along with the US and Britain, form the "Quad", which has sponsored mediation in Sudan along with the UN and the African Union. Western powers fear the potential for a Russian base on the Red Sea, to which Sudanese military leaders have expressed openness.

## Why violence has broken out in Sudan – video explainer

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

## 2023.04.27 - Spotlight

- 'At 83, I still feel sexual' Smokey Robinson on love, joy, drugs, Motown – and his affair with Diana Ross
- 'She didn't know how to make it stop' How Facebook and Instagram became marketplaces for child sex trafficking
- Dawn of the new pagans 'Everybody's welcome – as long as you keep your clothes on!'
- Jess Cartner-Morley's forever fashion 'I've had this dress 21 years. When I say "this old thing", I mean it'

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Smokey Robinson: 'Diana Ross is a beautiful lady and I love her right till today.'

[Smokey Robinson](#)

[Interview](#)

# **‘At 83, I still feel sexual’: Smokey Robinson on love, joy, drugs, Motown – and his affair with Diana Ross**

[Simon Hattenstone](#)

The music legend has just released a fabulously filthy album. He looks back on his incredible life in songwriting, and his friendships with Marvin Gaye, Berry Gordy and Aretha Franklin



Thu 27 Apr 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Thu 27 Apr 2023 06.24 EDT

Smokey Robinson’s first collection of new songs in 14 years is gorgeous, tender and utterly filthy – a concept album about sex called Gasms. Robinson, 83, admits he thought the title would be good for business. “When people think of gasms, they think of orgasms first and foremost ... I tell everybody: ‘Whatever your gasm is, that’s *exactly* what I’m talking about.’” He bursts out laughing. Within seconds of meeting him, you can tell this is a man who’s done a hell of a lot of laughing, loving and living.

On the title track, Robinson sings about eyegasms, eargasms, the whole gamut of gasms. If there is any danger of missing the point, he throws in

double entendres that verge on the single. He sings with the silky falsetto of yesteryear, the words perfectly phrased as ever. The album ranges from the exultant (“We’re each other’s ecstasy”) on Roll Around to the biological (“If you got an inner vacancy / Baby, then make it a place for me”) on I Fit in There.

It’s important for him to show that older people are still sexual beings, he says. “When I hear of grandfathers and grandmothers who are 60 years old being talked about as if you’re counting them out and putting them out to pasture, I think it’s ridiculous. This is a new era of life. I feel 50.” He has no intention of turning into an old man, whatever his age.



Smokey Robinson (front) and the Miracles, circa 1963. Photograph: Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images

Has his attitude towards sex changed since he was a teenager? “I still feel the same way, only I’m wiser with it. When you’re young and you have those exploratory feelings about sex, you haven’t lived long enough to know the value of it. So yes, I have a different attitude to it, but I still feel sexual. And I hope I’ll always feel like that. OK, chronologically, I’m 83, but it’s not *really* my age.”



We are chatting on a video call. Robinson lives in Los Angeles with his second wife, Frances Glandney, a successful interior designer. But today he is in New York publicising Gasms. His hair is jet black, his eyes golden-green, his skin taut, his teeth Alpine white. The look might not be 100% natural, but it works. Even if he allowed his hair to grey, his teeth to yellow and his skin to sag, Robinson would be youthful – possibly more so. The voice, the energy, the enthusiasm and the smarts all make him young.

It's impossible to overstate Robinson's influence on soul music. He was part of the team at the launch of Motown (then Tamla Records) in 1959, with his great friend Berry Gordy, the founder of the Detroit label. Motown's first No 1 on the Billboard Hot 100, Mary Wells's My Guy, in 1964, was written and produced by Robinson. He has written numerous hits for other artists – The Way You Do (the Things You Do), Since I Lost My Baby, Get Ready and My Girl for the Temptations, Ain't That Peculiar for [Marvin Gaye](#), Don't Mess With Bill for the Marvelettes, to name a few. Then there are the classics with his group the Miracles, including The Tears of a Clown (written with Stevie Wonder and Hank Cosby), The Tracks of My Tears (written with Warren Moore and Marvin Tarplin), I Second That Emotion (written with Al Cleveland). And the solo hits, such as Cruisin' and Being With You. He is said to have written more than 4,000 songs. Oh yes, and he was vice-president of Motown.



Smokey and his second wife, Frances Glandney, at Elton John Aids Foundation's academy awards party in March 2023. Photograph: Michael Kovac/Getty Images for Elton John Aids Foundation

Nobody wrote about love and desire like Robinson. You've Really Got a Hold on Me has one of music's greatest first lines ("I don't like you, but I love you"), while the lyrics to The Tears of a Clown ("Now if I appear to be carefree / It's only to camouflage my sadness / And honey to shield my pride I try / To cover this hurt with a show of gladness") show why Bob Dylan called him "America's greatest living poet".

William Robinson Jr was born in Detroit to working-class parents who had little money but plenty of love. His two sisters were born to the same mother, but different fathers. Although his parents divorced when he was three, they remained united as parents. "My mom used to say: 'You're going to have to take care of him after I'm gone, so you love him.' I don't know how she knew that. And my dad would say: 'You gotta love your mom because she's a great woman.' Even though they couldn't stay in the same room for five minutes together, they still promoted each other to me."

By the age of four, his Uncle Claude had nicknamed him Smokey Joe. "If you asked me what my name was, I'd say Smokey Joe because I'm a cowboy. Even my teachers called me it." Smokey Joe stuck till the Joe became surplus. When he was 10, his mother died. His older sister, Geraldine, and her husband, who had 10 children, moved into the family home and looked after him as if he was No 11, while his father lived upstairs. He was a bright, conscientious boy who planned to study dentistry until he discovered you had to dissect animals. That didn't appeal, so he changed to electrical engineering.

His real dream was to become a singer. But, back then, he believed people from his background didn't do that kind of thing.



‘I’m not as close to any man on earth as I am to Berry’: Smokey Robinson with Motown records founder Berry Gordy in LA, 1981. Photograph: Joan Adlen Photography/Getty Images

A couple of blocks away lived [Aretha Franklin](#) and her brother Cecil, another of his closest friends. When Robinson was 10, Diana Ross moved into his street with her family. He says his childhood was wonderful. “It’s beautiful to know we were kids playing together. And these people are some of the most famous people in the world now. We had such joy. I grew up in the hood, baby. And I mean *the hood*.” Franklin had a more privileged background. “Right in the middle of the ghetto there were two plush blocks, Boston Boulevard and Arden Park, that had lawns and big homes. Aretha lived on Boston Boulevard ’cos her father had money – he was one of the biggest preachers in the country. But it wasn’t like they were the rich kids. No, we just all played together. We stayed lifelong friends.”

They had singing competitions on the Franklins’ back porch, which Aretha and her sister [Erma](#) invariably won: “Erma was a helluva singer, too.” Most of his friends from then have died, too many when they were young – through drugs or violence. “When [Aretha passed](#), in 2018, she was my longest friend I had who was still alive. I’d known Aretha since I was eight.”

One day, young Robinson went with his band, the Miracles, to see the managers of his hero, Jackie Wilson. They told him the band didn't have a chance because he sang high, as did the Miracles' female singer (Claudette Rogers, Robinson's girlfriend, who went on to be his first wife and the mother of two of his three children), so their sound was too similar to that of the Platters, the world's most popular band at the time, who also had a female singer and a male singer who sang high. But Berry Gordy happened to be there and he liked what he heard. He started to mentor Robinson and the Miracles, and they recorded a single, Got a Job.

There had never been anything like Motown before, and there will never ever be anything like Motown again

Robinson started college. One day in class, he was listening to his radio when their single came on. "I went apeshit. I jumped up and ran out of class, and that was it for me. I said to Dad: 'I want to quit college and try music,' and he surprised me. He said: 'You're only 17 years old – you've got time to fail. If it doesn't work out, you can go back to school.'"

Less than two years later, Motown was formed. "Berry sat us down and said: 'I'm going to start my own record company. I've borrowed \$800 from my family. We're not going to just make black music – we're going to make music for the world. We're going to have great beats and great stories.' As far as I'm concerned, there had never been anything like Motown before that time, and there will never, ever be anything like Motown again." He's got a point.

By the age of 19, he and Claudette were married. They remained so for 27 years, although he had affairs along the way. Were he and Franklin an item at one point? "No, just friends." He smiles. "I do admit when I was about 15 I had a crush on her." Who wouldn't, I say. "Hehehe! Yeah, she was *fine*!" Did he and Ross have a thing? He pauses. "Yes, we did." How long for? "About a year. I was married at the time. We were working together and it just happened. But it was beautiful. She's a beautiful lady, and I love her right till today. She's one of my closest people. She was young and trying to get her career together. I was trying to help her. I brought her to

Motown, in fact. I wasn't going after her and she wasn't going after me. It just happened."



Smokey with Mary Wilson, Diana Ross and Florence Ballard of the Supremes, 1965. Photograph: Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images

What happened to them? "After we'd been seeing each other for a while, Diana said to me she couldn't do that because she knew Claudette, and she knew I still loved my wife. And I did. I loved my wife very much."

He looks at me and says this is what he was talking about earlier – understanding love. "You asked me what happened when we get older, and we get wisdom in life. I learned that we are capable of loving more than one person at the same time. And it has been made taboo by us. By people. It's not because one person isn't worthy or they don't live up to what you expect – it has to do with feelings. If we could control love, nobody would love anybody. Nobody would take that chance. Why would you put your heart out there for somebody to be able to hurt you like that and make you able to have those feelings?"

I ask if he has heard the rumour about him and Ross. There is a story, I say, that you two are the real parents of Michael Jackson. "*They say I'm the baby daddy?*" His voice rises an octave. "Hehehehe! Hooohoo! They say

[Diana Ross](#) and I had Michael?” Yes. “Oh my *God*! I never heard that one, man! That’s pretty good. That’s funny! That’s *funny*!”

