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Tokyo Olympic Games 2020

Simone Biles withdraws from Tokyo Olympics all-around gymnastics final

- Biles cited mental health concern in Tuesday's withdrawal
- No decision on Biles' participation in individual finals



Simone Biles stepped out of Tuesday's team final after one rotation.
Photograph: Mike Blake/Reuters

Simone Biles stepped out of Tuesday's team final after one rotation.
Photograph: Mike Blake/Reuters

PA Media

Wed 28 Jul 2021 02.48 EDT

Simone Biles has decided to withdraw from Thursday's women's all-around final, USA Gymnastics has confirmed.

[Simone Biles and Naomi Osaka highlight the untenable pressures of Big Sport | Barney Ronay](#)

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The 24-year-old pulled out after one rotation of the women's team final on Tuesday in Tokyo, citing mental health concerns.

USA [Gymnastics](#) said Biles is yet to decide whether to withdraw from her four individual finals, which are scheduled to take place next week.

In a statement, USA Gymnastics said: "After further medical evaluation, Simone Biles has withdrawn from the final individual all-around

competition.

After further medical evaluation, Simone Biles has withdrawn from the final individual all-around competition. We wholeheartedly support Simone's decision and applaud her bravery in prioritizing her well-being. Her courage shows, yet again, why she is a role model for so many. pic.twitter.com/6ILdtSQF7o

— USA Gymnastics (@USAGym) [July 28, 2021](#)

“We wholeheartedly support Simone’s decision and applaud her bravery in prioritising her wellbeing. Her courage shows, yet again, why she is a role model for so many.”

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Tokyo Olympic Games 2020

Team GB men strike Olympic gold in pool again with stunning relay win

- Tom Dean and Duncan Scott add to Tuesday's gold and silver
- 4x200m gives GB a third swimming gold for first time since 1908



(From left to right) James Guy, Tom Dean, Duncan Scott and Matthew Richards after Team GB won the gold medal in the men's 4x200m freestyle relay at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. Photograph: Xinhua/Shutterstock

(From left to right) James Guy, Tom Dean, Duncan Scott and Matthew Richards after Team GB won the gold medal in the men's 4x200m freestyle relay at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. Photograph: Xinhua/Shutterstock

[Andy Bull](#) at Tokyo Aquatics Centre

Wed 28 Jul 2021 00.08 EDT

Team GB's week in the swimming pool just keeps getting better. Their men's 4x200m relay didn't just win the event, they dominated it, and set a new European record. The quartet of Tom Dean, James Guy, Matthew Richards, and Duncan Scott won the gold in a time of 6min 58.8sec, which was just three-hundredths off the world record set by Michael Phelps' USA team in 2009. It was Great Britain's first gold medal in the event since 1908, and it also snapped one of the longer winning streaks in Olympic swimming – it was the first time since Sydney 2000 that anyone has beaten the USA in this event.

[Ariane Titmus wins another Olympic gold for Australia as Katie Ledecky fades](#)

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The Russian Olympic Committee took silver, and Australia bronze. The USA came fourth. No coincidence, it is also the first Olympics since 2000 when they have not had Phelps and Ryan Lochte in their squad. With Great Britain in this form, it might not have made much difference if they had.

The win also made Dean, who swam the lead-off leg, the first British man to win two gold medals in the swimming pool at the same Games since that same Olympics in 1908 (but the second swimmer – Becky Adlington did it at Beijing in 2008). It is an extraordinary achievement for a man who lost seven weeks of winter training because he had Covid. Dean, the new Olympic 200m champion, actually turned in the slowest of the four legs here. Great Britain were trailing the USA's when he touched the wall, but Guy swam brilliantly, and they took the lead midway through his leg.

Sign up for our Tokyo 2020 briefing with all the news, views and previews for the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Guy had watched Tuesday's 200m freestyle final from a spot in the stands, and started crying as he watched Dean and Scott win it in a one-two. Guy had finished fourth in that event at Rio in 2016 and said afterwards that he was overcome with joy when his training partner, Dean, won the gold here. That reaction said plenty about the bonds between the men on the relay team. Guy and Scott go back a long way, too: they have been swimming this event together for the best part of the last decade now and were both on the team that won the silver medal behind the USA at Rio in 2016.

Guy was crying again now, for himself this time, as he watched Scott streak home in a final leg of 1:43.45, the fifth-fastest split in history. Scott now has a gold to go with his three Olympic silvers and he still has three more events left to compete in this week.



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[Tokyo Olympic Games 2020](#)

Andy Murray's Olympics at an end after GB doubles defeat to Croatian pair

- Cilic/Dodig beat Murray/Salisbury 4-6 7-6 10-7
- Murray previously stepped down from singles due to injury



Andy Murray looks dejected during his and Joe Salisbury's defeat in their men's doubles quarter-final. Photograph: Lucy Nicholson/Reuters

Andy Murray looks dejected during his and Joe Salisbury's defeat in their men's doubles quarter-final. Photograph: Lucy Nicholson/Reuters

PA Media

Wed 28 Jul 2021 02.28 EDT

Andy Murray and Joe Salisbury's medal hopes were ended by a quarter-final loss to Croatians Marin Cilic and Ivan Dodig in the men's doubles.

[Britain's Liam Broady into third round at Olympics with biggest win of his career](#)

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The British pair had been in excellent form through the first two rounds and things seemed to be going smoothly when they broke Cilic to lead by a set and a break.

But the Croatians responded impressively, breaking the Murray serve, winning the second set on a tie-break and then coming through a deciding first-to-10-point tie-break to win 4-6 7-6 (2) 10-7.

More to follow...

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[Tom Daley](#)

Tom Daley knits a tea-cosy holder to keep his gold medal safe from scratches

The 27-year-old Olympic champion has built a solid following on social media from his knitting and crochet



Tom Daley with the medal he has knitted to protect. Photograph: Clive Rose/Getty Images

Tom Daley with the medal he has knitted to protect. Photograph: Clive Rose/Getty Images

[Martin Belam](#)

Tue 27 Jul 2021 10.55 EDT

Tom Daley had waited a long time to get his hands on an Olympic gold diving medal, having made his debut for Team GB in Beijing in 2008 and coming close at every subsequent Olympics. With Monday's victory in the 10m synchronised platform alongside Matty Lee, he finally has one – and on Tuesday demonstrated that he is determined to look after it.

Daley revealed on [his Instagram account madewithlovebytomdaley](#) that overnight in Tokyo he had [knitted a little holder for his gold medal](#) to “prevent it getting scratched”.



Team GB's Tom Daley holds up his gold medal and the knitted holder.
Photograph: Tom Daley/Instagram

In [the video](#), Daley laughs as he says: "This morning, I made a little cosy for my medal to stop getting scratched."

He then produces the tea-cosy type effort, with a Union flag knitted on one side, and the Japanese flag on the other. Demonstrating its utility, Daley goes on to say: "It slots in like this. It all tucks in nicely, to have a little pouch for me to carry around my medal without it getting scratched. How about that?"

The madewithlovebytomdaley account boasts nearly 100,000 followers, and has been where Daley has shown off his knitting prowess [since September last year](#).

He also praised the people who follow him on social media for his knitting-related content, saying his needlework during Covid restrictions had been a crucial part of his buildup to Olympic victory.

Daley said: "I don't normally post things that are not necessarily knitting related on my 'made with love' page, but myself and Matty won the Olympics yesterday, and I thought I'd come on and just say the one thing that has kept me sane throughout this whole process is my love for knitting,

crochet, and all things stitching. So I want to say thank you to all my followers on here too much for actually following along.”

01:16

'I am gay and an Olympic champion': Tom Daley wants to inspire LGBT community – video

The 27-year-old won plaudits for his speech after his gold medal. Having waited 13 years to secure a victory, Daley took a moment to say that “I feel incredibly proud to say that I am a gay man and also an Olympic champion. When I was younger I didn’t think I’d ever achieve anything because of who I was. To be an Olympic champion now just shows that you can achieve anything.”

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Immigration and asylum

RNLI hits out at ‘migrant taxi service’ accusations

Lifeboat charity says it is its moral and legal duty to rescue people at risk of dying as they cross Channel



‘Our role is ... simply to respond to a need to save lives,’ says Mark Dowie, the RNLI’s chief executive. Photograph: Gareth Iwan Jones/The Guardian

‘Our role is ... simply to respond to a need to save lives,’ says Mark Dowie, the RNLI’s chief executive. Photograph: Gareth Iwan Jones/The Guardian

*[Rachel Hall](#)
[@rachela_hall](#)*

Tue 27 Jul 2021 19.01 EDT

The Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) has hit out at accusations it is operating a “migrant taxi service” by rescuing people at risk of dying in the water as they [cross the Channel in small boats](#), which the charity says is its moral and legal duty.

Responding to accusations from Nigel Farage that it is facilitating illegal immigration, the volunteer lifeboat charity said it was “very proud” of its humanitarian work and it would continue to respond to coastguard callouts to rescue at-risk Channel migrants in line with its legal duty under international maritime law.

[How an RNLI training pool gave me an insight into crossing Channel as a migrant](#)

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“Imagine being out of sight of land, running out of fuel, coming across incredibly busy shipping lanes when you’re frightened and you don’t know which direction you’re going in. That is by anyone’s standards distress. Our role in this is incredible important: simply to respond to a need to save lives,” said Mark Dowie, the chief executive of the RNLI.

Dowie’s comments came as the government prepared to enact its controversial [borders and nationality bill](#), which aims to reduce the numbers of crossings by criminalising migrants who attempt illegal routes into the UK rather than entering via settlement schemes.

While the charity does not take a stance on political matters, Dowie said: “These islands have the reputation for doing the right thing and being decent societies, and we should be very proud of the work we’re doing to bring these people home safe.”

The RNLI’s work rescuing migrants began five years ago, but has greatly increased over the past two years across nine sites stretching between Margate in Kent and Eastbourne in east Sussex. In recent months, volunteers have observed an increase in larger boats, sometimes of up to 50 people, which are even more precarious than smaller vessels.

This reflects the rapid growth in the number of migrants attempting the dangerous crossing this year. Last week, the [number of people](#) who had crossed to the UK so far this year reached 8,452, which exceeded the figure for the whole of 2020, when 8,417 people made the trip. A further 600 were intercepted as they made the journey over the weekend.

The RNLI is looking to promote empathy and understanding among the British public with respect to migrants crossing the Channel following criticism on social media of its humanitarian work after it was included in a [Daily Mail article](#) that claimed to reveal “migration madness”.

Dowie said he had spoken to crew members who shared “harrowing” details of “an appalling melting pot of possible risks” to understand the plight facing migrants and wanted to share these more widely. “I understand it’s a polarising and complex situation,” he said. “But unless you’ve experienced being in an open boat in the waves, it’s quite hard to get a feel for what it must be like.”

Anonymised testimonies from crew members released by the RNLI shed light on the dangerous situations for migrants. These include people lost in the ocean for 30 hours in -2C (28.4F) temperatures in January, families suffering from severe heatstroke and sea sickness on sweltering summer days, people travelling on unseaworthy vessels such as inflatable dinghies, sailing catamarans and canoes, or sometimes floating on the broken remnants of boats without any lifejackets, hoping to be saved.

One volunteer described an especially harrowing encounter: “They’d paddled this thing about 80% of the way across the Channel and they’d been doing this all night. They’d made it into the middle of the shipping lane, and they were just so exhausted they couldn’t go on and they had nothing left and they’d stopped. When we got there, they were so tired they hardly reacted to us.”

Other volunteers shared experiences of “vile abuse” on the beach as they returned with people, including young children, in desperate need of medical attention, such as having beer cans thrown at them and people shouting “fuck off back to France”.

RNLI crew members are mostly volunteers and wake up in the middle of the night or leave their regular jobs to rescue people in distress in the sea. Once they return with migrants, they ensure they are safe and well before handing them over to the police and border control officers.

Dowie stressed that the RNLI's role was solely to save lives, not to act as an additional border control force.

While there had been “strong demand” for the RNLI’s service given the increase in the popularity of [British seaside holidays](#), the charity had the resilience to cope, Dowie said, although he added that it was always trying to recruit more volunteers.

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Refugees

Refugees recreate historic picture to celebrate 70 years of protection

People granted sanctuary in UK since 1951 gather to celebrate anniversary of UN refugee convention



Refugees who have arrived in the UK since 1951 celebrate the signing of the UN refugee convention. Photograph: Graeme Robertson/The Guardian

Refugees who have arrived in the UK since 1951 celebrate the signing of the UN refugee convention. Photograph: Graeme Robertson/The Guardian

[Diane Taylor](#)

Tue 27 Jul 2021 19.01 EDT

Refugees from seven generations have come together to recreate a photograph of the signing of the UN refugee convention to mark the agreement's 70th anniversary.