I wonder if she has heard it. “I’m gonna call her and ask her.” He is still laughing. “That’s funny!”

Robinson has examined the complexities of love beautifully in his songs. But his understanding is by no means confined to sexual love. He talks about his love for his father; the brother-in-law who became his second dad; Aretha’s brother Cecil, who died at 50; Sam Cooke, who was 33; and Marvin Gaye, who was killed in 1984 by his father, aged 44. “I do miss them. I wonder what they would have been like were they alive today. Especially Marvin, man. Marvin and I were brothers, man. We hung out almost every day of our lives. To lose him at that age was a real blow ... The last thing I ever expected to see him was dead.” And such a violent death? “Yes, exactly. He’d got into trouble with drugs when he died.”

Diana Ross is a beautiful lady, and I love her right till today. She’s one of my closest people

Robinson also succumbed to addiction. Was he in trouble when Gaye was? “It was during and afterwards. My most dramatic bout with it was afterwards. During, we did it together. I just never got strung out. I was never a cocaine person then. I got involved with that after he died. And it took me out. It was the worst time of my life – a life experience I will never forget, but I will never do again.”

Had he been as close to Gaye as to Gordy? “No, I’m not as close to any man on Earth as I am to Berry. Berry is still my best friend. It was another kind of relationship. It was different because Berry’s never done drugs. Marvin and I had a different relationship – we were promiscuous, the same age. With Berry, you didn’t take any drugs around him. We all respected him. He was our leader, our boss. He just happened to be my best friend, too.

“Berry calls it a bromance,” he says. “We have a love for each other, man; we’re there for each other. When I was going through my heaviest part with

the drugs, for two years I was damn near dead. It wiped me out. But Berry, man, during that time he'd bring me up to his house and lock me up there for a week or two. He'd just keep me there so I couldn't keep doing what I was doing to myself. He looked after me."

Robinson tells me that one night he walked into a church, met the minister and told her everything. He went in an addict and came out free from drugs. It was a miracle, he says. "That was May 1986 and I've never touched drugs since."

One of his greatest Motown memories is Martin Luther King's visit. "You know what he said to us? He said: 'I want to do my "I have a dream" speech on Motown because you guys are doing with music what I'm trying to do politically – bring people together. You have united the races and the world with music.'"

White boys had black girlfriends, black boys had white girlfriends, and it was all because of the music

In their earliest days, Robinson says, Motown's acts played to segregated audiences – black kids on one side, white kids on the other. "We went back a year later and they were all dancing together. White boys had black girlfriends, black boys had white girlfriends, and it was all because of the music. We gave them a common love. So I'm really, really, really, really, really proud of that. About a year after we started Motown, we started getting letters from white kids in those areas: 'Hey, man, we got your music, we *luuurv* your music, but our parents don't know we have it because if they knew we had it they might make us throw it away.' A year or so later, we got letters from the parents. 'Hey, we found out our kids were listening to your music. We were curious, so we started listening to it. We *luuurv* your music. We're glad the kids have it.'" He tells the story with such vim, but he looks emotional. "I'm so proud we started to break down barriers."

Does he ever look back and wish he had become a dentist? He laughs. "No! I also had aspirations of playing baseball. I think about that all the time. I think I could have been the greatest player in the history of baseball and my

career would have been over 50 years ago. If I'd been the greatest dentist in the world I'd have been retired for 20 years by now! But I was blessed enough to be in music, which gives you longevity if you love it, if you respect it."

It's all about keeping perspective, he says. "You've got to understand you didn't start it and you ain't gonna finish it and you don't go getting a big head 'cos you've got a record out or people recognise you: 'Oh, boy, I'm hot shit.' 'Cos you're not: you're just a person who's blessed enough to have your dream of being in showbusiness come true. I tell young people all the time: 'Don't go getting hoity-toity 'cos you've got a hit record, because this started way, way, way before your great-grandmother was born and it's going to go on way, way, way after you. So you better know that!'"

Was there any danger of him getting hoity-toity? "No, I had a better upbringing than that. I was always taught that I'm human and that's the best you can be. You don't get no bigger than that on our planet."

I ask a final question. What is his favourite gasm? "I guess if you're gonna start at the world, you'd have to say God is my favourite gasm, but other than that, love is my favourite gasm. I wish love on the world." And with that, the global minister for love leaves me brimming with the stuff.

*Gasms is released on 28 April. For more information, go to [smokeyrobinson.com](https://smokeyrobinson.com)*

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# How Facebook and Instagram became marketplaces for child sex trafficking

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Veneration of the sacred feminine ... Beltane celebrations at Butser Ancient Farm. Photograph: Paul Gapper/Alamy

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**Dawn of the new pagans: ‘Everybody’s welcome – as long as you keep your**

## clothes on!’

From the Green Man on King Charles’s coronation invitation to celebrations selling out across the UK, more and more people identify as pagan, or at least pagan-curious. What lies behind its growing appeal?



[Emma Beddington](#)

Thu 27 Apr 2023 05.00 EDTLast modified on Thu 27 Apr 2023 12.15 EDT

It’s nearly Beltane, and pagans across the country are getting ready to celebrate. One of the eight festivals in the “[wheel of the year](#)”, Beltane is observed from 30 April to 1 May in the northern hemisphere and is an occasion for joyful ritual that marks the moment spring bursts into life, with fires, flower garlands – and perhaps a maypole.

“To be in a circle, to have a huge bel-fire and to jump the ashes into the full summer, it’s very life-enhancing,” says Adrian Rooke, a druid from the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids (OBOD), which runs druidry courses. Anelli Stafford, a practising “eclectic” pagan and the organiser of [Beltane at Thornborough Henge](#) in North Yorkshire, agrees: “It’s a really nice start to the year after a long, cold winter.” A regular since 2011, Stafford describes the energy and stunning skies at the three [ancient henges](#), and the

event's welcoming spirit. "There's a full range from babies to old people with walkers and electric wheelchairs," she says. The majority of people are pagan, but Wiccans and Christians are also welcome, as well as their four-legged friends: "We've had cats, dogs, a bunny, ferrets ... everybody's welcome, as long as you keep your clothes on!"



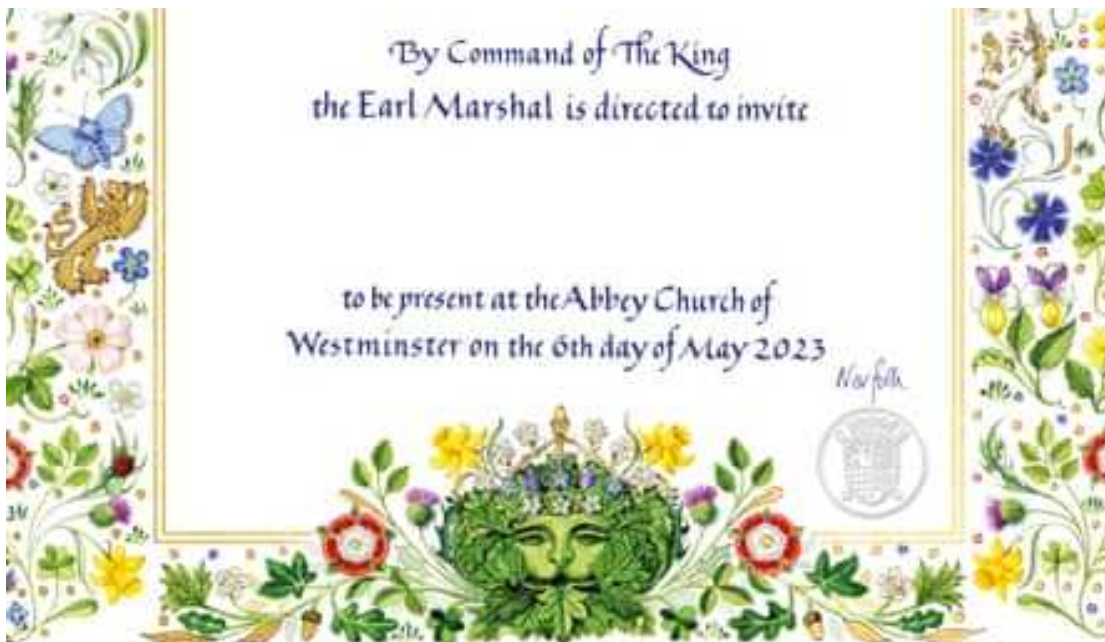
The Beltane festival at Butser Ancient Farm in Hampshire. Photograph: Andrew Matthews/PA

It's a similar scene at Butser Ancient Farm's eclectic [Beltane Celtic Fire festival](#) in Hampshire. More pagan-inspired than actual ritual, there's drumming, Celtic face painting, flower crowns, a May Queen and a Green Man – not to mention a dramatic 40ft wicker man that gets burned at dusk. "It's a joyful celebration and a collective coming-together, with a decent amount of mead, which is an essential component," says Kristin Devey, who runs events at Butser.

If you're thinking that sounds like fun, you're out of luck for this year. Overnight camping spots for Beltane at Thornborough were booked up weeks ago, and there's no space left for day visitors. Butser, which has capacity for 2,500 guests, is also completely sold out. "We used to be able to sell tickets on the door," Devey says. "Now our final release sold out literally in minutes. It was akin to the 'big festival tickets' feeling." That's a

striking degree of enthusiasm for what would once have been considered seriously fringe celebrations.