The gathering celebrates decades of the UK granting sanctuary to people fleeing for their lives – but also warns that the nation's duty towards refugees must continue into the future.

The photo, created by coalition campaign [Together With Refugees](#), brings together refugees from a range of conflicts including the Hungarian uprising, Ugandan Asians who fled Idi Amin's regime and the ethnic cleansing of the Balkans war. In the place of the UN document, they signed an orange heart, a symbol of support for refugees.

The UN refugee convention 1951 formalised the rights of refugees under international law. It means that countries signed up to it have a legal duty to protect those fleeing persecution and serious harm in other countries. A total of 149 countries have signed up to this law, including the UK.

George Szirtes, 72, who took part in the recreation photograph, is a successful writer who arrived in the UK as a refugee in 1956 at eight years old, having fled from Hungary.



The original image showing the signing of the UN refugee convention in Geneva in 1951. Photograph: Arni/UN Archives

He said: “Giving safety to people fleeing war and persecution was necessary 70 years ago and I suspect it is more necessary now than ever before.”

Other refugees taking part in the photograph include author and playwright Gillian Slovo, 69, who arrived in the UK from South Africa in 1964 with her mother and two sisters. Her parents were both active in the opposition to the apartheid regime.

Hong Dam, a digital artist and writer born to a Chinese father and Vietnamese mother, fled with her family when war broke out between Vietnam and China when she was eight years old.

Aloysius Ssali, 50, was captured and tortured in Uganda because of his sexuality. The UK didn't formally recognise sexuality as a reason for claiming refugee status until 2010 when he became one of the very first people to be granted refugee protection in the UK on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity.

“Celebrating 70 years of the refugee convention, especially for someone like me, a refugee in this wonderful country, I don't take that for granted. I am who I am now because of the British people, they granted me refugee status and gave me another chance to live,” he said.



George Szirtes with Aloysius Ssali Photograph: Graeme Robertson/The Guardian

Syrian refugee Dr Saad Maida, 37, who also took part in the photograph, is a doctor working in the NHS. He arrived in the UK in 2010 to study and was given refugee status in 2014. He said: “The UN convention has had a huge impact on me. It has given refugees freedom and acknowledges that we have rights. I feel immense gratitude and hope somehow to pay that back.”

Enver Solomon, a spokesperson for Together With Refugees and CEO of the Refugee Council, said: “Seventy years ago, after the horrors of the second world war, the UK signed the Refugee convention. We gave our commitment to protect people fleeing war and persecution. Since then, it has saved hundreds of thousands of lives. These are people who have gone on to make huge contributions to our communities as proud Britons. And we must continue to safeguard this promise of safety.”

Findings from an ICM poll revealed on Wednesday that three in five people (59%) are proud that Britain has protected refugees since it signed the convention in 1951.

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Police

‘Weird and gimmicky’: police chiefs condemn Boris Johnson’s crime plan

PM’s attempt to grip agenda flounders amid criticism he has ignored evidence on stop-and-search



Boris Johnson during a visit to Surrey police headquarters in Guildford as part of his ‘crime week’. Photograph: PA

Boris Johnson during a visit to Surrey police headquarters in Guildford as part of his ‘crime week’. Photograph: PA

[Vikram Dodd](#) and [Jessica Elgot](#)

Tue 27 Jul 2021 15.32 EDT

Police chiefs have condemned Boris Johnson’s high-profile strategy to tackle crime as “weird and gimmicky”, while plans to increase stop-and-

search were criticised for ignoring the evidence.

The crime initiative was supposed to show the Johnson government gripping the agenda. But senior police officers, the rank and file, opposition politicians and even some in business rebuked it.

The criticism of Johnson's crime plan is the latest in a series of setbacks for the prime minister's domestic relaunch, after his landmark "levelling up" speech was [mocked for being light on detail](#) and his [plan to overhaul social care](#) delayed by Treasury wrangling and a Conservative backlash over tax rises.

The shadow justice secretary, David Lammy, said the plan was "tinkering" and would do nothing to rebuild a broken system. "It is just a rehash of policies that won't make our streets safer or prevent offending," he said.

"Delays in the courts are at a record high, while convictions for the most serious crimes including rape are at a record low. The government's tinkering proposals do little to reverse the effects of the closure of 295 courts in England and Wales, or to deal with the massive cuts to drug treatment services, the police, the CPS and the whole justice system his government has made since 2010."

Among the proposals in the strategy are:

- Permanently relaxing conditions on the use of section 60 stop-and-search powers for police to tackle knife crime.
- Expanding the use of electronic monitoring for thieves upon release from prison.
- Trialling the use of alcohol tags – which detect alcohol in the sweat of offenders guilty of drink-fuelled crime – on prison leavers in Wales.
- Making unpaid work "more visible" by getting offenders to clean streets and open spaces.

Under the plans, offenders doing community service would wear hi-vis as they clear canals or clean graffiti. “The intention is to make the price of crime visible,” one Home Office source said.

Some police chiefs privately mocked parts of the government plans, which the Guardian understands were launched without consulting leaders in law enforcement or frontline officers.

One chief constable condemned a plan for league tables measuring how quickly forces answer emergency and non-emergency calls: “So forces can answer the phone, say ‘hello’, and put it down again. It needs to be about the quality of what you do.”

Another chief constable said: “It’s a real over-50s assumption that picking up the phone is an indicator of effectiveness.

“It is about what you do after you answer the call. Some mental health calls take two hours.”

One chief said of the overall package: “It is just weird ... and a bit gimmicky. Why tag burglars on release from prison, and not domestic violence offenders, or rape suspects?”

Asked if it would cut crime, the chief said: “No, but it will waste some officers’ time. It does not address the big issues.”

Those issues identified by police leaders include poverty and social inequality that have widened in recent years, as well as changing dynamics in drugs markets.

Another police leader said of the measures, some of which were recycled from past announcements: “It is like there has been an explosion in a strategy factory.”

Johnson, out selling the plans, claimed “fluorescent-jacketed chain gangs” of offenders would be visible to the public, paying for their crimes.

That was rubbed by James Timpson, of the shoe repair business, which funds recruiting and training for ex-offenders, who said on Twitter: “Instead

of making offenders wear hi-vis jackets in chain gangs, how about helping them get a real job instead? In my shops we employ lots of ex-offenders and they wear a shirt and tie. Same people, different approach, a much better outcome.”

A planned relaxation of rules governing the use of stop-and-search without an officer needing reasonable suspicion was described by Johnson as a “loving” thing to do: “I think that giving the police the backing that they need in law to stop someone, to search them, to relieve them of a dangerous weapon, I don’t think that’s strong-arm tactics, I think that’s a kind and a loving thing to do,” he said.

Andy George, president of the National Black [Police](#) Association, said: “There is no evidence for the PM’s claims about the effectiveness of stop-and-search, but there is a lot of evidence it is discriminatory, unfair and does not prevent the long-term scourge of violent crime.

“[Black people are nine times more likely](#) to be stopped and searched; innocent black people are nine times more likely to be stopped and searched. That appears to be a discriminatory, not a loving thing to do. The PM should be aware of that because those are the official statistics.”

Victor Olisa, former Scotland Yard lead on stop-and-search, said: “Relying on stop-and-search as a key crime reduction tactic suggests a level of desperation in this government’s ideas on stemming the increasing level of violence in our streets.”

Part two of the crime plan sees government promising greater use of special “Nightingale” courts. It comes with the criminal justice system in crisis: courts backlogged with some cases waiting three years, demand on police rising and an expectation violence will increase as lockdown eases and society opens up.

Since becoming PM, Johnson has been keen to repair relations with policing, which fractured during the years of austerity with [police officer numbers cut](#) and government denials that helped violent crime rise.

He has promised and is on track to deliver 20,000 more officers within three years, but there are signs relations are fraying.

Police Federation leaders, representing 130,000 rank and file officers, are furious their pay has been frozen, and condemned the crime plan as containing gimmicks and being ill thought out.

Simon Foster, police and crime commissioner for the West Midlands, said: “After a decade of cuts, during which my force has shrunk by a quarter, and community policing has been dismantled, it is the height of hypocrisy for the government to talk about wanting communities to have named police officers who they can get in touch with.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/jul/27/police-chiefs-condemn-boris-johnsons-plan-as-weird-and-gimmicky>

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Tories hope ‘crime week’ heralds return to old politics after Covid

Analysis: Conservative and Labour MPs expect greater focus on issues such as economy as recess begins



Boris Johnson and Priti Patel launching ‘crime week’. Fear of crime has repeatedly come up as an issue with focus groups. Photograph: Reuters

Boris Johnson and Priti Patel launching ‘crime week’. Fear of crime has repeatedly come up as an issue with focus groups. Photograph: Reuters

*Jessica Elgot
@jessicaelgot*

Tue 27 Jul 2021 13.11 EDT

Parliament is especially ghostly for summer recess this year as exhausted MPs flee back to their constituencies. But there is a hopeful atmosphere in the air from both parties, where MPs are starting to muse that the break may usher in the return to the kind of politics they are more comfortable with – the economy, crime, education and “levelling up”.

Polling between the parties [has started to narrow](#) – though Labour and Conservative strategists tend to see this as a return to normal service. The artificial inflation of a “vaccine bounce”, which No 10 never thought would hold, has died away.

This week, a Survation poll found that the Tories dropped from an 11-point lead to a two point lead in a fortnight, while a YouGov survey recorded a fall from a 13-point lead to a four-point lead over five days.

Some Tory MPs said they believed that a more normal polling pattern would allow the party to see a more realistic picture.

“The economy is going to make a comeback,” one confidently predicted. While some of his colleagues fear a resurgence of the virus and a reimposition of restrictions that would unleash a torrent of public anger, most believe rightly or wrongly that [the worst is over](#) – and want to get on with talking about other things.

“We are desperate to have something to talk about,” another Tory MP said. “I’ve got to have something to put on my leaflets that we’ve delivered on, and at the moment there is nothing to say. That’s OK when you can just say ‘the government is literally paying your wages’ but when that ends we need to start delivering fast.”

Boris Johnson has long been desperate to move on to talking about his government’s post-Covid agenda. But now the moment is approaching, his colleagues have started to fear there is too little to say.

The prime minister’s levelling up speech, described as a “landmark moment”, had some stirring rhetoric [but little policy](#).

Indeed, there are several policies the government is pursuing that could even compound regional disparities.

The chancellor, Rishi Sunak, is understood to be uncomfortable with a Dilnot-style social care cap, because £50k is significantly more daunting if you live in a £150k home in the north of England versus a £650k in the south. A national insurance rise to pay for it would hit younger and lower-paid workers, as well as businesses – those most affected by the pandemic.

In his March budget, there are plans for £4bn of cuts to public spending that are likely to fall on councils, no matter how many times Johnson says austerity is nothing to do with him. Tories are also warning that Johnson's net zero strategy is likely to disproportionately hit the voters who can least afford new cars and boilers.

The long-delayed social care plan appears to be at a stalemate after a pushback from cabinet ministers on the manifesto-breaking tax rise.

Instead, ministers are focusing on “crime week” – an issue which repeatedly comes up in focus groups as a growing concern. They have launched a plan some have branded [a rehash of old policies](#), expanding stop-and-search powers and piloting some alcohol tags, and gimmicks such as a named officer for a neighbourhood and league tables for 999 call handling.

Labour has seized on crime as an area of Conservative weakness, underlining shocking statistics on rape convictions, knife crime and antisocial behaviour. [Keir Starmer](#), as a former director of public prosecutions, can helm that convincingly.

Labour sources suggest that doubts about the PM's capacity to deliver are starting to show in focus groups. Voters in the north of England, especially those who switched in 2019, want to give Johnson a chance and give him the benefit of the doubt on Covid, but want to see spending start in their areas. In the south, [Labour](#) says they are noticing a dislocation, a sense that the party is ignoring their concerns and fuelling culture wars.

“One rule for them” is also a damaging trope, though real public anger is still mostly fuelled by personal pandemic breaches like Johnson attempting

to dodge quarantine or Matt Hancock's affair, rather than PPE contracts.

Across the board, there is a frustration with politicians talking in banalities – something Starmer himself has been guilty of – but Labour has Johnson's levelling up speech as a key moment to point towards which was all mouth and trousers.

There are bear traps for the government along the path towards the end of the year too, battles with the Treasury over tax and spend, the threat of industrial action from medics and a mutinous Tory party prepared to vote down vaccine certification.

Many veteran Tories hope that Johnson can refocus on the Tory party's strengths – his own authenticity and growing the economy, where voters still do not trust Labour.

Labour has its own internal battles to play out over the economy, between shadow cabinet ministers like Ed Miliband who think the party should "go big" and make a radical economic offer to voters to heal post-pandemic scars, and those like the former shadow chancellor turned shadow cabinet office minister Anneliese Dodds, who warn voters still believe Labour will bankrupt the nation.

Overall, though Tories gripe, none are seriously starting to panic. One Conservative strategist said voters still saw Labour as riven with internal division and thought Starmer had failed to make an impression, whereas Johnson was thought authentic and personable.

They compared the images of the two leaders watching the football, where Johnson, who barely knew the rules, looked more at ease than Starmer, a passionate and knowledgeable fan with a season ticket at Arsenal.

One Tory strategist jokes: "Everything we do is reactive and driven by focus groups with no strategy but the saving grace is that Labour are doing exactly the same."

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Police

What is Boris Johnson offering in his crime reduction plan?

Making stop and search easier is among proposals that police and critics doubt will do much to cut crime



Thirty-five years after stop and search was introduced, a watchdog said police were still unable to explain why black people were more likely to be targeted. Photograph: Chris Bull/Alamy

Thirty-five years after stop and search was introduced, a watchdog said police were still unable to explain why black people were more likely to be targeted. Photograph: Chris Bull/Alamy

Vikram Dodd Police and crime correspondent

Tue 27 Jul 2021 12.46 EDT

What is the government's new crime plan?

It is [a phalanx of announcements and measures](#) the government claims will cut crime and make the public feel safer. There is some more money for medium- to long-term measures such as drug treatment and violence reduction units spearheading a public health approach.

But the government, led by the prime minister, has tried to sound tough, talking about ["chain gangs"](#) for [relatively minor offenders](#).

Within policing there is some anger, and in private, some mockery.

What does it say about stop and search?

There are two types of stop and search. One requires an officer to have reasonable suspicion of crime. That is [used nine times more against black people](#), official figures for England and Wales show.

One issue with stop and search is that the vast majority targets the innocent – it is in the very nature of the tactic.

But the government is making permanent a change to the other type of stop and search, which is even more racially charged. That is called [section 60](#) and allows stops without any need for reasonable suspicion.

When Theresa May was home secretary it was made harder and subject to greater scrutiny before police could issue a section 60 order. Now it is going back to being made easier.

[Stop and searches](#)

Is the Conservative government right on stop and search?

The answer to this is yes and no. It depends which recent Conservative government you are talking about.

On Tuesday [Boris Johnson](#) claimed stop and search, presumably talking about section 60, was a loving act.

But in 2015, when May was home secretary, [she said: “If you look at the evidence – it shows no link whatsoever with violent crime.”](#)

When stop and search is misapplied, and when people are stopped and searched for no good reason, it is unfair, it wastes valuable police time, and it damages the relationship between communities and the police,” she added.

[Stop and searches by ethnic group](#)

So as top Conservatives don't agree, what do others say?

Young black males in London were [19 times more likely to be stopped and searched](#) than the general population, a study of official data by University College London’s Institute for Global City Policing shows.

Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary has [castigated police forces over stop and search](#), saying that 35 years after the power was introduced they were still unable to explain why black people are more likely to be targeted.

The watchdog said in a report published in February that public trust was in danger, with police unable to provide evidence of [why black people were nine times more likely to be stopped](#) than white people in England and Wales.

HMIC said the most common reason given for stops was drug possession and questioned whether this was an effective use of the power or police time, given that so little was found.

The College of Policing, which sets standards for law enforcement, says that focused “tough” action by police, such as intelligence-led stop and search, can suppress rises in stabbings only in the short term. [The Met is the biggest user of the tactic](#), and cites the fact it helps officers take hundreds of dangerous weapons off the street every month.

What have police said about the package of measures?

Police have been taken aback because neither police chiefs nor the federation, which represents 130,000 rank and file officers, were consulted.

The fed has publicly criticised the plans as “ill thought out” and containing “gimmicks”.

Behind the scenes police chiefs made it clear some of the measures were old, some were already in place, and some may divert resources from where they could be better used.

Will the plans help cut crime?

The consensus seems to be in policing at least, no.

Police also point out they are far away from having the officers and resources they had when the Conservatives started cutting them from 2010.

Police numbers

The government’s 20,000 boost to officer numbers is on track and is welcome, but the second biggest force in England, West Midlands police, will still have 1,000 officers fewer than in 2010, even after it has recruited all the officers the government will fund.

But because the government has kept police budgets static, a so-called flat cash increase, chiefs say this is in effect a cut of 3% to 4%, given the rate of inflation. They are also seeing huge demand on them as lockdown lifts, with levels of calls in the last few weeks at the level they would expect around New Year’s Eve, traditionally the time of year they face most calls.

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[Crime](#)

Johnson proposes hi-vis chain gangs as part of crime plan

Punishment for antisocial behaviour included in proposals that will also extend powers of stop and search



Boris Johnson (centre) with the home secretary, Priti Patel, in Surrey as the government released new proposals to tackle crime. Photograph: Yui Mok/AFP/Getty Images

Boris Johnson (centre) with the home secretary, Priti Patel, in Surrey as the government released new proposals to tackle crime. Photograph: Yui Mok/AFP/Getty Images

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Tue 27 Jul 2021 08.44 EDT

Offenders guilty of anti-social behaviour should be in “fluorescent-jacketed chain gangs” publicly paying for their crimes, [Boris Johnson](#) has said.

Launching the government's [crime plan](#), which has been criticised by campaigners for the extension of stop-and-search powers, Johnson also called the controversial tactic "a kind and a loving thing to do".

Among the proposals, designed to relaunch the prime minister's domestic agenda, was a pledge that offenders doing community service will wear hi-vis clothing as they clear canals or clean graffiti. The plan will also trial the use of alcohol tags, which detect alcohol in the sweat of offenders guilty of drink-fuelled crime, on prison leavers in Wales.

"If you are guilty of antisocial behaviour and you are sentenced to unpaid work, as many people are, I don't see any reason why you shouldn't be out there in one of those fluorescent-jacketed chain gangs visibly paying your debt to society. So you are going to be seeing more of that as well," Johnson told reporters.

It is not the first time Johnson has proposed using highly visible uniforms for those undergoing community service. During his mayoral campaign in 2008 he launched "payback London", which advocated youth offenders losing privileges such as travel passes and having to [undertake community service in hi-vis](#) attire in order to have them returned.



Boris Johnson launches the ‘payback London’ scheme in 2008. Photograph: Anthony Devlin/PA

Stop-and-search powers, which disproportionately target ethnic minorities, were restricted in 2014 by Theresa May when she was home secretary, so that they could only be used if police believed there was an immediate violent threat, during a limited number of hours.

Those restrictions were eased by Priti Patel in 2019 to allow police to carry out searches 24 hours a day and on grounds of possible violence. These changes will be made permanent under the [government’s crime-fighting proposals](#).

Human rights groups including Liberty and criminal justice NGO Fair Trials said the powers were “discriminatory” and “repeatedly lead to the racist profiling of Black and other racially minoritised ethnic groups”.

Johnson, a long-time proponent of the tactic since his time as mayor of London, said he disagreed.

“They are not the only tool that we have got to use. They are part of a range of things we have got to do to fight street crime,” he said.

“I think that giving the police the backing that they need in law to stop someone, to search them, to relieve them of a dangerous weapon I don’t think that’s strong-arm tactics, I think that’s a kind and a loving thing to do.

“The people who often support stop and search most passionately are the parents of the kids who are likely themselves to be the victims of knife crime.”

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Travellers at Heathrow airport. Photograph: Andy Rain/EPA

[Guardian morning briefing](#)

Wednesday briefing: UK poised to ease amber list quarantine

Travellers at Heathrow airport. Photograph: Andy Rain/EPA

No isolation if vaccine requirements are met ... Team GB gold in men's 4x200m relay ... and an electric drive the length of Great Britain

by [Warren Murray](#)

Wed 28 Jul 2021 01.30 EDT

Top story: Proof of US, UK or EU vaccine required

Hello, Warren Murray with you again, on another golden morning for Team GB in the pool. More on that further down – first, the other big stories.

Plans to significantly open up international travel are expected to be announced today, with UK ministers poised to let Britons and some others who have been fully vaccinated in the US and EU avoid quarantine [if arriving from amber-list countries](#). Currently only those who have been inoculated by the NHS are eligible to skip the self-isolation period of up to 10 days.

The Guardian understands the Covid operations committee of ministers will meet this morning to sign off the plan. US citizens with a valid vaccine card and EU citizens using the bloc's "green pass" to demonstrate inoculation are also expected to have their documents recognised, as long as their vaccines are also authorised for use in the UK.

'Our role is to save lives' – The Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) has hit out at being called a "migrant taxi service" for rescuing people at risk of dying as they cross the Channel in small boats. Responding to accusations from Nigel Farage, the volunteer charity said it was "very proud" of its humanitarian work and would continue to respond to coastguard callouts in line with its [legal duty under international maritime law](#). "Our role in this is incredibly important: simply to respond to a need to save lives," said Mark Dowie, the chief executive of the RNLI. It comes as the government

prepares to criminalise migrants who attempt entry to the UK via illegal routes.

Midweek catch-up

- > Ecuador has [stripped Julian Assange of the citizenship](#) he was granted in 2018 while living in its London embassy to avoid arrest. The Australian founder of WikiLeaks is in a UK prison as US prosecutors try to have him extradited for espionage.
 - > More than one in three middle-aged British adults have [at least two chronic health conditions](#), including recurrent back problems, poor mental health, high blood pressure, diabetes and high-risk drinking, according to a study on “generation X”.
 - > Police chiefs have privately condemned Boris Johnson’s high-profile crime strategy as [“weird and gimmicky”](#), while [plans to increase stop-and-search](#) were criticised for ignoring the evidence.
 - > The private bank Coutts, where people like the Queen keep their money, will offer carbon credits and green mortgages to its ultra-wealthy clients after becoming one of the [largest UK banking brands to secure B Corp status](#).
-

Officials cleared for Trump testimony – Donald Trump’s former officials [can testify to Congress about his role in the Capitol attack](#) and efforts to subvert the results of the 2020 election, the justice department has ruled in a letter obtained by the Guardian. The department declined to assert executive privilege – a sharp departure from the Trump era when it repeatedly intervened to keep senior White House officials away from congressional investigations into the then-president. In his last weeks in office, Trump pressured justice department officials to use the vast powers of the federal government to undo his defeat, asking them to investigate baseless conspiracies of voter fraud and tampering that they had already determined to be false.

Disabilities work plan set out – Ministers have announced plans to help disabled people in the workplace as part of a disability strategy billed as the most ambitious in a generation, but said by some campaign groups to be thin on specifics. Government departments will be assessed on how well their policies help disabled people – the first step is to [focus on workplace inclusion and cut the disability employment gap](#). Ideas include making larger companies say how many disabled people they employ, and increasing employment of disabled people at institutions including the civilian military and reserves, MI5, MI6 and GCHQ. An “access to work adjustments passport” will help people moving from education to work or changing jobs. Another proposal is for 10% of affordable homes built through a government scheme to be supported housing, and measures to improve rail services for disabled passengers.

Karma, bro – An unreleased Wu-Tang Clan album that “Pharma Bro” Martin Shkreli forfeited after his securities fraud conviction has been sold by US authorities for an undisclosed sum, paying off the last of a \$7.4m forfeiture order. He [claimed to have bought Once Upon a Time in Shaolin for \\$2m](#). Shkreli was imprisoned for fraud after gaining fame in 2015 when, unrelated to the prosecution, he put up by 5,000% the price of Daraprim, a previously cheap drug used to treat Aids patients and others at risk of toxoplasmosis. He is in jail until October 2022. Wu-Tang Clan spent six years creating the 31-track double album, packaged in a hand-crafted silver and nickel case, which includes a 174-page book wrapped in leather.

Today in Focus podcast: The forever-Trumpers

It might seem like a post-Trump world, but in red states across the US his most hardline supporters are setting the political agenda. [How much power do they have to shape the country's future](#), even with Joe Biden in the White House?

Today in Focus

The forever-Trumpers

00:00:00

00:29:51

Lunchtime read: Sweaty bum time on the A9

“On downhill stretches during ‘regenerative braking’, when the battery is getting charged, I tell myself it’s going to be OK,” Sam Wollaston says of the ups and downs of an [all-electric car trip from Land’s End to John o’Groats](#). “But going uphill the range plummets. Squeaky bum time ...