Is paganism, a loosely defined constellation of faiths based on beliefs predating the main world religions, going mainstream? King Charles's coronation invitation features a prominent image of the [Green Man](#) – “an ancient figure from British folklore, symbolic of spring and rebirth”, as the [royal website](#) puts it – creating what one paper called a “[paganism row](#)” (basically a cross tweet from one member of Mumford & Sons). Thriving fantasy literature and cinema genres are rich in pagan symbolism, and British folk revival musicians frequently draw on pagan inspiration.



The bottom half of King Charles's coronation invitation, with a representation of the Green Man. Photograph: Hugo Burnand/Buckingham Palace/Getty Images

While less than half the UK population identified as Christian in the 2022 census, [74,000 people declared they were pagan](#), an increase of 17,000 since 2011. And that might well be a significant underreporting. When the pre-eminent scholar of British paganism professor Ronald Hutton investigated in the 1990s, he came up with 110,000 – much higher than the contemporary census total. “Most of the pagans with whom I’ve kept in touch do not enter themselves on the census,” he also notes.

Pagan groups report a similar story. “When I joined OBOD 29 years ago,” says Rooke, “there were about 240 people doing the druid course. There are upwards of 30,000 now worldwide and the course is in Dutch, Italian, German ...” Heathenry – based on northern European traditions of polytheistic and spirit worship and ancestor veneration – is also “seeing massive growth”, according to Jack Hudson from the “inclusive heathen community” [Asatru UK](#). “When we started in 2013, there were eight of us; now, about 4,000 people have interacted with us over the past 10 years.” Meanwhile, a [2014 survey](#) by the Pew Research Center estimated at least 0.3% of people in the US identified as pagan or Wiccan, which translates to about one million people. That number is [expected to triple](#) by 2050.

What is paganism in 2023? For starters, it’s essentially a contemporary creation, drawing on ancient traditions. There were no “card-carrying, self-conscious pagans” from the mid-11th century until the Romantic movement in the 18th century, says Hutton. Although elements endured in Christianity, neopagans only started to establish continuous traditions in the early 20th century. It’s also the broadest of churches, spanning witchcraft, Wicca (the organised witchcraft-based religion founded in the 1950s), shamanism, druidry, heathenry and a vast swathe of non-affiliated “eclectic” pagans. “It has become incredibly mainstream, and that means it’s become incredibly diverse,” says professor of theology Linda Woodhead, who has researched the rise of alternative spiritualities.





A burning wicker man at Beltane festival 2019. Photograph: Eleanor Sopwith

One thing that has helped make paganism mainstream is the internet. Finding druids when he first became interested, says Rooke, was near impossible; they were “like the masons – you had to be invited in”. Now the pagan-curious can find information and resources on every sub-variant imaginable online, groups advertise “moots” (meet-ups) and larger gatherings welcome all-comers.

Social media has played a huge part, too. “Wichtok” is huge: the #witch hashtag has 24.1bn views on TikTok (plus 19.1m Instagram posts). “It’s definitely made magic more accessible, 100%,” says Semra Haksever, eclectic witch and owner of the [Mama Moon](#) candle and potion shop in east London. “There was always so much secrecy around how you’d meet people and how other people would practise. Now it’s really easy to connect, to learn how to do things. I can’t remember a time when I was connected with so many other women who are into witchcraft.”

Online resources have also enabled a vertiginous rise in “[solitary pagans](#)”, or people whose practice is largely private. “Getting pagans to do anything together is like herding cats,” laughs [Dr Liz Williams](#), author of *Miracles of Our Own Making*, a history of British paganism and co-owner of an online



[witchcraft shop](#). “A lot of people feel they don’t want to be told what to do – they’re just happy getting out into nature and doing their own thing.”

The sacredness of nature is one core pagan belief that holds obvious appeal now. As Hutton puts it, paganism fulfils “a need for a spiritualised natural world in a time of ecological crisis”. That resonates: a new literature of wonder, from Katherine May’s [Enchantment](#) to Dacher Keltner’s [Awe](#), has articulated our desire for transcendence, rooted in renewed appreciation for a beleaguered natural world. “You’d have to be living in a cave not to be aware of the impact we as human beings are having on the earth,” says Rooke. “A lot of druidry is about preservation, protection, planting trees. It’s ecological, geocentric, idealistic.”

That’s true of heathenry, too: “We are an intensely nature-based religion,” says Hudson. Paganism also speaks to a desire to reconnect with the rhythms of the seasons and the year: visitors to Butser are keen for more events marking festivals of the pagan calendar, according to Devey.



The Butser May Queen and Green Man dance in front of a giant wicker man at Butser Ancient Farm. Photograph: Andrew Matthews/PA

Then there’s paganism’s attitude to women: there are goddesses as well as gods, and there’s the veneration of a sacred feminine. Female empowerment

is a particular draw to witchcraft and Wicca. The appeal to young women is obvious, says Williams. “It’s very female-dominated and women-driven in a way which a lot of other patriarchal religions just aren’t.” Pop culture has had a strong influence on waves of uptake, says Williams. “Buffy started off a big interest in Wicca and witchcraft generally. Charmed, before it, had the same effect.” Now there’s Wednesday, the popular Netflix Addams Family spin-off. “I watched a little bit – it’s all about magical young women and it’s got the message that you can be different, so for young women that’s quite a positive message.”

Neopaganism also supports individual freedom and self-actualisation – very contemporary concerns. Hutton describes paganism as “a religion in which deities don’t make rules for humans or monitor their behaviour – humans are encouraged to develop their full potential”.

People often arrive there after a period of spiritual searching and dissatisfaction with other faiths. Rooke became estranged from the intolerant Pentecostal church he joined as a child, journeying through Buddhism and shamanism via a near-death experience (a catastrophic cardiac infection after a botched wisdom-tooth extraction) before alighting on druidry. Heather, a recent druidry convert, became disillusioned with Methodism after discovering reiki healing and moved through spiritualism before becoming pagan. Having spent time quietly observing on the margins of pagan ceremonies at [Stanton Drew stone circle](#), she found the druids “lovely, kind, welcoming people”.

She and her husband organised a pagan handfasting (a wedding ceremony in which partners’ hands are symbolically bound together) and in preparing for that, learned about “the elements, the stones and the land. All these things just fell into place.” Paganism, says Hudson, is “a lot less rigid in terms of worship and practice. It’s not as dominating over your personal life.” That also translates into tolerance. “I think you see each other as souls,” says Heather. “We’re all on our journey.”

That tolerance is not universal. The notion of a deep spiritual attachment to native soil has obvious appeal to white nationalists, and neopaganism has suffered from the far right misappropriating its ideas and symbolism. The

Pagan Federation states clearly on its [website homepage](#) that far-right ideology is “incompatible with our aims, objectives and values”.

“It’s something our community is extremely aware of,” says Hudson. “We protect our own community by having a strong stance.” Their Introduction to Heathenry document condemns far-right ideology as “simply incompatible with heathenry”. Asatru UK also works with [Exit Hate](#), a charity helping people leave far-right groups.

For Woodhead, what really sets paganism apart isn’t nature or self-actualisation but magic. “The big world religions are very anti-magic.” I wonder whether Williams sees a particular hunger for magic at the moment. “I think it’s perennial, but it is particularly emergent in times of crisis and extreme stress. Unfortunately, most of human history has been a time of crisis and extreme stress!” She says there has been a rise in Ukrainian witchcraft recently, directed against Putin and the Russian invasion. “I guess that is because it’s a last resort: they feel helpless, they’re under terrible threat from a powerful foe and they need to do what they can.”

By contrast, the pagan magic evoked in popular culture is often savage, grotesque and bloodthirsty. Robin Hardy’s film *The Wicker Man* celebrates its 50th anniversary this year and has become the foundational text of [folk horror](#). In it, a buttoned-up Christian policeman travels to a Hebridean island to investigate the alleged disappearance of a young woman and finds himself confronted by a population in thrall to a pagan cult. Hardy and screenwriter Anthony Shaffer carefully researched the rites and rituals included, from maypole and sword dancing to fire jumping. The film’s ineffable creepiness keeps it at the top of “best horror” lists half a century later, and a long wicker shadow still lies across the whole genre, which is filled with horned, garlanded or animal-disguised initiates, unbridled sexuality and, of course, human sacrifice. The sun-drenched, flower-bedecked bloodbath Midsommar is the obvious example, and last year’s [Men](#), by Alex Garland, also went deep on folk horror tropes, including a Green Man and masked children.



The Wicker Man (1973). Photograph: British Lion/Studiocanal/Allstar

There may never have been a wicker man. The legend emerged from a handful of Roman writings on northern European tribes, according to Hutton. “They’re hostile reports and could indeed be negative propaganda.” Meanwhile, the “enduring tea-towel, film-poster drawing of the druidic wicker man”, he says, comes from a single illustration in a 17th-century book on the history of Britain. Butser’s wicker man, Devey explains, is simply a way for the experimental archaeologists who work there to show off their woodworking prowess: “It’s a Butser craft thing. It’s got no real relation to Beltane or paganism.”

Nor is the maypole a phallic symbol: “Originally it’s a tree covered in flowers and foliage symbolising everything that’s blossoming and sprouting,” says Hutton. No one sacrifices anything except food and drink these days, and what Rooke calls paganism’s “sensuous spirituality” mainly translates to providing a welcoming spiritual home for the whole rainbow of sexual and gender identity and orientation. “There are lots of trans people in OBOD,” he says. “Lots of gay men and lesbian women – it’s very inclusive.” Heathenry also has “a large LGBTQ population that is thriving,” says Hudson.

Paganism in 2023 isn't a secret front for human sacrifice or a sex cult, nor is it an object of ridicule. If anything, it's becoming institutionalised. Both Woodhead and Williams compare paganism's current incarnation to the Church of England. "It's really quite similar to old-fashioned village Anglicanism," says Woodhead, citing the [Goddess temple](#) in Glastonbury. "They're licensed to do weddings and funerals, they've become like the church of Glastonbury. It's like the Women's Institute when you go there." It's so well-established that there are now second- and even third-generation pagans, promising a continuity never previously imaginable. Stafford loved meeting the "lockdown babies" when celebrations at Thornborough restarted post-Covid. "It's nice to see small heathen children running around," says Hudson.