Sam Wollaston at Land’s End before departing for John o’Groats.
Photograph: Jenna Foxton/The Guardian

“It’s the hottest day of the year so far, but I can’t risk the air conditioning, because that wipes about 10% off the range. I’ve heard that opening windows makes a car less aerodynamic, so they remain closed. Sweaty bum time, too.”

Sport

Team GB’s week in the swimming pool just keeps getting better, with the men’s 4x200m team dominating the event a short time ago and setting a new European record. [Tom Dean, James Guy, Matthew Richards and Duncan Scott won the gold](#) in a time of 6min 58.8sec, three-hundredths off the world

record set by Michael Phelps' USA team back in 2009. It was Great Britain's first gold medal in the event since 1908, and the first time since Sydney 2000 that anyone has beaten the USA in this event. Also this morning, Team GB clinched silver in the men's quad scull rowing final, behind the Netherlands and ahead of Australia.



Team GB men celebrate their 4x200m relay gold. Photograph: Charlie Riedel/AP

Team GB is riding high elsewhere as well. The women's gymnastics team has become the [first since 1928 to win a medal](#) in the team finals after securing bronze on Tuesday. Most eyes were on Japan, China or Italy but the British team of twins Jennifer and Jessica Gadirova, Alice Kinsella and Amelie Morgan snuck on to a podium spot in what Morgan called "more than a dream come true". Even before the latest medals, Sean Ingle writes that it is the [best start by Team GB](#) in a pretty long time, with two British male swimmers sharing the podium for the first time in more than 110 years. Some victories were hard-won. Triathlete Georgia Taylor-Brown defied a stress injury in her leg and a puncture to take silver. There's essential reading in Barney Ronay's look at the fates of Simone Biles and Naomi Osaka and the [pressure to "Be brilliant, constantly"](#). You can find out what's coming up later today via our [interactive guide](#) and follow all the action at our [live blog](#).

Moving from Tokyo to Cape Town, the (latest) mind games have begun before the British & Irish Lions' second test against South Africa. Rassie Erasmus has accused the Lions of compromising the “integrity of the game” by criticising the appointment of [the South African TMO Marius Jonker](#). Erasmus insisted he would never draw attention to the fact that Warren Gatland and Saturday's referee, Ben O'Keeffe, are both New Zealanders. Manchester United have confirmed they have reached an agreement with Real Madrid to [sign the centre-back Raphaël Varane](#). Having completed the signing of Borussia Dortmund winger Jadon Sancho in a £73m deal last week, the 28-year-old is set to be the next arrival.

Business

Asia-Pacific shares have been sitting at seven-month lows after regulatory crackdowns in China hit stocks in technology, property and education. Markets are also on tenterhooks before a statement from the US Federal Reserve policy meeting, followed by a press conference from its chairman, Jerome Powell, this evening UK time. The FTSE fell below the 7,000 level yesterday and again this morning it will open lower. The pound is worth \$1.387 and €1.173 at time of writing.

The papers

The Briefing's top story is also the **Guardian's** splash today: “[UK to waive quarantine rule for arrivals fully jabbed in US or EU](#)”. There is pictorial coverage for Simone Biles, the American gymnast and greatest athlete in the sport's history, who [walked away from the women's team competition](#) after admitting she had “freaked out in a high-stress situation”.



The Guardian front page, Wednesday 28 July 2021

The **Times** says “Border set to open for EU and US travellers”, which is not entirely correct on its own, but the subheading qualifies: “No quarantine for the vaccinated from next week”. The **Telegraph** says “Freedom for double jabbed as UK reopens to world”, which once again might be putting it a bit high, though the medal for that goes to the UK senior minister quoted by the **Daily Mail** as saying “Covid is all over bar the shouting”.

The **Express** forecasts: “We’ll put bulk of pandemic behind us by October” as it speaks to “Professor Upbeat” Neil Ferguson, previously dubbed Professor Lockdown in its pages. “Too late to get the jab” – the **Metro** leads with a theme of the week, stories about Covid victims who died regretting not being vaccinated. “Betrayed” – the **Mirror**’s splash is about a report into abuse at a care home. And the **Financial Times** has “Vaccine access ‘faultline’ will split global recovery in two, IMF warns”.

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[Disability](#)

UK ministers lay out ‘most ambitious’ plan for disabled workers

DWP-led plan to improve conditions for disabled people labelled ‘thin’ and ‘flawed’ by some campaign groups



Justin Tomlinson, the minister for disabled people, said the strategy was ‘a significant first step as we work towards a fully inclusive society’.
Photograph: Rex/Shutterstock

Justin Tomlinson, the minister for disabled people, said the strategy was ‘a significant first step as we work towards a fully inclusive society’.
Photograph: Rex/Shutterstock

Peter Walker Political correspondent
@peterwalker99

Tue 27 Jul 2021 19.01 EDT

Ministers have announced plans to help disabled people in the workplace, part of a wider disability strategy billed as the most ambitious in a generation, but condemned by some campaign groups as notably thin in specific policies.

The 120-page strategy, led by the Department for Work and Pensions, is intended as the first step in an annual process by which all departments will be assessed on how well their policies help disabled people.

The first incarnation, backed by £1.6bn in funding – although this is all money previously announced – focuses on the workplace, tackling inclusion and seeking to cut a disability employment gap currently at 28.6%.

Ideas include the possibility of making all larger companies say how many disabled people they employ, and increasing the number of disabled people employed by official institutions including the civilian military and reservists, MI5, MI6 and GCHQ.

There will also be a pilot scheme for what is called an “access to work adjustments passport” for people moving from education to work, or changing jobs; plus an online advice centre for disabled people and employers, covering areas such as flexible working and disability discrimination.

In other areas, one proposal is for 10% of homes built through a government scheme for affordable homes to be supported housing, and measures to improve rail services for disabled passengers.

Speaking before the launch, the minister for disabled people, Justin Tomlinson, said the document was “a significant first step as we work towards a fully inclusive society” for the estimated 14 million disabled people in the UK”.

The aim, Tomlinson said, was to integrate assistance for disabled people, highlighting issues such as for someone who gets a job in a new area but cannot find accessible housing locally.

“We’re probably very good at identifying a single challenge but not all of the issues in delivering a fully inclusive society,” Tomlinson said.

The plan, he said, was for the minister in each department who serves as the disability champion to be regularly challenged on new policies: “This is not a one-off. This is an annual document where we will be held to account for the promises we made.”

Boris Johnson described the strategy – which applies in England – as “the most far-reaching endeavour in this area for a generation or more”.

However, some charities have expressed scepticism. Kamran Mallick, the chief executive of Disability Rights UK, said the strategy was “disappointingly thin on immediate actions, medium-term plans and the details of longer term investment”.

There has also been [criticism of the consultation](#), which ran from January to April, and prompted about 14,000 responses.

Kevin Shinkwin, a Conservative peer who chairs a disability commission for the Tory thinktank the Centre for Social Justice, has previously said that the lack of engagement risked making the strategy “another car crash”.

The National Federation of the Blind of the UK says key elements of the consultation did not even work correctly for users, and has called for Tomlinson to resign.

Andrew Hodgson, the group’s president, said: “How can you have a minister who is willing to use data that is fundamentally flawed to formulate policy which will affect the lives of disabled people for a generation?”

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[Julian Assange](#)

Julian Assange stripped of citizenship by Ecuador

Authorities cite unpaid fees and problems in naturalisation papers relating to WikiLeaks founder



Pro-Julian Assange protesters at Piccadilly Circus, London demanding his release from Belmarsh prison. Photograph: Vuk Valcic/Sopa Images/Rex/Shutterstock

Pro-Julian Assange protesters at Piccadilly Circus, London demanding his release from Belmarsh prison. Photograph: Vuk Valcic/Sopa Images/Rex/Shutterstock

Associated Press in Quito
Tue 27 Jul 2021 19.08 EDT

Ecuador has revoked the citizenship of [Julian Assange](#), the founder of WikiLeaks who is currently in a British prison.

Ecuador's justice system formally notified the Australian of the nullity of his naturalisation in a letter that came in response to a claim filed by the South American country's foreign ministry.

A naturalisation is reconsidered when it is granted based on the concealment of relevant facts, false documents or fraud. Ecuadorian authorities said Assange's naturalisation letter had multiple inconsistencies, different signatures, the possible alteration of documents and unpaid fees, among other issues.

Carlos Poveda, Assange's lawyer, said the decision was made without due process and Assange was not allowed to appear in the case.

"On the date [Assange] was cited he was deprived of his liberty and with a health crisis inside the deprivation of liberty centre where he was being held," Poveda said.

Poveda said he will file appeals asking for an amplification and clarification of the decision. "More than the importance of nationality, it is a matter of respecting rights and following due process in withdrawing nationality."

Assange received Ecuadorian citizenship in January 2018 as part of a failed attempt by the government of then-President Lenín Moreno to turn him into a diplomat to get him out of its embassy in London.

On Monday, the Pichincha court for contentious administrative matters revoked this decision.

Ecuador's foreign ministry said the court had "acted independently and followed due process in a case that took place during the previous government and that was raised by the same previous government".

Assange, 50, has been in the high-security Belmarsh prison in London since he was arrested in April 2019 for skipping [bail](#) seven years earlier during a separate legal battle.

Assange spent seven years holed up inside Ecuador's London embassy, where he fled in 2012 to avoid extradition to Sweden to face allegations of rape and sexual assault, which he denied. Sweden dropped the sex crimes investigations in November 2019 because so much time had elapsed.

US prosecutors have indicted Assange on 17 espionage charges and one charge of computer misuse over WikiLeaks' publication of thousands of leaked military and diplomatic documents. The charges carry a maximum sentence of 175 years in prison if convicted of all charges.

Earlier this month, Britain's high court granted the US government [permission to appeal](#) against a decision that the WikiLeaks founder cannot be sent to the United States to face espionage charges.

In January, a lower court judge had refused an American request to send Assange to the US

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Health

A third of middle-aged UK adults have at least two chronic health issues – study

Childhood poverty and health issues before adulthood all factors in decline in mid-life wellbeing



One in six adults born in 1970 have high blood pressure; other common problems include back trouble and asthma. Photograph: Anthony Devlin/PA

One in six adults born in 1970 have high blood pressure; other common problems include back trouble and asthma. Photograph: Anthony Devlin/PA

*Rachel Hall
@rachela_hall*

Tue 27 Jul 2021 19.01 EDT

More than one in three middle-aged British adults are suffering from at least two chronic health conditions, including recurrent back problems, poor mental health, high blood pressure, diabetes and high-risk drinking, according to research that warned that health in midlife is on the decline.

The study of “generation X” adults born in 1970 found that those who grew up in poorer families were 43% more likely to have multiple long-term health conditions than their peers from wealthier households. Those who had been overweight or obese as children, who had lower birthweight and who had experienced mental ill-health as teenagers were also at increased risk of poor health in midlife.

Dawid Gondek, the UCL researcher who authored the paper, said: “This study provides concerning new evidence about the state of the nation’s health in midlife. It shows that a substantial proportion of the population are already suffering from multiple long-term physical and mental health problems in their late 40s, and also points to stark health inequalities, which appear to begin early in childhood.”

Gondek urged public health agencies to target middle-aged people with advice on how to look after their health since improvements have been linked to higher life satisfaction and earnings in earlier research. “Compared to previous generations, it appears that the health of British adults in midlife is on the decline,” he said.

The study is based on data from a nationally representative group of around 8,000 British adults who have participated in the 1970 British Cohort Study since they were born, more than 50 years ago.

At age 46-48, in 2016-18, they were asked to report on whether they had chronic physical and mental health conditions while nurses measured their blood pressure and took a blood sample to check for diabetes.

One third (34%) of the adults surveyed had multiple chronic health problems, with 26% engaged in high-risk drinking, while 21% reported

recurrent back issues, and 19% experienced mental health problems. One in six (16%) had high blood pressure, 12% were suffering from asthma or bronchitis, 8% had arthritis and 5% had diabetes in midlife.

Adults from [poorer backgrounds](#) had almost three and half times higher risk of suffering from mental ill-health and arthritis, and about three times the risk of having poor mental health and high blood pressure in their late 40s.

Those who had experienced physical and mental health problems as children, including lower birthweight, higher body mass index, lower cognitive ability at age 10 and worse emotional and behavioural issues at age 16 were also more likely to suffer from multiple chronic health problems.

Prof George Ploubidis from UCL's Centre for Longitudinal Studies said: "If these links reflect causal effects, policy and practice targeting these core areas in childhood and adolescence may improve the health of future generations and alleviate potential pressures on the NHS."

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‘The Queen’s bank’ Coutts joins the ranks of ethical brands

Despite chequered history the 329-year-old private bank has secured the sought-after B Corp status



Coutts and Co, founded in 1692 and the eighth oldest bank in the world, shows its support for Pride month at its offices in The Strand in London in 2020. Photograph: Dave Rushen/SOPA Images/Rex/Shutterstock

Coutts and Co, founded in 1692 and the eighth oldest bank in the world, shows its support for Pride month at its offices in The Strand in London in 2020. Photograph: Dave Rushen/SOPA Images/Rex/Shutterstock

[Kalyeena Makortoff](#) Banking correspondent
[@kalyeena](#)

Wed 28 Jul 2021 01.01 EDT

Private bank Coutts will offer carbon credits and green mortgages to its ultra-wealthy clients after becoming one of the largest UK banking brands to secure B Corp status.

Coutts, known as the Queen's bank for having served every member of the royal family since George IV, is trying to bolster its environmental and social reputation after being dogged by a series of scandals in recent years, including sexual harassment allegations against its former star banker Harry Keogh, who was sacked in 2018. The bank was also fined by Swiss regulators in 2017 over alleged money laundering and for illegally profiting from transactions associated [with the 1MDB scandal](#).

The lender has now secured B Corp certification, which is meant to signal that a company upholds high standards in its dealings with staff, the community, customers and the environment.

It joins more than 500 other B Corps in the UK – including energy company Bulb, The Body Shop, and Jamie Oliver Group – which are required to value purpose as much as profit and commit to improving their performance every year. The Guardian's publisher, Guardian Media Group, is also a B Corp.

The Coutts chief executive, Peter Flavel, said the move was not necessarily about attracting new clients, but ensuring that the 329-year-old bank remained relevant to existing customers and their children, who are increasingly concerned about the impact of their family's wealth.

"We seek to bank families over generations," he said. "I do think that a younger generation of client coming in is going to want to see that we're addressing these issues."

Internally, it means the bank will continue reducing the carbon footprint of its investment funds, and assess the impact of its service providers and suppliers, including tech support, software, caterers and concierge services.

And for clients, it will mean Coutts will help customers assess and understand their own carbon emissions, and encourage business customers to sign up to Paris climate commitments. Clients will also be offered the opportunity to purchase carbon credits to offset their footprint – the details

of which are still under discussion – and encouraged to take up green mortgages by offering lower interest rates.

“Wealthy people continue to live in larger, older houses, and the carbon footprint … generally isn’t that good,” Flavel said. “So we’re working out …[how we] can help our clients understand what the footprint of their house is and what they can do to improve the carbon footprint of the way they live.”

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Coutts, which offers services ranging from holiday planning to investments and wills, is one of the few UK financial firms to hold the certification alongside asset manager Lombard Odier and digital bank Triodos. A number of Coutts’s own clients also hold B Corp status including the PR firm Freuds, and law firm Bates Wells.

But some existing B Corp companies have run into trouble. Last month, it emerged that B Lab, the New York-based group that oversees the certification, was reviewing Brewdog’s accreditation following allegations that the Scottish brewer’s bosses had created a toxic work culture. B Lab said it did not comment on the details of open cases.

Flavel said it took Coutts 18 months to secure its certification. “It’s incredibly challenging to get there,” he said.

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[Slipknot](#)

Joey Jordison, Slipknot's founding drummer, dies at age 46

Family announce that metal musician, who had transverse myelitis, a nerve disease, died 'peacefully in his sleep'



Joey Jordison as a member of Murderdolls. Photograph: Rob Monk/Metal Hammer Magazine/Rex/Shutterstock

Joey Jordison as a member of Murderdolls. Photograph: Rob Monk/Metal Hammer Magazine/Rex/Shutterstock

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[@ben_bt](#)

Tue 27 Jul 2021 18.42 EDT

Joey Jordison, the drummer whose dynamic playing helped to power the metal band [Slipknot](#) to global stardom, has died at age 46.

His family wrote in a statement: “We are heartbroken to share the news that Joey Jordison, prolific drummer, musician and artist passed away peacefully in his sleep ... Joey’s death has left us with empty hearts and feelings of indescribable sorrow. To those that knew Joey, understood his quick wit, his gentle personality, giant heart and his love for all things family and music.”

Jordison was born and raised in Des Moines, Iowa, and played in a number of local bands before joining Slipknot – then called the Pale Ones – in 1995, with Jordison naming the band after one of their song titles. He featured on the band’s first release, *Mate. Kill. Feed. Repeat.*, and the lineup grew to nine members for their self-titled debut album in 1999.



Jordison in his Slipknot outfit, in 2008. Photograph: Photoshot/Getty Images

Powered in part by Jordison’s high-speed drumming in tandem with percussionists, and adopting horror-movie outfits featuring boiler suits and masks – Jordison used an expressionless mask used in Japanese noh theatre – the band brought drama and invention to the US metal scene. Their debut album was certified platinum in 2000, and set the stage for second album *Iowa*, which topped the UK album chart in 2001 and is regarded as a bleak genre masterpiece.

Jordison played on two further studio albums with the band: 2004's Vol 3: (The Subliminal Verses) and 2008's All Hope Is Gone, their first to top the US chart. In 2005, he won a Grammy with the band, who earned best metal performance for Before I Forget.

In August 2010, readers of drumming magazine Rhythm voted Jordison the greatest drummer of the previous 25 years. "This is bigger than a Grammy to me! You people keep me alive, I can't thank all of you enough," Jordison said.

He left in 2013, with the band announcing: "It is with great pain but quiet respect that for personal reasons Joey Jordison and Slipknot are parting ways." In 2014, Jordison claimed he had been fired and was "shocked and blindsided" by the decision. He later revealed he had transverse myelitis, a nerve disease, which had affected his ability to play.

"I lost my legs. I couldn't play any more. It was a form of multiple sclerosis, which I don't wish on my worst enemy," he said in 2016. "I got myself back up, and I got myself in the gym, and I got myself back in therapy to beat this ... If I can do it, you can do it. To people with multiple sclerosis, transverse myelitis or anything like that, I'm living proof that you can beat that shit."

After leaving Slipknot, Jordison went on to form the bands Scar the Martyr, Vimic and Sinsaenum, and continued Murderdolls, a side project he had begun in 2002. Over the years, he also played live drums for Metallica, Korn, Satyricon, Ministry and Rob Zombie.

Metal stars paying tribute include Serj Tankian of System of a Down, who called him "an amazing drummer and a fantastic guy", and Trivium frontman Matthew Heafy, who said: "Joey's contributions to music changed the face of heavy music on the planet as we know it."

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‘Teething problems’: visitors offered refunds for Marble Arch Mound

Council invites customers to return once the landscape has had time to ‘bed in and grow’



A steward and no visitors are seen on the Marble Arch Mound. Photograph: Dominic Lipinski/PA

A steward and no visitors are seen on the Marble Arch Mound. Photograph: Dominic Lipinski/PA

[Lanre Bakare](#) Arts and culture correspondent

[@lanre_bakare](#)

Tue 27 Jul 2021 13.57 EDT

It was supposed to boast glorious views of the capital from a lush, human-made hill in order to tempt shoppers back to central [London](#), but now

refunds are being offered to customers who bought tickets for a trip up the £2m Marble Arch Mound.

Westminster city council confirmed refunds were being given out after the project suffered “teething problems” which left its artist’s impression looking nothing like the rather limp reality – leading to a torrent of ridicule on social media.

The council said it would offer anybody who had booked a visit during the first week another ticket free of charge so that they could enjoy “the full experience” – once the landscape had “had time to bed in and grow”.

Visitors who booked in advance will be refunded the ticket fee – between £4.50 and £8 for adults – which provides an opportunity to climb the structure. Such an “experience”, the council claimed, would entice shoppers back to Oxford Street – an area that has had 17% of its shops close for good during the pandemic.

A statement on the council’s website confirmed the refunds, while reminding visitors that the mound is “[a living building by design](#)”.

“We’ll continue to adapt and improve London’s newest outdoor attraction and resolve any teething problems as they emerge,” it read. “We’re sorry for the delay and look forward to welcoming visitors when they’re ready to enjoy all the mound has to offer.”

MVRDV, the Rotterdam-based architects behind the project, declined to comment.

Last week [Winy Maas](#), founding partner of MVRDV, said before the mound’s opening that he was “fully aware that it needs more substance” after the recent heatwave hindered plant growth. “But I think it still opens people’s eyes and prompts an intense discussion. It’s OK for it to be vulnerable,” he said.

Others disagreed with his sentiment.

Social media was full of people critiquing the 25-metre-tall structure, with some comparing it to the blocky landscapes seen on the video game Super

Mario 64, while others pointed out its resemblance to the set of Teletubbies.

The mound attracted negative predictions before its launch, with critics labelling it “[a slippery slope to nowhere](#)”, with the scale and ambition of the project seen as incredibly difficult to pull off successfully.

Rowan Moore, the architecture critic of the Observer, was one of the voices sounding the alarm. “Last week, abseiling operatives were still frantically sticking slabs of turf to its sloping sides,” he wrote. “The result looked parched and patchy, more like an ensemble of ill-matched carpet tiles than a greensward.”

On a visit to the site just before it opened, the Guardian’s architecture critic, Oliver Wainwright, [described the structure](#) as composed of “thin sedum matting clinging desperately to the sheer walls of the structure, punctuated by occasional spindly trees”.

The setback is especially embarrassing for the council as the project is the figurehead of [Oxford Street District](#), an ambitious attempt to make one of the most famous shopping areas in the world “more enjoyable and civilised” through dynamic planning projects.

The importance of the £150m overhaul to the area was made clear by Debbie Jackson, the executive director of growth, planning and housing at Westminster city council, when she spoke to the Guardian in March.

“There is a certain totemic nature to the closure of Debenhams, to the closure of Topshop,” she said. “It’s very difficult to punch above those sorts of headlines. We need to remind people that it’s here and that it is everybody’s West End.”

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‘Pharma bro’ Martin Shkreli’s \$2m Wu-Tang Clan album sold by US government

The album, purchased by Shkreli for \$2m, was bought for an undisclosed sum



An unreleased Wu-Tang Clan album that Martin Shkreli forfeited after his securities fraud conviction was sold Tuesday for an undisclosed sum. Photograph: Carlo Allegri/Reuters

An unreleased Wu-Tang Clan album that Martin Shkreli forfeited after his securities fraud conviction was sold Tuesday for an undisclosed sum. Photograph: Carlo Allegri/Reuters

Guardian staff and agencies

Tue 27 Jul 2021 21.23 EDT

An unreleased Wu-Tang Clan album that “Pharma Bro” entrepreneur [Martin Shkreli](#) forfeited after his securities fraud conviction was sold Tuesday for an undisclosed sum, though prosecutors say it was enough to fully satisfy the rest of what he owed on a \$7.4m forfeiture order he faced after his 2018 sentencing.

The entrepreneur once boasted that he paid \$2m in 2015 at auction for Once Upon a Time in Shaolin, the 31-track double album the [Wu-Tang Clan](#) spent six years creating.

He later put the album on eBay, but was incarcerated for fraud before the sale (the winning bid was just over a million dollars) before the sale could be completed, Forbes [reported](#) at the time.

“With today’s sale of this one-of-a-kind album, his payment of the forfeiture is now complete,” Acting US Attorney Jacquelyn M Kasulis in Brooklyn said in a release.

Authorities said the sales contract for the album contained a confidentiality provision that protects information relating to the buyer and price.

[Martin Shkreli's \\$2m Wu-Tang Clan album seized by federal court](#)
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In a civil case in Manhattan federal court, lawyers wrote in an April document that Shkreli had already reduced his forfeiture debt by about \$5m.

Attorney Benjamin Brafman, who represented Shkreli, said he couldn’t comment because of the confidentiality order. He said in an email that he can only confirm that the entire forfeiture amount has now been paid.

Shkreli, 38, is scheduled for release in October 2022 after serving a [seven-year prison sentence](#).

He was prosecuted after he gained fame in 2015 when, unrelated to the prosecution, he boosted by 5,000% the price of Daraprim, a previously

cheap drug used to treat toxoplasmosis, a parasitic infection that can be fatal to people with the Aids virus or other immune-system disorders.

[Journalist says she fell in love with Martin Shkreli while covering his arrest](#)
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Shkreli's purchase of the Wu-Tang Clan album came as group member RZA said he wanted the album – packaged in a hand-crafted silver and nickel case which includes a 174-page book wrapped in leather – to be viewed as a piece of contemporary art.

In 2016, Shkreli said if Donald Trump won the election, he would release the album and if Hillary Clinton won he would destroy it. When Trump did win, he streamed the album intro and one of the tracks, according to [Gizmodo](#).