A representative of a new generation is on the throne now, too, taking on the title of Defender of the Faith among others. King Charles has already expressed his desire to uphold that promise – wouldn't it be refreshing if he incorporated elements of an ancient-modern, tolerant, open, life-affirming, female-friendly faith into his reign? He's already passionate about the natural world, there's that [Green Man](#) on the coronation invitation and he almost certainly has a good collection of cloaks. Perhaps it's time for a pagan king.

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‘I’ve worn it to two weddings and a christening’ ... Jess Cartner-Morley wearing her 21-year-old Diane Von Furstenberg dress. Photograph: Suki Dhanda/The Guardian

[Forever fashion](#)[Dresses](#)

## Jess Cartner-Morley's forever fashion: 'I've had this dress 21 years. When I say "this old thing", I mean it'

The Guardian fashion writer was given this wrap dress in 2002 and since then has worn it to weddings, a christening, Ascot – and to interview the woman who designed it



[Jess Cartner-Morley](#)

[@JessC\\_M](#)

Thu 27 Apr 2023 02.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 28 Apr 2023 04.11 EDT

This is how long I've been wearing this dress: I thought about reproducing the older photo you see here when having my picture taken for this, but I couldn't make it work because Alfie, the baby son I'm holding, is at university in a different city. Alfie is now 20; the dress is almost a year older.

The funny thing is that, when I bought it, I wasn't at all sure I'd get much wear out of it. The year was 2002, Net-a-Porter had recently launched and "internet shopping" was an exciting new world. [Diane von Furstenberg and](#)

[her wrap dresses](#) were enjoying a renaissance. Her New York fashion show that season was a headily glamorous scene, Ellen Barkin clinking champagne glasses with Paris Hilton. Also, I go weak in the face of leopard-print anything, always have done. I saw this dress, dropped a few heavy hints to my husband, Tom, about my upcoming 29th birthday and before I knew it I was lifting it out of layers of black tissue paper and putting it on for the first time for a birthday dinner at our local Italian.

But then – plot twist! – about a week later, it turned out that I was pregnant with Alfie. A wrap dress doesn't really work without a waist, so within a couple of months this dress was relegated to the back of my wardrobe.

By the time Alfie was six months old, the dress was back in my life – as was the champagne, as you can see. (Yes, I was still breastfeeding – but it was the 00s, we did things differently.) And I've been wearing it ever since. I've worn it to two weddings and a christening. I've worn it to Ascot – with a dodgy asymmetric fedora hat, not its finest hour, with the benefit of hindsight – and to interview Von Furstenberg herself. (Never underestimate the power of sucking up to an interviewee.)



20 years ago ... Jess Cartner-Morley with Alfie. Photograph: Suki Dhanda/The Guardian



I used to dry-clean it, but I've found that washing it on cold in the machine and letting it air-dry works just as well. It is pretty much as good as new. And it isn't, actually, the oldest thing that I still wear – there is a Gap flippy black above-the-knee skirt, still a staple of my summer wardrobe, that I have had since I was a student. When I say “this old thing”, I mean exactly that.

This is quite categorically *not* intended to portray me as a saintly pioneer of sustainability. I am nothing of the sort. For many years I bought way, way too many clothes. In the glory years of the big Topshop at Oxford Circus, I sailed up those escalators laden with shopping bags on a Saturday afternoon in blissful ignorance, like a passenger on the Titanic knocking back the Moët even as the ship tilts. I overshopped, and I wish I hadn't. I have a lifetime of buyer's remorse, and more clothes than anyone could ever need. The least I can do now is keep wearing the clothes I already own, instead of buying more. A leopard doesn't change his spots, after all. And I have no plans to change out of these ones.

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## 2023.04.27 - Opinion

- The lesson from the Diane Abbott row: if we fight racism in silos, we just can't win
- Ali died days before he could challenge BP's CEO on the dangers of gas flaring. Don't let his death be in vain
- The terrible truth about the sacking of Tucker Carlson: someone just as odious will replace him
- I am often the oldest person in the room now. Why don't I feel wiser?



Illustration: Bill Bragg

[OpinionRace](#)

**The lesson from the Diane Abbott row:  
if we fight racism in silos, we just can't  
win**

[Aditya Chakraborty](#)



The row caused by her dreadful letter was depressing, but just as sad was what the furore revealed about modern racial politics

Thu 27 Apr 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Thu 27 Apr 2023 07.47 EDT

Long before Hackney North first elected Diane Abbott as its MP, my mother was a teacher in one of its primary schools. As a small boy I sometimes went with her, on long journeys by bus and train and across the wooden bridge over Clapton Pond, chanting about the [billy goats gruff](#). *Trip trap, trip trap*.

Visiting her staffroom was almost a whistle-stop tour of the British empire, with teachers from Jamaica, Trinidad, Nigeria, Pakistan, Cyprus and Ireland. All, I think, first-generation immigrants to the UK and all women – and all aware that those two things meant they wouldn’t get the money or the promotions they deserved. So they organised. My mother was in her trade union’s black caucus, which spoke for “all teachers who face racism”. This was London in the early 1980s, where the streets still echoed to the [Anti-Nazi League](#)’s chant of “We are Black, We are White, together we are Dynamite”.

This was Abbott's world, too. She came up through the Labour movement's Black Sections, [activist-organised groups](#) open to all historically oppressed by colonialism, be they African-Caribbean or Bengali or Cypriot. To fight racism then was to recognise that its victims looked different, spoke many tongues and had a tapestry of histories – but that they faced obstacles in common and could only beat them together.

That was a vital political schooling for Abbott and so many others. At its best, it was leftwing, alive to the complex play of class and sex alongside ethnicity, and universalist. While often more confident, today's racial discourse is narrower and less radical. Apart from the direct shock of [stupid and crass remarks](#) made by Abbott this week, one of the most troubling aspects of both the arguments made and the reaction to them is that they indicate some of the worst aspects of this discourse.



MPs Diane Abbott and Bell Ribeiro Addy (L) join demonstrators gathering to protest about the killing of Chris Kaba in Streatham Hill on 10 September 2022 in London. Photograph: Guy Smallman/Getty Images

To counter her argument that the “prejudice” experienced by Irish, Jewish and Traveller people is not a patch on the “racism” suffered by black people, I cannot improve on the [letter](#) from someone whose family left a city in Poland where more than 99% of Jews were exterminated for their

race and whose experiences of British antisemitism includes having Nazi insignia brandished in their face. As the anonymous writer says: “To compare those experiences to the struggles of redheads is incomprehensible.” Quite.

The other theme of her argument is about the white privilege enjoyed by, say, Irish people, which flies in the face of a long history in which ethnic groups are sometimes deemed to be white and other times not. As Kenan Malik [notes](#) in Not So Black and White, Irish immigrants to 19th-century America were described as “niggers turned inside out”, while in England the social reformer Charles Kingsley labelled them “white chimpanzees”.

There is much to criticise here, and yet some of Abbott’s most ferocious critics are very low on shame. Not so long ago, the Sun ran a column by Katie Hopkins [comparing migrants](#) to “cockroaches”; naturally enough, this week it ran an editorial decrying racism. It was joined by former MP John Mann, who once published a pamphlet giving advice on how to “remove any gypsies and travellers [sic]”. Also spotted this week, fretting no doubt sincerely about antisemitism, was Boris Johnson, who is possibly modern journalism’s best-remunerated user of racist language. Piccaninny, anyone?

Compare the blond Etonian to Britain’s first black woman MP, and you see how racist and sexist 21st-century Britain remains. No matter how great the sin, how brazen the deceit, how lethally complacent the politician, he gets to come back again and again, and fills his pockets while doing so. Abbott can’t even enjoy an [M&S mojito](#) on the tube without it becoming a major scandal. She has faced [racial bullying](#) – including from within her own party – that would have broken others. Little of that is remembered, and none of it helps. Given the right class, ethnicity and comportment, some people can get away with a million “mistakes”; others aren’t allowed to make one.

That is the context for so much race politics: a “gotcha” culture where an unpopular person’s misbehaviour or genuine error counts for more than actual policy, and an approach to race that prizes diversity over equality, and representation over transformation. This is aided and abetted by some within the ethnic minorities themselves who pursue what David Feldman, the director of Birkbeck Institute for the Study of Antisemitism, calls

“competitive racisms”. A couple of years ago, the Muslim Council of Britain published a report looking at how it could emulate the takeup of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s definition of antisemitism by coming up with its own hard and fast [definition of Islamophobia](#). A couple of weeks ago, neocon thinktank the Henry Jackson Society published the “first national study into the discrimination facing Hindu youth in the UK”, what it naturally calls Hinduphobia.

Not only does this make legalistic what should be political battles but it also, as Feldman says, “turns racialised minorities against each other, with each group thinking it can make gains on its own”. In other words, anti-racist politics ends up resembling the strategies and practices of the racist societies it seeks to change.

Let us end with a more hopeful story. It begins with a young man of Pakistani parents standing outside a mate’s house in the dark, chucking tiny pebbles at his window. It is 1984, and Mukhtar Dar needs to wake up his friend because they are driving to Orgreave to join the miners’ picket.

*Tap! Tap! Tap!*

Waiting in the minibus are others from the Sheffield Asian Youth Movement, formed to defend their families and homes from the far-right thugs who enjoy Paki-bashing, a sport they play with fists, knives and petrol bombs.