At sentencing, Shkreli also claimed to own an unreleased Lil Wayne album, "Tha Carter V." In its debut week in 2008, the rapper's "Tha Carter III" sold more than 1m copies and helped launch Lil Wayne to superstar status.

In 2017, Shkreli was convicted of lying to investors and cheating them out of millions of dollars in two failed hedge funds he operated. Brafman described Shkreli at sentencing as a misunderstood eccentric who used unconventional means to make his defrauded investors even wealthier.

– *With Associated Press*

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UK poised to end amber list quarantine for people vaccinated in US and EU

Ministers to discuss plans, with talks also to determine if they will apply to England only or all UK nations

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Heathrow. The expectation is that travellers from the US who have a negative test before departure and after arrival will not have to self isolate.
Photograph: Steve Parsons/PA

Heathrow. The expectation is that travellers from the US who have a negative test before departure and after arrival will not have to self isolate.

Photograph: Steve Parsons/PA

*Aubrey Allegretti Political correspondent
@breeallegretti*

Tue 27 Jul 2021 19.09 EDT

Plans to significantly open up international travel are expected to be announced on Wednesday, with UK ministers poised to let people who have been fully vaccinated in the US and EU avoid quarantine if arriving from amber list countries.

The move would benefit millions of people by finally letting them be reunited with family and friends based in the UK, as well as businesses in the [aviation and tourism sectors](#) that have been hit hard by the pandemic.

Currently, only those who have been inoculated by the NHS are eligible for a “Covid pass” to show upon return that would allow them to skip the self-isolation period of up to 10 days if coming from an amber list country, under the rules of the traffic light system that grades countries according to their case, variant and vaccination rates.

Last week it was confirmed by the vaccines minister, Nadhim Zahawi, that those who had been jabbed abroad but were still registered with a GP in the UK would from August be able to [have those doses recognised](#).

But the move came under criticism from Britons living abroad, who said it benefited a tiny number of people given the NHS is a residency-based system and so British citizens who have moved overseas would still be largely locked out.

The Guardian understands that senior ministers will gather for a meeting of the Covid operations committee on Wednesday morning to sign off plans to start treating Britons who have been fully vaccinated in the US and EU the same as UK residents.

US citizens who have a vaccine card proving they have been fully vaccinated and EU citizens who use the bloc’s “green pass” to demonstrate

inoculation are also expected to have their documents recognised, as long as the vaccines they received are authorised for use in the UK.

Government sources stressed the change was not guaranteed and subject to a final agreement at the meeting, with conversations also taking place during the day between Whitehall and the devolved administrations about whether it would apply to England only or all four UK nations.

The Guardian also understands that ministers will discuss adding [Spain](#) to the amber plus list.

The whole of the mainland, as well as the Balearic Islands, which were downgraded several weeks ago from the green list, is at risk.

A significant number of European countries allow in Britons who have been fully vaccinated and Brussels' advice to member states is to accept the NHS app, but the US bars anyone who has been in the UK in the past 14 days from entering the country.

The prime minister, Boris Johnson, and the US president, Joe Biden, announced at the [G7 summit in Cornwall](#) last month they would set up a taskforce to re-establish international travel links between both countries.

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But hopes of a breakthrough were shattered when the White House press secretary, Jen Psaki, said this week that the US would not lift the existing restrictions it places on British nationals owing to the prevalence of the Delta variant.

The US is on the UK's amber list, meaning all travellers from the country must isolate for 10 days, though they can be released under the "test to release" system after day five. Under the changes hoped to come into force from August, Britons or American citizens who have been fully vaccinated in the US will no longer need to isolate as long as they test negative before departure and after arrival.

While likely to be welcomed by many, the move was expected to happen some time over the summer, given a review of the UK's Covid rules on international travel was due to take place before 31 July.

[Beta prompts UK moves over France – but all variants could flourish after Monday](#)

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Further changes to the red, amber and green lists are not expected to be made until next Thursday, with particular attention focused on [France](#).

Ministers decided with only a few days' notice that all those returning home from France who were fully vaccinated would not be exempt from self-isolating, with the [Beta variant](#) blamed for the move.

Some government figures are optimistic that France will be moved from "amber plus" from 9 August, given the number of Beta cases there is not as high as first thought.

The move caused a significant split among some cabinet ministers, given the Joint Biosecurity Centre had initially advised France be put on the red list – a significant step that would have meant only British residents and nationals being allowed to travel home across the Channel.

In an attempt to encourage the government to ease international travel restrictions, Heathrow, British Airways and Virgin Atlantic ran a 10-day pilot scheme, which they said showed US and EU fully vaccinated passengers could be safely exempted from the requirement to isolate.

Around 250 double-jabbed passengers on selected flights from New York, Los Angeles, Jamaica and Athens in July presented their credentials using paper or digital formats before boarding the plane.

Around 99% of their documents were verified as authentic, while just two passengers' credentials were rejected. In one case there was a discrepancy between the name on the passenger's vaccine card when compared to their passport, while another had been fully vaccinated less than 14 days before travel.

Shai Weiss, chief executive of Virgin Atlantic, criticised the UK's "overly cautious approach" to international travel, saying it would harm the country's economic recovery and put half a million jobs at risk.

John Holland-Kaye, the chief executive of Heathrow airport, also said there was "now no reason to delay" with exempting double-jabbed passengers from isolating.

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Coronavirus

Covid passports ‘right’ for Premier League matches, says Michael Gove

Senior minister says unjabbed fans who attend matches are selfish and could be barred in future

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The Cabinet Office minister, Michael Gove, says Covid passports for some venues are ‘the right way to go’. Photograph: Jane Barlow/PA

The Cabinet Office minister, Michael Gove, says Covid passports for some venues are ‘the right way to go’. Photograph: Jane Barlow/PA

[Caroline Davies](#) and [Aubrey Allegretti](#)

Tue 27 Jul 2021 13.29 EDT

Michael Gove has given the strongest hint yet that domestic Covid passports will be needed for fans attending [Premier League](#) matches, as he branded those who refuse to get jabbed “selfish”.

The government has already announced that proof of inoculation will be required in nightclubs in England from the end of September, but the Cabinet Office minister went one step further as the number of infections continued to decline but deaths rose to their highest level since mid-March.

Meanwhile, [Boris Johnson](#) said case numbers were getting “better” but cautioned they could rise significantly again as the effects begin to be felt of his decision, which came into force on Monday, to lift most legal restrictions across England.

Despite recent warnings that the number of people catching Covid could hit 100,000 a day, the figure appeared to have plateaued at 54,674 on 17 July. It has more than halved since then, with cases down to 23,511 on Tuesday.

Some scientists have been left surprised, with [reasons attributed to the decline](#) including the end of the European football championship, the heatwave encouraging more people to socialise outside, England’s schools breaking up for summer and the vaccine rollout.

But the number of people with Covid in hospital is still rising and stands at 5,918, while the number of daily deaths grew to 131 – the highest since 17 March, when the country was still in lockdown.

Gove said domestic Covid passports were “the right way to go” for some venues so “people can be confident that those who are attending those events are less likely to be carriers of the virus” – and specifically cited Premier League matches.

He said that if businesses “required a certain level of safety” from customers, then people who remain unvaccinated by choice should not be

surprised if they were “barred” – accusing them of “putting other people’s health and lives at risk”.

Johnson earlier urged people not to “run away with premature conclusions” about the dip in Covid cases and said more young people getting jabbed would “help us all to move forward”.

In a move likely to inflame an already-growing row among Tory MPs about the use of documents that essentially mandate vaccination in some settings, the prime minister did not rule out certification being needed for university students to attend lectures from next term

His urge for caution was echoed by Prof Neil Ferguson, the epidemiologist whose modelling spurred the government into action at the start of the Covid pandemic, who warned the UK was not “out of the woods yet”.

He said it would be several weeks before the effect of almost total unlocking was felt, although he admitted “the equation has fundamentally changed” as a result of vaccines “hugely reducing the risk of hospitalisations and death”.

“I’m positive that by late September or October time we will be looking back at most of the pandemic,” said Ferguson, who sits on the government’s Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (Sage).

“We will have Covid with us, we will still have people dying from Covid, but we’ll have put the bulk of the pandemic behind us.

“Clearly the higher we can get vaccination coverage, the better – that will protect people and reduce transmission – but there is going to be remaining uncertainty until the autumn.”

But there were warnings that the strain on the [NHS](#) was showing no sign of abating.

Chris Hopson, chief executive of NHS Providers, said the pressure on hospital, community, mental health and administration services “feels as great as it did in January”.

About 15,000 of 100,000 NHS beds had been lost because of measures to reduce transmission in patients, and the NHS was still doing “a whole bunch of different things at once” and “trying to recover all of those care backlogs at full pelt”, he told Sky News.

Hopson said there was also “record demand for urgent care” with “large numbers of staff self-isolating”, and more off with stress and other mental health conditions.

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[Joe Biden](#)

Biden to announce vaccine requirement for US federal workers – report

Federal employees will be required to get Covid vaccine or submit to regular testing, according to CNN



Joe Biden in McLean, Virginia, on Tuesday. Photograph: Evelyn Hockstein/Reuters

Joe Biden in McLean, Virginia, on Tuesday. Photograph: Evelyn Hockstein/Reuters

Guardian staff and agencies
Tue 27 Jul 2021 17.46 EDT

Joe Biden says requiring all federal workers to get coronavirus vaccine is “under consideration” as the Delta variant surges.

Meanwhile, CNN [has reported](#) that the president will indeed announce a vaccine requirement for all federal employees and contractors, or submit to regular testing and mitigation requirements, according to a source the network said is close to the matter.

[CDC advises vaccinated people to wear masks indoors in Delta surge areas](#)

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As he wrapped up a speech to members of the intelligence community at the Office of the Director of National intelligence today, Biden took a couple questions from reporters.

One journalist asked Biden whether he plans to mandate coronavirus vaccinations for federal employees.

“That’s under consideration right now, but if you’re not vaccinated, you’re not really as smart as I thought you were,” Biden said.

Some local and state leaders, including New York’s mayor, Bill de Blasio, and the California governor, Gavin Newsom, have already announced such mandates for their government employees.

The debate over sweeping vaccine mandates come as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updated their mask guidelines today, which Biden described “another step on our journey to defeating this virus”.

“I hope all Americans who live in the areas covered by the CDC guidance will follow it,” Biden said. “I certainly will when I travel to these areas.”

Biden once again encouraged all eligible Americans to get vaccinated as quickly as possible, saying that vaccines are “the most important protection we have against the Delta variant”.

Biden added that he will “lay out the next steps in our effort to get more Americans vaccinated” on Thursday.

“By following the science, and by doing our part by getting vaccinated, America can beat Covid,” he said.

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Coronavirus

‘I advise everyone to get it’: UK Covid patients tell of regrets over refusing jab

Doctors say most patients now arriving in intensive care are unvaccinated, and deeply regret their decision

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Abderrahmane Fadil, who almost died of Covid-19, said he would get the jab as soon as he left hospital. Photograph: Twitter/NHS Bradford

Abderrahmane Fadil, who almost died of Covid-19, said he would get the jab as soon as he left hospital. Photograph: Twitter/NHS Bradford

[Sarah Marsh](#)

[@sloumarsh](#)

Mon 26 Jul 2021 11.27 EDT

For some people, the moment the ambulance arrives is the time they start expressing regrets about not receiving a coronavirus vaccine. For others, it's the death of a loved one.

Healthcare workers and Covid patients have spoken out about growing numbers who, once faced with the serious reality of catching the virus, realise that they made a huge mistake.

Dr Samantha Batt-Rawden, a senior intensive care registrar, said she had only come across one patient in critical care who had received both vaccination doses, and that the “vast majority” of people she was seeing were “completely unvaccinated”.

According to official statistics, about [60% of people being admitted to hospital with Covid are unvaccinated](#).

Batt-Rawden said it was difficult to witness the look of regret on patient’s faces when they became very unwell and needed to go on a ventilator. “You can see it dawn on them that they potentially made the biggest mistake of their lives [in not getting the vaccine], which is really hard,” she said, adding that she had overheard people telling family members about their remorse.

The patients who pull through are for ever changed – their Covid scepticism disappears once they have experienced time in intensive care, Batt-Rawden said.

One patient who regrets not being inoculated is teacher Abderrahmane Fadil, who nearly died from the virus. Speaking from his hospital bed last month, he said: “At the moment I am Covid-19 positive … My road to recovery has been excellent and positive and I am looking forward to getting the jab as soon as I get out of the hospital. I advise everyone to get it. I for one am prepared to go to hell to get the jab, instead of waiting for the disease to devour each and every one of us,” he said.