*Tap! Tap! Tap!*

Finally! Out he tumbles, eyes still crusty with sleep. But when they reach the picket line, a miner says, “What the fuck are the Pakis doing here?” In an [interview](#) in Tribune magazine, the activist Dar recalls his mate’s reaction. “Shit man, you get me up at five in the morning ... [for] this racism?” Dar says, “Bro, we can see the bars and some of them can’t.”

Even if some white miners are racist, he explains, their communities share much with the Asians of Sheffield: both are tight knit, working class, suffering in the slump and victimised by Margaret Thatcher. The same goes



for the Irish and the African-Caribbean communities. “Even though we organised autonomously, we saw our struggle as one.”

To strain a hand beyond the bars of one’s cell is human. But freedom, the real freedom to – as Nina Simone once said – live as fearlessly as a child; that will only come when we dismantle the entire prison.

- Aditya Chakraborty is a Guardian columnist
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Ali Hussein Jaloud was diagnosed with leukaemia at 15.

[OpinionPollution](#)

**Ali died days before he could challenge  
BP's CEO on the dangers of gas flaring.  
Don't let his death be in vain**

[Jess Kelly](#).



The 21-year-old Iraqi, who lived by a smoke-choked oilfield, died of cancer before he got to address the fossil fuel giant's shareholders. His message must be heard

Thu 27 Apr 2023 05.23 EDTLast modified on Fri 28 Apr 2023 09.16 EDT

Ali Hussein Jaloud, a 21-year-old Iraqi who lives next to one of BP's biggest oilfields, was meant to ask a question at the company's annual shareholder meeting today. He was going to challenge the CEO on why his company continues to poison his neighbourhood with [cancer-causing pollution](#). But, just a few days ago, Ali died of a form of leukaemia that has been linked to chemicals released by the burning of fossil fuels. His grieving father will ask why BP did not use its vast profits to help save his life.

Over the past two years, my fellow investigator Owen Pinnell and I got to know Ali while making a documentary for BBC News Arabic, [Under Poisoned Skies](#), which revealed the deadly impact of gas flaring in southern Iraq, including at BP's Rumaila oilfield where Ali lives, surrounded by oil company-patrolled checkpoints. We also found out that Rumaila has more gas flaring than any other oilfield in the world.

Routine gas flaring is a wasteful and avoidable practice used by oil companies to burn off the natural gas expelled during drilling. The process releases both greenhouse gases and dangerous air pollution. The gas could be captured instead and used to power people's homes, saving them from dangerous emissions. But for more than a decade, BP and its partners have failed to build the necessary infrastructure. Since the Iraq war, BP has extracted oil [worth £15.4bn](#) from the country. BP said it was "extremely concerned" by the issues raised by our film (and in February said it was working to reduce flaring and emissions at Rumaila) but announced record profits from the [oilfield](#) in the year we launched the film.

A keen footballer, Ali was diagnosed with leukaemia at 15. He had to drop out of school and his football team, and embark on two painful years of treatment. His family had to sell their furniture and take donations from their community to pay for it. "Sometimes I wished I would die so that I could stop torturing my parents," he told us. But, miraculously, Ali survived. He was too old to return to school, so he set up a small mobile phone shop.

Ali had been told by doctors that pollution had probably caused his cancer, and he quietly started advocating for a greener Iraq, one where children could breathe clean air. In his last [Instagram post](#), just days before his death, Ali called for the oil companies to stop routine gas flaring and "save the youth of the country from kidney failure and cancer".



‘In Iraq, the law states that gas flaring shouldn’t be closer than 10km (6 miles) from people’s homes.’ Excess gas is burned off near workers at the Rumaila oil field, south of Basra. Photograph: Atef Hassan/REUTERS

Rumaila, the town where Ali was living, is heavily guarded and journalists are denied access, so we asked Ali to record video diaries documenting his daily life. In the first scene of our film, he opens his front gate to reveal a towering black cloud of smoke, just a few hundred metres away, beneath which children play hopscotch. In [Iraq](#), the law states that gas flaring shouldn’t be closer than 10km (6 miles) from people’s homes.

“These children are happily playing, they’re not aware of the poison that is coursing through their veins,” he says over the video. In the next shot, he loads his cute five-year-old nephew, Abyas, on to the front of his motorbike and they scoot off, passing the primary school, which is also engulfed in thick black smoke, before arriving at a spot by the canal where gas flares punctuate the skyline in every direction.

When we showed that footage to [David Boyd](#), the UN’s special rapporteur on human rights and the environment, he called it “a textbook example of a modern sacrifice zone, where profit is put above human life and the environment”.

Ali helped us uncover high levels of the cancer-causing chemical, benzene, produced by gas flaring, in the air and bodies of children living in his community. Benzene is [known to cause](#) acute myeloid leukaemia (AML) – the cancer from which Ali and many other children we met were suffering. After our documentary appeared, the Iraqi government acknowledged, [for the first time](#), the link between the oil industry’s pollution and the local population’s health problems.

In December 2022, we found out Ali’s leukaemia had returned. His doctor in Iraq said that his only option was palliative care. But his father, who described Ali as his best friend, refused to accept this. He found a doctor at Columbia University who said that Ali could be eligible for experimental T-cell therapy. A supporter of the film, Callum Grieve, began a fundraising campaign to try to raise the £70,000 needed to send him to India. The donations were steady, but relied on the generosity of ordinary people with only small sums to give.

I began to notice in our calls with Ali that his face looked bloated, and his cheekbones hidden because of the effects of steroids. But I had no idea we would lose him so soon. On Friday 21 April, the first night of Eid, we received the terrible news that Ali had died. We had already lost to cancer three of the children we got to know while making this film.

A [Guardian investigation](#) found that nine million people a year die as a result of air pollution. Getting to know Ali helped to make that feel like much more than a statistic.

Despite the barren and apocalyptic landscape Ali grew up in, he was a keen gardener. He used to send us videos of him watering the tiny, sparse patch in his front yard where he grew a handful of small palms and some unusual species like the “bambara” or white mulberry tree. When we showed him pictures of the countryside in England, he marvelled at the greenery and the clear skies. It contrasted so starkly with the constantly orange and acrid sky he was used to.

Companies like [BP](#) are still breaking Iraq’s law by gas flaring illegally close to people’s homes. If you are looking down on us now, Ali, please know

that your death will not be in vain. Britain's biggest pension fund, Nest, and other investors are launching a shareholder rebellion against BP for rolling back on its climate targets. They told us their actions were partly inspired by our film. And this story could help secure justice for the thousands of lives put at risk by pollution from fossil fuel companies.

- Jess Kelly is a documentary film-maker and journalist. Owen Pinnell also contributed to this piece.
- **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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‘It was Tucker Carlson’s very blandness, the Tintin hair and look of perpetual confusion, that made him more objectionable than all of his predecessors.’ Photograph: Jason Koerner/Getty Images

[OpinionFox News](#)

## **The terrible truth about the sacking of Tucker Carlson: someone just as odious will replace him**

[Emma Brockes](#)



Think of those presenters who reigned at Fox News before: Bill O'Reilly and Glenn Beck. There's an endless supply of horror

Thu 27 Apr 2023 03.00 EDTLast modified on Thu 27 Apr 2023 09.11 EDT

It is a truism of the US news industry that no one is bigger than the network itself, an insight that Donald Trump – [binned by Rupert Murdoch](#) last year – may still be painfully processing, and which this week became suddenly clear to Tucker Carlson.

The former cable news host, who, it was announced on Monday, had “[agreed to part ways](#)” with the network, has hired an aggressive Hollywood lawyer – and in line with the preferred volume of the man generally, seems unlikely to go quietly. Even as the share price at Fox dropped in response to the news, [wiping \\$500m \(£400m\)](#) off its value in apparent flattery of Carlson, the question remains pertinent as to how much he, and those like him, matter as individuals.

If you are looking to fill a spare five minutes, it is an enjoyable thought experiment to rank in order of sheer flesh-crawling hideousness some of Fox News's fallen stars. Where does Carlson place, for example, compared



with Glenn Beck, the former Fox personality who, prior to his dismissal in 2011, had a shot at the title of [America's most awful man](#)? Or Bill O'Reilly, a man [who was given the boot in 2017](#) after news surfaced that the company had paid [up to \\$13m](#) in settlements to women accusing him of sexual harassment?

For a while, a sense has prevailed that these former giants – add to the list the former Fox News head Roger Ailes, [ousted in 2016](#) in the wake of sexual harassment allegations – have been banished from frontline positions, and the hope prospers that Carlson might be among the last. The fact he has lasted this long, and the likely reasons for his departure, however, point in another direction.

For my money, Carlson – who is presently the subject of his own lawsuit, brought by Abby Grossberg, [a senior producer who alleges](#) he was responsible for creating a misogynist and hostile work environment – edges out even O'Reilly for pure anti-charisma. If O'Reilly was gross in a standard Fox News style, in Carlson's case it was his very blandness, the Tintin hair and look of perpetual confusion, that made him more objectionable than all of his predecessors.

It is always fascinating to consider the tipping point at which behaviour previously tolerated by Fox becomes suddenly intolerable to the company – and for Carlson, it seems unlikely it's the Grossberg lawsuit. It might not even be his role in fanning the flames of the [January 6 riot](#) that has [just cost the company \\$787.5m](#) in settlement money to shut down the lawsuit brought by Dominion Voting Systems.

Had it gone to trial, Carlson would surely have been a liability, given the way he encouraged viewers to regard the presidential election as rigged. At the same time, behind the scenes, he was [lambasting Trump's lawyers](#) for selling a line to the public that Carlson himself seems not to have believed. “You’ve convinced them that Trump will win,” he wrote to an attorney for Trump in November 2020. “If you don’t have conclusive evidence of fraud at that scale, it’s a cruel and reckless thing to keep saying.”