Glenn Barratt passed away in the Diana, Princess of Wales hospital in Grimsby after fighting coronavirus for weeks. The 51-year-old, from Cleethorpes, had opted not to have the vaccine. But his final words to bedside nurses and doctors were: “I wish I had.”

His family has now urged others not to make the same mistake. Ken Meech, a cousin, said if his relative had been vaccinated, “he would still be with us today”.

He told the Staffordshire newspaper the Sentinel: “I’m not a doom-monger or someone who’s telling you what you should do or not do. After all, we are supposed to live in a free world. But this is one of the saddest times of my life, losing my cousin, Big Glenn Barratt, to Covid.”

Carla Hodges, 35, whose stepfather, Leslie Lawrenson, 58, died at home from the virus on 2 July and whose mother ended up in hospital, said it had been a big wake-up call on the importance of inoculation. Lawrenson did not believe in vaccines.

“My mother did not have the vaccine either, although she had underlying health conditions such as diabetes,” Hodges said.

She said her mother was now looking to get a jab: “She is very lucky to still be here … I know not getting vaccinated is a massive regret of my mother’s. She was embarrassed to tell hospital staff she had not had the jab.”

Batt-Rawden said families often ask if anything could have been done to prevent the situation.

“You know that there is something that the patient could have had which would have meant their life is not at risk, and it is a question we get asked a lot,” she said, adding that in some instances relatives have actively discouraged their loved ones from getting vaccinated. A lot of the misinformation came from social media, she said.

Batt-Rawden said she felt guilty when patients came in and were not protected, as she thinks “we have failed them as a system and a country”. She said doctors will continue to speak up, advising anyone on the fence to

get the jab. “The side-effects are mild ... Listen to doctors who work in intensive care, because we are heartbroken every day and don’t want you to end up here.”

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Coronavirus live news: record cases in South Korea and Thailand; US may mandate vaccines for federal workers

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[Thailand](#)

Thailand puts Covid patients on sleeper trains home to ease crisis in Bangkok

More than 100 patients have already been sent home as country faces its third and deadliest wave of coronavirus

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Thai railway police patrol a passenger train while waiting for Covid-19 patients in Bangkok. Photograph: Narong Sangnak/EPA

Thai railway police patrol a passenger train while waiting for Covid-19 patients in Bangkok. Photograph: Narong Sangnak/EPA

[Rebecca Ratcliffe](#) and [Navaon Siradapuvadol](#) in Bangkok

Wed 28 Jul 2021 01.34 EDT

Thailand has begun using sleeper trains to transport Covid patients out of Bangkok, where hospitals have been overwhelmed by a recent surge in cases.

The first train left the capital on Tuesday, transporting 137 patients who were asymptomatic or had mild symptoms to their home towns in the north-east of the country.

[Thailand's hospitals under pressure as Covid crisis deepens](#)

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Thailand is facing its third and most severe wave of Covid since the start of the pandemic, driven by the Delta variant, which has spread widely across the capital. Hospitals have been forced to [treat patients in car parking areas](#), and to turn away patients who are severely ill.

Since April, the country's total fatalities have grown from fewer than 100 to 4,397. On Wednesday, 16,533 cases and 133 deaths were reported.

Public health minister Anutin Charnvirakul said on Tuesday the service would move patients who were unable to access treatment in Bangkok. "The process is all secured because they will be closely monitored by doctors and staff and won't stop anywhere. There will be an emergency team and ambulance standby at the destination," he said.

Buses, vans and planes may also be used to move people across the country, he said.

A further 15 carriages will be used to isolate patients who are awaiting hospital beds in Bangkok.

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— ittipat pinrarod (@ittipat_tv) [July 27, 2021](#)

A doctor from the group Mor Mai Thon (Doctors Won't Tolerate It), which has criticised the government response, described the situation in Bangkok as critical. “It has reached the point where people cannot access medical care at all, which has never happened before. There are a huge number of people who can't get treated,” the doctor, who asked to be anonymous, said.

Moving patients with mild symptoms could help Bangkok's hospitals in the short term, the doctor said. But they added that if such patients developed more severe illness, this could overwhelm hospitals in other areas of the country, where there are fewer intensive care beds. “The Delta variant is very strong, 50% of the patients develop a severe condition,” they said.

The government should focus on expanding testing capacity, the doctor said, while medicines need to be given more quickly to patients to prevent their illness from deteriorating.

About 70,000 tests are performed each day, with 20.5% returning positive. Demand for testing is so high that long queues stretch outside hospitals where swabs are conducted.

Thailand cases

Thailand managed to escape the worst of the virus last year, when it introduced strict lockdown measures, and rolled out test and trace systems. Critics have accused the government of complacency since then, especially in relation to the country's vaccination campaign, which has suffered from delays and shortages.

About 5% of the Thai population is fully vaccinated, while 12.4% have received one dose, according to Our World in Data. Large crowds have gathered at Bang Sue Grand Station over recent weeks, Bangkok's vaccination hub, prompting concerns that the virus could spread at the centre.

Mor Mai Thon is calling for greater transparency around the government's vaccine contracts and for officials to focus on procuring a greater variety of doses.

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pic.twitter.com/aD8oPHG9zC

— ThairathTV (@Thairath_TV) [July 28, 2021](#)

Thailand is relying on AstraZeneca and Sinovac. However, studies suggest that [Sinovac's efficacy falls 40 days after the second dose](#). Growing numbers of Thai medics – who were given this vaccine earlier in the year – have become infected. While most medics experience mild illness, they are required to isolate and this places greater pressure on resources.

“When one doctor gets infected, the people surrounding them – such as nurses, medical students – also need to do quarantine,” said Suvinai Jiraboonsri, president of IFMSA, a medical student group. “It’s a waste of time and resources in this critical moment. They need to get better vaccines.”

The government has said it will give booster jabs of alternative doses to medics.

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International Monetary Fund (IMF)

Failure to help poor countries fight Covid ‘could cost global economy \$4.5tn’, says IMF

Fund calls on rich nations to help halt spread of infectious variants through countries with low vaccination rates

- [Larry Elliott: Global economic recovery from Covid could go wrong](#)



A nurse in Haiti prepares a coronavirus vaccine. The country has only recently received its first doses. Photograph: Orlando Barriá/EPA

A nurse in Haiti prepares a coronavirus vaccine. The country has only recently received its first doses. Photograph: Orlando Barriá/EPA

[Phillip Inman](#)

[@phillipinman](#)

Tue 27 Jul 2021 09.19 EDT

The world economy risks losing \$4.5tn (£3.3tn) from highly infectious variants of Covid-19 spreading through poor countries where vaccination rates are lower, the [International Monetary Fund](#) has warned.

Calling on rich countries to take urgent action to share at least 1bn doses with developing nations, or risk severe economic consequences, the Washington-based fund said the gap between rich and poor economies had widened during the pandemic and risked worsening further next year.

A speedy rollout of vaccines has improved the economic outlook in wealthier countries, including the UK, while a lack of resources to improve vaccination rates and support the reopening of their economies has depressed growth rates across low-income countries.

[Failure to help poor countries fight Covid ‘could cost global economy \\$4.5tn’](#)

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Setting out the downside risk scenario in its six-monthly health check of the global economy, the IMF said the new coronavirus variants would wipe \$4.5tn from global GDP by 2025 with the potential for more than two-thirds of that loss falling on middle- and low-income countries.

The IMF said financial markets could be thrown into panic if the virus was believed to be spreading out of control, restricting lending and investment, and lowering the potential for growth over many years.

While such a turn of events would hurt the outlook for rich countries, the IMF's chief economist, Gita Gopinath, said: “A worsening pandemic and tightening financial conditions would inflict a double hit on emerging market and developing economies and severely set back their recoveries.”

Global GDP fell from a peak of \$87.6tn in 2019 to \$84.7tn last year, meaning that a \$4.5tn loss over four years would knock 1.3 percentage points off the world's annual GDP growth.

In recent months, the IMF has joined the [World Health Organization](#), the World Bank and World Trade Organization in [urging the wider deployment](#)

of vaccines across the developing world.

The report said that close to 40% of the population in advanced economies had been fully vaccinated, compared with 11% in emerging market economies and a small fraction in low-income developing countries.

Gopinath said: “Multilateral action is needed to ensure rapid, worldwide access to vaccines, diagnostics, and therapeutics. This would save countless lives, prevent new variants from emerging, and add trillions of dollars to global economic growth.”

The IMF’s most recent proposal to end the pandemic sets a goal of vaccinating at least 40% of the population in every country by the end of 2021 and at least 60% by mid-2022 at a cost of \$50bn.

“At the end of June 2021, the pace of daily global vaccinations stood at about 40m doses a day, with China alone accounting for more than 20m of those daily doses,” the report said.

“High-income countries account for 7m doses a day. By contrast, fewer than 100,000 doses a day are being administered in low-income countries.

“Vaccine supplies and deliveries to low- and lower-middle-income countries must increase sharply to meet the proposal’s targets. In close to half of countries recent daily vaccination rates fell below the rate needed to meet the 40% target by the end of 2021.”

On its central forecasts, the IMF said the global economy was still on track to grow by 6% in 2021, unchanged from its most recent spring health check. However, it warned fault lines were widening between rich and poor countries – with dramatic results for the shape of the economic fightback from Covid-19.

Despite the unchanged global forecast, the fund upgraded its 2021 growth estimates for advanced economies by 0.5 percentage points, but revised down its forecasts for developing countries by 0.4 percentage points.

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Next year, the IMF expects the outlook to improve from its previous forecast for global growth of 4.4% to a fresh prediction of 4.9%. However, this growth rate will also be marked by a stronger performance from the advanced economies and a slower growth rate among most emerging market and developing economies.

The UK growth rate this year was upgraded by the IMF to 7% for 2021, the highest in the developed world alongside the US. The economies of Germany, Italy and France are expected to expand by 3.6%, 4.9% and 5.8% respectively.

Gopinath said many countries were already suffering setbacks to their plans for reopening, including India after a severe second Covid wave between March and May and similar more recent waves in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam.

Meanwhile, the IMF downgraded its forecast for China in 2021 by 0.3 percentage points after Beijing scaled back public investment and overall fiscal support. The fund upgraded its growth forecasts for the UK by 1.7 percentage points to 7% in 2021.

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Electric, hybrid and low-emission cars

Leading the charge! Can I make it from Land's End to John o'Groats in an electric car?



Sam Wollaston at that start of his electric-car journey from Land's End to John o'Groats. Photograph: Jenna Foxton/The Guardian

Sam Wollaston at that start of his electric-car journey from Land's End to John o'Groats. Photograph: Jenna Foxton/The Guardian

New petrol and diesel cars will be banned in the UK from 2030, and sales of electric vehicles are rising fast. But with drivers reliant on charging points how practical is the greener option? One writer finds out



[Sam Wollaston](#)

[@samwollaston](#)

Wed 28 Jul 2021 01.00 EDT

Range anxiety hits hard on the A9 in the Highlands of Scotland. For the uninitiated, this is the fear that an electric vehicle (EV) won't reach its destination before running out of power. I'm driving through some of Britain's loveliest landscape – mountains, rivers, lochs and firths – but I hardly notice. I'm focused hard – on the road in front, but mainly on two numbers on the dashboard. One is how far it is in miles to where I'm going; the other is the range in miles remaining in the battery. Sometimes, especially on downhill stretches when what is known as "regenerative braking" means the battery is getting charged, I tell myself it's going to be OK, I'll make it. But going uphill the range plummets. [Squeaky bum time](#).

Plus, I've read [Michel Faber's Under the Skin](#). I know what happens to men stranded on the A9. To range anxiety add the fear of being processed and eaten by aliens.

It's the hottest day of the year so far, but I can't risk the air conditioning, because that immediately wipes about 10% off the range. I've heard that opening windows makes a car less aerodynamic, so they remain closed.

Sweaty bum time, too. Driving as gently as possible, nursing the car along, barely touching the accelerator or the brake, phone unplugged, radio off, I head north in sweltering, silent panic. Guilt-free, though, on account of being emissions-free at the tailpipe.

I find myself behind a lorry. I tuck in behind, into its slipstream. Potential salvation by Alsop Transport Services of Oban, Argyll. I'm going to surf this baby all the way home. Well, hopefully, all the way to John o'Groats, because that is where I'm heading.