More irksome to his employers, however, might have been his off-the-cuff comments about Trump at a time when Fox officially still backed the

former president. In early January 2021, in an exchange with members of his staff, [Carlson wrote](#): “We are very, very close to being able to ignore Trump most nights. I truly can’t wait,” and: “I hate him passionately.”

I dare say Murdoch hated Trump, too, at that point, but for a network like [Fox](#), it is dangerous to show the workings of the sausage machine too closely. There comes a point where the gap between the true feelings of network bosses and the line they are selling to viewers becomes so large that even those at the back who aren’t paying attention may catch a whiff of the true venality of the operation.

The most surprising thing to have come out since Carlson’s departure, however, is the breakdown in viewing figures. At the time of his ousting, Carlson was the highest rated cable news host in the US, pulling in [more than 3 million viewers](#) nightly. By contrast, Chris Hayes over on MSNBC attracts around 1.3 million viewers and Anderson Cooper, the most boring man on television, scores around 700,000 on CNN in that time slot.

These are decent figures. But dig down into the details, and among viewers aged between 25 and 54 – the most attractive demographic – Carlson [hovered around](#) the 330,000 mark. This is more than his rivals, for sure, but is still a tiny number of people relative to the sheer amount of oxygen this man has taken up over the last five years.

He will write a book. He’ll launch a podcast. He may accept a [flippantly offered](#) \$25m job opportunity from the far-right news channel OAN. As with his predecessors, the memory of Carlson will fade quickly to irrelevance as we’re reminded it’s the platform that pulls the strings, not the person. Someone equally odious will replace him.

- Emma Brockes is a Guardian columnist





‘Am I helpful to my young colleagues or a grumpy old deadweight?’: the power of advice from senior colleagues. Photograph: Morsa Images/Getty Images

[Opinion](#)[Work & careers](#)

**I am often the oldest person in the room now. Why don't I feel wiser?**

[Adrian Chiles](#)



When I started at work I loved being mentored. But younger people seem to know more and be more confident than me

Thu 27 Apr 2023 02.00 EDTLast modified on Thu 27 Apr 2023 05.50 EDT

When I started in broadcasting, I always seemed to be the youngest person in the room. I liked it this way. Yes, I was occasionally patronised a bit, and doubtless got on my elders' nerves, in a who-does-this-kid-think-he-is kind of way. But I didn't mind being talked down to one jot. After all, they knew a lot more than me about things and I had plenty to learn.

This was in the BBC's business news department. The best of them were only too happy to sit me down and talk me through one of the many topics I didn't understand. I spent many hours learning at the feet of gifted correspondents such as Rory Cellan-Jones, Simon Gompertz and Jackie Hardgrave. I'll for ever be grateful to them. They looked out for the work experience kid, professionally and socially. When I was hungover, they probably gave me Calpol. It was good to be the junior; I felt as if I was ahead of the game.

Now, all a sudden, I'm not the youngest. I'm the oldest. This wise old owl feels old enough for the role, but nowhere near wise enough. In fact, I'm still seeking wisdom much more than I'm dispensing it. To this day, I call Rory for explanations, and he has been retired a year or more. Am I anywhere near as helpful to my young colleagues, or a grumpy old deadweight? I'm taking a long look at myself.

I went to the Croatian embassy recently for a gathering of Croatian professionals in the UK. Upon entering, I thought I'd walked into the wrong event; it felt more like a youth club for exceptionally well-dressed people. I was a good quarter of a century older than nearly everyone there. They all seemed more confident and wiser than me. All of them spoke English far better than I spoke their language. It felt as if I didn't have a lot to offer.

I got talking to one impressive young woman studying chemical engineering.

“Postgrad?”

“No. First degree. I'm only 20.”

She turned out to be the daughter of a famous Croatian goalkeeper. Sloping off home, I checked his Wikipedia page and discovered that I'm considerably older than him, too.

When I got back, I made myself some cocoa and went to bed.

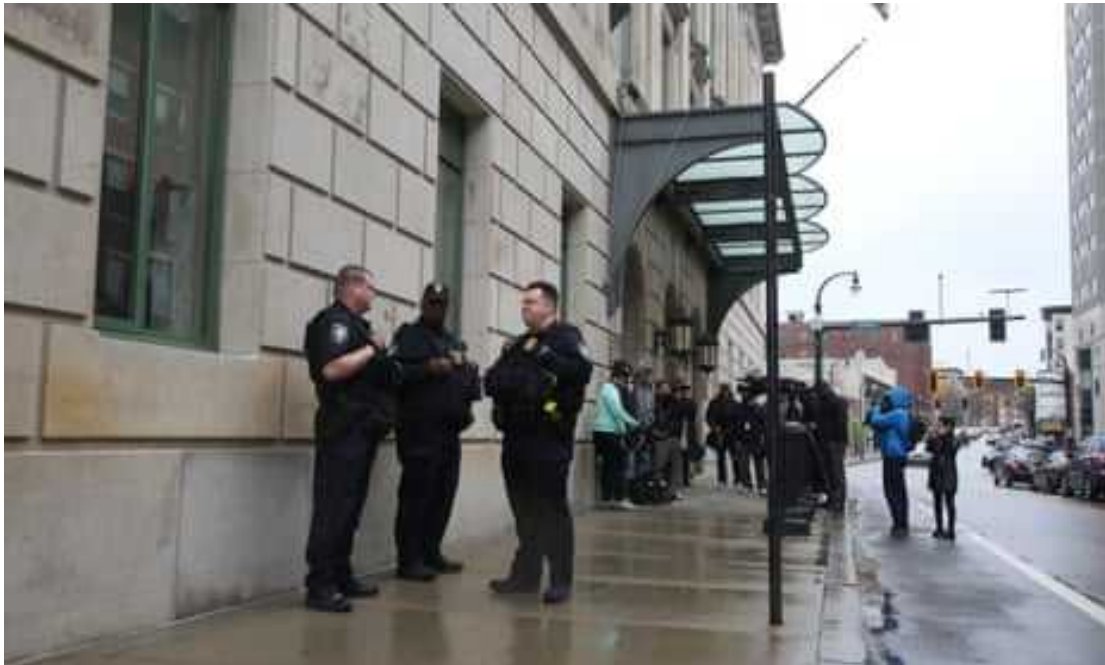
Adrian Chiles is a broadcaster, writer and Guardian columnist

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## 2023.04.27 - Around the world

- [Pentagon leaks Suspect may still have access to classified info, court filings allege](#)
- [Belize Former partner of Lord Ashcroft son pleads guilty over shooting of police officer](#)
- [American Pie South Korean president sings at state dinner with Biden](#)
- [South Korea US nuclear-armed subs to resume visits after decades](#)



The federal courthouse in Worcester, Massachusetts, on Thursday, where the hearing took place. Photograph: Reba Saldanha/Reuters

[Pentagon leaks 2023](#)

## US judge delays decision on detention for Pentagon leaks suspect

No decision on where Jack Teixeira should remain until trial but judge appears doubtful of arguments that he should be released

[Gloria Oladipo](#) and agencies

Thu 27 Apr 2023 15.33 EDTFirst published on Thu 27 Apr 2023 01.10 EDT

A federal judge has delayed a decision on a detention hearing for the US air national guardsman suspected of leaking highly classified US intelligence documents.

Federal prosecutors urged Judge David Hennessy to keep Jack Teixeira, 21, behind bars, arguing he could still pose a grave risk to [US national security](#).



and have access to secret national defense information, during a nearly 90-minute trial on Thursday in Worcester, Massachusetts.

Prosecutors also said Teixeira had kept an arsenal of guns and had said on social media that he would like to kill a “ton of people”.

Hennessy delayed an immediate decision on where Teixeira should remain until trial, but remained skeptical of arguments made by Teixeira’s defense team that he should be released.

In court papers filed late on Wednesday, justice department lawyers said releasing Teixeira while he awaits trial would present a grave threat to national security, arguing he may still have access to secret information.

Investigators are still trying to determine if Teixeira kept physical or digital copies of classified information, including files that have not yet surfaced publicly.

“There simply is no condition or combination of conditions that can ensure the defendant will not further disclose additional information still in his knowledge or possession,” prosecutors wrote.

“The damage the defendant has already caused to the US national security is immense. The damage the defendant is still capable of causing is extraordinary.”

Teixeira has been in jail since [his arrest earlier this month](#) on charges stemming from the highest-profile intelligence leak in years. Defense lawyers asked that he be released into the custody of his father, also named Jack Teixeira.

During Thursday’s hearing, Teixeira entered the courtroom wearing an orange jumpsuit and handcuffs and carrying rosary beads, [CNN reported](#). His handcuffs were removed after he sat down.

Several individuals filled a section of the court reserved for friends and family. One individual began sobbing as Teixeira entered.

During Thursday's hearing, Teixeira Sr told the presiding judge he would not hesitate to report his son to the court if he violated the terms of his release.

"My son is well aware of the fact that if he is released and does anything against probation, I will report it to his probation officer or anyone else," said Teixeira.

The senior Teixeira said his house was equipped with several Ring cameras that would notify him if his son were to leave the house, as well as several cameras on the property.

But Judge David Hennessy appeared doubtful of arguments made by Teixeira's defense team that the 21-year-old did not mean for the leaked information to be widely shared, the Associated Press reported.

"Somebody under the age of 30 has no idea that when they put something on the internet that it could end up anywhere in this world?" asked Hennessy.

"Seriously?"

Teixeira has been charged under the Espionage Act with unauthorized retention and transmission of classified national defense information. He has not entered a plea. After a hearing last week, his attorney declined to speak to reporters. If convicted, he faces up to 25 years in prison.

Teixeira is accused of [distributing highly classified documents](#) about top national security issues in a chatroom on Discord, a social media platform that started as a hangout for gamers.

The documents provided a wide variety of highly classified information on allies and adversaries, with details ranging from Ukraine's air defenses to Israel's Mossad spy agency.

In describing Teixeira as a danger to the community, prosecutors wrote that the suspect, who owns multiple guns, repeatedly had "detailed and troubling discussions about violence and murder" on the Discord platform.

In February, he told another person he was tempted to convert a minivan into an “assassination van”, prosecutors wrote.

Teixeira is accused of searching for recent shootings and terms including “Las Vegas shooting”, “Buffalo tops shooting” and “Uvalde” not pertinent to his military base job.

An application for a firearms ID card that Teixeira filed “was denied due to the concerns of the local police department over the defendant’s remarks at his high school”, [the Washington Post reported](#).

Prosecutors also disclosed that Teixeira was suspended from high school when a classmate overheard him discussing molotov cocktails, other weapons and racial threats.

Prosecutors alleged that Teixeira took steps to destroy evidence after news outlets began reporting on the documents leak. Authorities who searched a dumpster at his home found a smashed laptop, tablet and Xbox gaming console, they said.

The justice department has said its investigation is continuing, and the Pentagon has said it will conduct a review of access to sensitive intelligence to prevent a similar leak in the future.

Billing records the FBI obtained from Discord were among factors that led authorities to Teixeira, who enlisted in the air national guard in September 2019.

His role in the guard was as a “cyber transport systems specialist”, essentially an IT specialist responsible for military communications networks. In that role, Teixeira would have had a higher level of security clearance because he would have been tasked with responsibility to access and ensure protection for the network, a defense official told the Associated Press.

A Discord user told the FBI a username linked to Teixeira began posting what appeared to be classified information around December.

On Wednesday, the air force suspended the commander and a detachment commander in the squadron in which Teixeira was employed, NBC reported. The intelligence mission of Teixeira's squadron has also been suspended.

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |



Jasmine Hartin, the former partner of the son of the billionaire Tory donor Lord Ashcroft, has pleaded guilty in Belize to negligent manslaughter. Photograph: Alaia Belize / Youtube

[Belize](#)

## Former partner of Lord Ashcroft son pleads guilty in Belize over shooting of police officer

Jasmine Hartin admits negligent manslaughter of Henry Jemmott by accidentally discharging his firearm

[Oliver Laughland](#) in Belize City

[@oliverlaughland](#)

Thu 27 Apr 2023 00.59 EDTLast modified on Thu 27 Apr 2023 01.59 EDT

The Canadian socialite and former partner of the son of billionaire and Conservative party grandee Lord Michael Ashcroft has pleaded guilty in a court in [Belize](#) to the negligent manslaughter of a police officer.

Jasmine Hartin, 34, who shot and killed police superintendent Henry Jemmott in May 2021 in what [she has described](#) as an accidental discharge from Jemmott's firearm, entered a tearful plea at the nation's supreme court in Belize City on Tuesday afternoon before the start of a scheduled trial.

Hartin briefly addressed reporters outside the courthouse, stating: "I just want Henry's family to have peace now and I want this whole thing to be behind all of us so we can heal."

Speaking to the Guardian, Hartin's attorney, Orson "OJ" Elrington, said he expected his client would receive "no custodial sentence" while a judge would determine the size of a fine or compensation due to Jemmott's family at a sentencing next month.

"The law dictates, and not emotion or public sentiment," Elrington said of the expected non-custodial sentence. "The law dictates what the sentence should be in these matters, and the law is very clear ... it is right in line with the law."

The 2021 incident occurred in the town of San Pedro as Hartin handled Jemmott's gun while the two drank together on a pier in the evening. Hartin had reportedly been giving Jemmott a shoulder massage when he handed her his gun. After hearing a shot, police rushed to the scene and found Hartin distressed and covered in blood. Jemmott's body was recovered from the water with a single gunshot wound to the head.

Hartin said in interviews that she and the officer were friends but not in a romantic relationship.

The Canadian was living with Andrew Ashcroft and their two children in Belize at the time, where Lord Ashcroft holds citizenship and a substantial business portfolio. The pair had been involved in the launch of a new luxury hotel in San Pedro at the time of the shooting.

After the incident Andrew Ashcroft obtained custody of the children in 2022 and moved to the Turks and Caicos Islands to launch a new business

venture. [In a statement](#) he said he had gifted his former partner a 10% stake in the holding company of the new hotel, which he planned to compensate her for.

“I hold no ill will or malice towards Jasmine and wish her well with the court proceedings,” the statement read.

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

South Korea's president sings American Pie at White House – video

[South Korea](#)

## South Korean president sings American Pie at state dinner with Biden

Yoon Suk Yeol impresses US president with rendition of 70s hit before being presented with guitar signed by Don McLean

*Agence France-Presse*

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From discussing nuclear war to belting out a beloved hit: South Korean president Yoon Suk Yeol's White House visit ended on a high note when he sang Don McLean's American Pie to great applause.

Yoon is on a [six-day state visit to Washington](#), where he discussed with Joe Biden “the end” of any North Korean regime that used nuclear weapons against the allies.

But the two leaders had more cheerful topics on the agenda at the White House state dinner in Yoon's honour on Wednesday, with the South Korean leader – who is known at home to be something of a karaoke buff – sharing his love of American music.

Unexpected moment at the state dinner when the president of South Korea sings “American Pie.” [pic.twitter.com/Dus6BiBU9E](https://pic.twitter.com/Dus6BiBU9E)

— Jeff Mason (@jeffmason1) [April 27, 2023](#)

“We know this is one of your favourite songs, American Pie,” Biden said to Yoon, having pulled him up on to the stage at the end of the evening to listen to singers perform the classic.



“Yes, that’s true,” the 62-year-old Yoon said, saying he had loved the song, released in 1971, since he was at school.

“We want to hear you sing it,” said Biden.

“It’s been a while, but ...” Yoon responded, offering only token resistance as he took the microphone.

Yoon belted out the first few lines of the song a cappella, triggering rapturous applause from the crowd and delighting Biden and first lady Jill Biden.

“The next state dinner we’re going to have, you’re looking at the entertainment,” Biden told the crowd, referring to Yoon.

Then he turned to the South Korean president and said: “I had no damn idea you could sing.”

Biden told Yoon that McLean could not be at the White House to join them but had sent a signed guitar, which the US president gifted to the South Korean leader.

It is not Yoon’s first time singing in public.

On the campaign trail in 2021, he appeared on the famous South Korean TV show All the Butlers, wowing its celebrity hosts with a sparkling rendition of the K-pop ballad No One Else, by Lee Seung-chul.

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Joe Biden and Yoon Suk-yeol at the White House in Washington on Wednesday. Photograph: Shutterstock

[South Korea](#)

## US nuclear-armed submarines to resume visits to South Korea for first time in 30 years

Yoon Suk-yeol meets Joe Biden in Washington amid concerns in South over North's nuclear buildup

[Julian Borger](#) in Washington and [Justin McCurry](#) in Tokyo

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The US and South Korea have reaffirmed their alliance, agreeing that nuclear-armed submarines would resume port visits and threatening a “swift, overwhelming and decisive response” to any North Korean nuclear attack, including retaliation in kind by the US.

The South Korean president, Yoon Suk Yeol, said that response would include US nuclear weapons, making explicit an element of the alliance that normally remains unspoken.

The warning to Kim Jong-un's regime came as Yoon and Joe Biden issued [a joint declaration](#) marking the 70th anniversary of the alliance, during a visit by the South Korean leader to Washington on Wednesday.

“A North Korean nuclear attack against the US or its partners is unacceptable, and would result in the end of whatever regime took the action,” Biden said.

“I have absolute authority, and sole authority, to launch a nuclear weapon, but what the declaration means is that we will consult with our allies, if any action is so called for.”

The visit and the declaration have come at a time of increasing nervousness in South Korea about [North Korea's nuclear buildup](#), and calls for Seoul to develop its own nuclear arsenal. The Biden administration is seeking to reassure the South Koreans of the US's security commitment, amid signs that the North has made significant advances in its weapons programme, despite years of international sanctions targeting the regime in Pyongyang.

Concern over the threat posed by its neighbour has sparked a serious conversation in South Korea over whether the country should develop its own nuclear deterrent. Once considered a peripheral view, the idea of possessing nuclear weapons is now supported by most South Koreans, according to recent opinion polls.

The South gave up its nuclear weapons programme almost 50 years ago when it signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and officials in Washington are eager for that stance to continue, fearing that the peninsula could become the centre of a potentially dangerous arms race between North and South.

But North Korea's rapidly advancing weapons programmes - including ballistic missiles that can theoretically reach the US mainland – have added

to concern in South Korea over whether the US would really use nuclear weapons to defend its ally under what it calls “extended deterrence”.

Yoon, a conservative who has ditched his liberal predecessor’s policy of engaging with the North, earlier this year said his country was weighing developing its own nuclear weapons or asking the US to redeploy them on the peninsula.

While Wednesday’s agreement will see the US and South Korea coordinate more deeply on a nuclear response strategy in the event of an attack by the North on its neighbour, nuclear weapons would remain under US operational control, while Biden made it clear that he was not contemplating the deployment of nuclear weapons in the South.

“We are not going to be stationing nuclear weapons on the peninsula,” he said.

In the declaration, Biden said Washington’s security commitment to Seoul was “ironclad” and that any North Korean nuclear attack on South Korea would be “met with a swift, overwhelming and decisive response”. US extended deterrence, it said, was “backed by the full range of US capabilities, including nuclear”.

The declaration also said the allies would consult more extensively “to defend against potential attacks and nuclear use and conduct simulations to inform joint planning efforts”.

To underline the presence of the nuclear umbrella, US ballistic submarines armed with nuclear missiles will make port visits in South Korea for the first time since 1991.

“Sustainable peace on the Korean peninsula does not happen automatically,” Yoon said. “Our two countries have agreed to immediate bilateral presidential consultations in the event of a North Korean nuclear attack and promised to respond swiftly, overwhelmingly and decisively using the full force of the alliance, including the United States’ nuclear weapons.

“Deployment of strategic assets will be made constantly and routinely.”

Derek Johnson, managing partner of the Global Zero, a disarmament advocacy group, said the potential use of nuclear weapons by the US would only add to tensions in the region.

“Nuclear weapons are a source of global insecurity and lie at the heart of the crisis on the Korean peninsula,” Johnson said. “Adding more of these weapons to the equation, even temporarily, will not make the United States or South Korea safer or more secure. This is far more likely to aggravate, rather than alleviate, pressures in the region, which could boil over catastrophically at any moment.”

While Yoon is expected to use the declaration to try to persuade voters that Washington is taking South Korea’s concerns seriously, Jenny Town of the monitoring group 38 North said the declaration fell short of what some in the South had hoped for. It was “unlikely to either persuade North Korea off its current course of WMD [weapons of mass destruction] development and testing or to quiet the debate inside South Korea about its own nuclear future”, she said.

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# Table of Contents

[The Guardian.2023.04.30 \[Sun, 30 Apr 2023\]](#)

[Headlines saturday 29 april 2023](#)

['Toxic' Firm releases almost 800kg of 'forever chemical' a year into Lancashire river](#)

[Live Russia-Ukraine war: fire rages at Crimea oil depot;](#)

[Zelenskiy asks Xi for help with deported children](#)

['I was in tears' Briton with valid passport barred from flight over Brexit rules](#)

[Brexit Lords committee urges end to barriers for musicians and young people](#)

[2023.04.29 - Spotlight](#)

[Tim Minchin 'Politics affects my mental health ... I feel gaslit'](#)

[The best and worst health myths and wisdom Chocolate doesn't cause acne – but carrots do help you see in the dark](#)

[Jack Whitehall 'I have a punchable face, and my body looks like it's been drawn by a child'](#)

[Rafael Behr How putting away my phone helped me recover from a heart attack](#)

[2023.04.29 - Opinion](#)

[Now we know how fabulously wealthy Charles is, why can't he pay for his own coronation?](#)

[Nixed nuptials, Fox in trouble and 'erratic' behaviour ... Is Rupert Murdoch OK?](#)

[South Korea may look perfect, but behind the facade lies a devastating suicide crisis](#)

[Richard Sharp was Boris Johnson's toxic legacy – never again should politicians pick a boss for the BBC](#)

[2023.04.29 - Around the world](#)

[US supreme court Leaked abortion draft made us 'targets of assassination', says judge](#)

['This was unexpected' Abortion bans blocked in Nebraska and South Carolina](#)

[Indonesia Arrested Australian man says he felt ‘almost possessed’ during naked rampage](#)

[Italy ‘Provocative’ mermaid statue causes stir](#)

#### [Headlines tuesday 25 april 2023](#)

[Live ‘Large-scale evacuation’ of UK nationals begins in Sudan amid fears ceasefire will break down](#)

[UK Government to begin evacuating British nationals from Sudan](#)

[‘The worst of worst case scenarios’ Western diplomats blindsided over Sudan crisis](#)

[Stories of the evacuees ‘We were not sleeping, eating or drinking’](#)

#### [2023.04.25 - Spotlight](#)

[‘I have an invisible disability myself’ Edward Enninful and Sinéad Burke on their fashion revolution](#)

[Eat fibre first – and ditch the juice Five quick and easy tips for a much healthier meal](#)

[How we survive I was the sole survivor of a plane crash. This is what I learned in eight days alone in the jungle](#)

[Donald Trump’s civil rape case What is he accused of and what happens next?](#)

[Who is E Jean Carroll? The woman who alleges Trump sexually assaulted her](#)

#### [2023.04.25 - Opinion](#)

[Dominic Raab is gone, but many others will continue his assault on human rights](#)

[A ‘skinny jab’ is no quick fix for obesity – and no excuse to let junk food companies off the hook](#)

[How do you put a new lover to the test? See how they react when your dog bites your mother](#)

[Tucker Carlson was Fox News’ biggest star. Then he became its biggest liability.](#)

#### [2023.04.25 - Around the world](#)

[US North Dakota governor signs law banning nearly all abortions](#)

[Antibiotics Use in farming ‘endangering human immune system’](#)

[Tucker Carlson Host leaves Fox News – reportedly fired by Rupert Murdoch](#)

[‘Wow’ and ‘OMG’ Shock at Carlson's departure](#)

[Headlines monday 24 april 2023](#)

[Diane Abbott Labour officials will decide on MP's future, says shadow minister](#)

[Len Goodman Former Strictly Come Dancing judge dies aged 78](#)

[Slavery Descendants of UK slave owners call on government to apologise](#)

[Live Government exploring ‘every single option’ to get British nationals out of Sudan, says minister](#)

[Sudan No assurances UK nationals will be rescued, says minister](#)

[2023.04.24 - Spotlight](#)

[The hell of somniphobia On a bad night I get zero to two hours’ sleep](#)

[John Cooper Clarke’s honest playlist The thrill of Elvis has never gone away](#)

[‘We all want to be Steve McQueen’ Gary Lineker on his MotD style, baggy jeans and who’ll win the league](#)

[A lost Ukraine The photographs that show the calm before the carnage](#)

[2023.04.24 - Opinion](#)

[Learning-disabled and autistic people are being neglected and tortured. How much longer?](#)

[My ancestors profited from slavery. Here’s how I am starting to atone for that](#)

[Rishi Sunak’s wife’s business links tell the story of Britain’s broken childcare system](#)

[Trump committed treason and will try again. He must be barred from running](#)

[2023.04.24 - Around the world](#)

[Kenya cult deaths Toll from suspected starvation cult reaches 47](#)

[Credit Suisse \\$68bn left bank in lead-up to rescue by UBS](#)



[Burkina Faso Sixty killed in village by raiders 'wearing military uniforms'](#)

[Human rights UN experts begin US tour focusing on racial justice and policing](#)

[China Beijing says don't 'hype up the so-called threat narrative' after Australian criticism](#)

[Headlines friday 28 april 2023](#)

[Live Sharp quits as BBC chair after report finds 'potential perceived conflict of interest' over Boris Johnson loan help](#)

[BBC Richard Sharp resigns as chair after months of pressure](#)

[Profile Sharp has friends everywhere but left on his own](#)

[2023.04.28 - Spotlight](#)

['I was really shocked' Would-be UK homebuyers describe their mortgage battles](#)

[You be the judge Should my phone-addicted friend go on a mobile detox?](#)

['Decadent, stupid, a fool' The dark days of Donna Summer Experience I'm the world's oldest female standup comedian](#)

[2023.04.28 - Opinion](#)

[Britain once rioted over the price of bread. What would it take for us to confront greedflation today?](#)

[As a billionaire king is crowned, he urges us to do some charity work. Welcome to Britain](#)

[The Met was ill prepared when Stephen Port began killing gay men – and it still is](#)

[Betting nearly destroyed me. The industry must not be allowed to water down online gambling reform](#)

[2023.04.28 - Around the world](#)

['A crying shame' Overdose deaths in San Francisco rise by 41% in three months](#)

[Live Business: EU economy returns to growth despite surprise German stagnation](#)

[Israel Gun-toting, prayer-reciting protesters throng Jerusalem to back judicial overhaul](#)

[US Senate investigation into Brett Kavanaugh assault claims contained serious omissions](#)

[Donald Trump E Jean Carroll pushes back in cross-examination: ‘He raped me whether I screamed or not’](#)

#### [Headlines thursday 27 april 2023](#)

[King Charles Direct ancestors of monarch owned slave plantations, documents reveal](#)

[Live Russia-Ukraine war: Russia attacks Mykolaiv and Bakhmut; Nato says almost all promised combat vehicles delivered to Ukraine](#)

[Live Sudan crisis: calls to help people left in the country as hundreds of foreign nationals airlifted to safety](#)

[UK British nationals should leave Sudan immediately, says foreign secretary](#)

[Sudan conflict Army says it is willing to extend ceasefire amid plans for talks](#)

[Sudan explainer Why is there fighting and what is at stake in the region?](#)

#### [2023.04.27 - Spotlight](#)

[‘At 83, I still feel sexual’ Smokey Robinson on love, joy, drugs, Motown – and his affair with Diana Ross](#)

[‘She didn’t know how to make it stop’ How Facebook and Instagram became marketplaces for child sex trafficking](#)

[Dawn of the new pagans ‘Everybody’s welcome – as long as you keep your clothes on!’](#)

[Jess Cartner-Morley’s forever fashion ‘I’ve had this dress 21 years. When I say “this old thing”, I mean it’](#)

#### [2023.04.27 - Opinion](#)

[The lesson from the Diane Abbott row: if we fight racism in silos, we just can’t win](#)

[Ali died days before he could challenge BP’s CEO on the dangers of gas flaring. Don’t let his death be in vain](#)

[The terrible truth about the sacking of Tucker Carlson: someone just as odious will replace him](#)

[I am often the oldest person in the room now. Why don’t I feel wiser?](#)

#### [2023.04.27 - Around the world](#)

[Pentagon leaks Suspect may still have access to classified info, court filings allege](#)

[Belize Former partner of Lord Ashcroft son pleads guilty over shooting of police officer](#)

[American Pie South Korean president sings at state dinner with Biden](#)

[South Korea US nuclear-armed subs to resume visits after decades](#)