[Electric cars: UK government urged to prevent ‘charging deserts’](#)

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I should say that the predicament I find myself in has less to do with the car I'm driving (a Škoda Enyaq; brilliant) or Britain's infrastructure for charging EVs (extensive, not brilliant; we'll come to that) and more about my organisation skills (even less brilliant). Most of the EV charging points in Scotland are run by ChargePlace Scotland. To use them, you sign up and they send you a card to operate the machines. I signed up, but not in time to get the card, so I'm relying on the few charging points not run by ChargePlace Scotland. Well, it will make it more of a challenge, I thought.



A range-anxiety inducing readout on Sam's electric car. Photograph: Sam Wollaston/The Guardian

I'm driving my Enyaq, a family SUV, from Land's End to John o'Groats. Why? Several reasons. Of the 30m cars on UK roads, only about 250,000 are purely electric, but that number is going up fast. The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders [released figures in July](#) showing that sales of new electric cars had jumped 50% in the previous month. EVs will outsell petrol and diesel models by about 2025. The government ban on new petrol and diesel cars [has been brought forward, from 2040 to 2030](#). "However attached you are to your old car, 2030 is coming fast and you'll be left with a car with no value," warns Prof Liana Cipcigan of the Electric Vehicle Centre of Excellence at Cardiff University. If you get a new car, it's increasingly likely to be an electric one. Perhaps you've got one already, you're about to head off on a UK holiday in it and you're worried. I'm here for you: driving the longest possible route in the country to see if it's feasible.

It's not my Enyaq: it has been loaned to me by Škoda. This one costs £34,495 to buy, including a £2,500 government grant. Still a fair old whack, but EVs are expensive: even a little Renault Zoe costs £27,500. The cheapest [Tesla](#) is more than 40 grand.

EVs are much cheaper to run than other cars, though. [Research by the price comparison website Uswitch](#) found that, if you charge at home, you can squeeze 2,380 miles (3,830km) out of a Nissan Leaf E+ for £50. Compare that with only 443 miles for a similar-sized VW Golf. Edmund King, the president of the AA, says that service costs should be lower, too, because EVs are simpler. "The main things are tyres and brakes – there's very little else in the vehicle. Initially, insurance was expensive, but that seems to be coming down. You don't pay Vehicle Excise Duty, London congestion charge is free [until December 2025], some authorities give you incentives to park." He also says that lots of people get EVs on leases, because of uncertainty about battery life and rapidly changing technology.



Sam charging his car at Land's End. Photograph: Jenna Foxton/The Guardian

Enough background facts. You want to hear more about my epic journey, right?

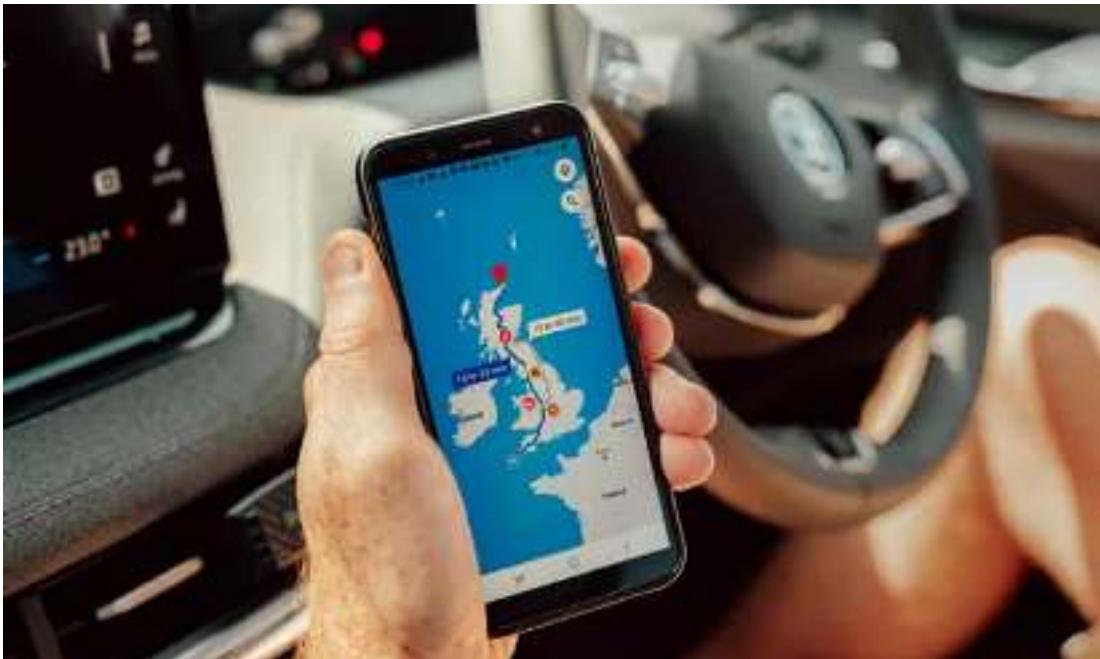
Land's End is a miserable place: expensive parking before you queue up to pay more to have your photo taken by a signpost. But, more importantly, there is a rapid charger there (Gridserve, 30p/kWh). I can get from low up to 80% in about half an hour, as opposed to hours on a slow charger or at home. So I get a top-up charge. Plus a discharge, from a gull, right on the bonnet – splat. Not an EV fan, apparently. Before the charge, however, I have to wait 45 minutes for a glamorous couple charging their glamorous Tesla. They came down from London, charging it once on the way, although they say they could have done it in one. Yeah, all right, move along now. One of the really annoying things about Teslas is that they have their own special superchargers, sometimes at the same site; other stations are for Teslas only. We, by which I mean non-Tesla EV plebs, can't use them, whereas they can use ours.

I also meet Amanda and Mike, who have come from York in their electric Kia, having traded in their petrol car for environmental reasons. They get 270 miles on a charge, less in winter. They could have done the journey with

one stop, but they put in another. That seems to be a thing among EV drivers: slipping in a cheeky little extra charge, to fend off the anxiety. King doesn't think range anxiety should be an issue. With new EVs capable, on average, of 200 miles, "that's going to cover the vast majority of people's journeys. At the AA, in terms of breakdowns for EVs, only 4% are running out of charge." Careful, Edmund, I can always bump up that figure a bit.

The Enyaq is nice to drive – quiet, quick when you want it to be – but EVs do make you drive slowly. It's all about the range. Because I'm new to this, I didn't do any planning, like where to spend the night. So I spent my first in the car, in a car park on the outskirts of Gloucester, a little Nomadland re-enactment. Here, I cannot recommend the Enyaq. Although the back seats fold down to make quite a big space, there is an annoying step, so I end up reclining the front passenger seat, like on an overnight flight (remember them?).

Back on the M5, then the M6, and more encounters. In Carlisle, I meet Anne-Marie from Newcastle, who is having a weekend away from the kids to go swimming in Ullswater. She loves her five-year-old Nissan Leaf, but gets a range of only 80 miles, so she is stopping off to charge. She drives to work and used to spend £175 a month on diesel in her old Audi; now it's more like £25 on charging. But she is starting a new job next week, 85 miles away from home, so Anne-Marie needs to get a new car. What is she going to get? A new-generation Leaf.



‘EV drivers have screens full of apps’ ... Photograph: Jenna Foxton/The Guardian

At Gretna, I meet Sarah and Phil from Sheffield, on the way to Hamilton races, although they are going to miss the first race because they are having problems charging their Jaguar I-Pace. The charger at home was tripping all the circuits in the house, so they had to have that fixed. “Then trying to find a superfast charger when you’re out and about is not always possible, because they don’t always work,” says Sarah. Phil says too many companies offer charging: “It should have been three or four franchises from the government and it should have all gone on one app.” It’s a common complaint: that the charging infrastructure is confusing and frustrating – some are fast, others slow, some require an app (EV drivers have screens full of apps), some don’t work at all.

My own experience reflects this. In Perth, for example, I identify a BP Pulse point. “Ultra fast charging here,” says the big sign, which, after crossing the Cairngorms, is like reaching an oasis in the desert (I’m limited in my Scottish charging, remember – entirely my own fault). Guess what, though? It doesn’t bloody work. Is it a contactless issue? I download the app, open an account, put £20 on it, try again. The man on the helpline reboots the machine, twice. Still no joy. BP No Pulse, I’m calling it. BP Clinically Dead. If you’re reading, BP Pulse, you owe me £20.

I have more joy from Ionity round the corner (I soon learn that you always need a backup). That said, on the way back, at the same place, I have problems with the payment and the woman on the helpline gives me a charge on the house. This happens twice on my trip. It's my No 1 EV tip: always call the hotline. In short, while the physical infrastructure might be there, it's not quite functioning in an anxiety-free way.

I have quickly become part of the EV community – well intentioned and mostly friendly, but a tiny bit dull. We chat as we charge: about our range, about our favourite and least favourite charging companies. We mostly use the Zap-Maps app, which shows where all the charging points are and lets us plan. There isn't a lot of room for spontaneity with an EV. A sign to Alton Towers? The Lakes? Or Stirling Castle ... No daytime for a visit, because it would mean leaving the route, messing with the plan. Thelma and Louise II: The EV Sequel is going to be a very different and, I think, inferior movie.

But hey, I'm feeling good about saving the planet. I have no emissions coming from my tailpipe – I don't even have one. Of course, my electricity has to be generated somehow. Currently, that is about 43% renewable in the UK and going up all the time. Plus, the car has to be made and maintained – and there are issues about the mining of [lithium and cobalt for batteries](#). It's not perfect, but EVs are better than petrol or diesel cars. The sale of hybrids will also end in 2030 – or 2035 if they can travel a significant, [yet-to-be-decided](#) distance with zero tailpipe emissions.



Photograph: Jenna Foxton/The Guardian

When we got a new car (not new-new) a year or so ago, we thought about getting an electric one. But, like 35% of the country's drivers, we have no off-street parking; we wouldn't be able to plug in at home. This, says King, is the area that most needs to be addressed. He mentions lamp-post charge points, already available in some places, ducts that go under pavements, empty office blocks where local people could come and charge up cheaply at night. It is getting better – and will continue to do so.

But then I speak to Prof Mike Berners-Lee at Lancaster University, a carbon footprint expert and the author of [How Bad Are Bananas?](#). You know those stingers – the spike strips that the police use to stop cars by puncturing their tyres? Well, Berners-Lee throws one of them across my path – metaphorically speaking, not across the actual A9.

He mentions the burden that the huge increase in EVs will have on the power grid. “If you look at the marginal demand for electricity, it’s not met through extra renewables – that capacity is met through gas.” Boo. The surge in electric cars might make it harder for the grid to decarbonise. “It’s not going to put up solar panels and wind turbines faster – we’re already doing that foot to the floor, and this country has a limited capacity for all that, anyway.”

Cipcigan at Cardiff University agrees that the EV revolution will be challenging to the grid, but argues that it will also offer opportunities. She mentions charging that doesn't affect the grid in the evening, and how EVs could help with one of the issues with solar – when there is too much power on sunny days. "Electric vehicles could charge in those periods, use up the extra generated. This service could be offered to fleets and vans."

Berners-Lee isn't against electric cars – he has just got himself a seven-year-old Renault Zoe. The need for road transport to stop using fossil fuels has never been greater. But he is not convinced that electric was the right way to go. I think I know what is coming: the H word. One of the problems with electricity is that it can't be produced very far from where it's needed. Hydrogen, by contrast, could be manufactured using solar power, [in the Australian desert](#), say, then compressed and transported to where it needs to go. "There's less environmental burden from batteries, quicker charging time, a smaller re-engineering job on the cars themselves [a hydrogen combustion engine isn't so different from a petrol one], and it allows us to get some of our primary energy from thousands of miles away."

In the race between E and H on the road to transport decarbonisation, maybe the wrong car got ahead. "Elon Musk has won the argument. But he is promoting space tourism, which is the most ridiculous unnecessary thing you could think of," says Berners-Lee. Another reason to hate Teslas.

Certainly, he says, hydrogen makes sense with bigger vehicles – vans and lorries, where a battery would have to be way too big. But none of this is helping me right now. One day, the Alsop Transport Services lorry in front of me will hopefully run on hydrogen. But that infrastructure certainly isn't there. And I'm in an electric car, possibly feeling a bit less smug about it, but mainly still anxious about whether I'm going to make it to my destination.



Made it ... Sam at his final destination. Photograph: Sam Wollaston/The Guardian

I spend another night in the car, in a fishing village 50 miles short of John o'Groats. To the people of Helmsdale, I apologise for my alarm, which kept going off throughout the night; the car thought I was stealing it, from the inside. In the early morning, I set off on the final leg, gently milking the Enyaq's battery of its remaining charge. No lorry today, but the terrain gets flatter, the anxiety eases and it becomes clear that I'm probably going to make it.

Which I do, with six miles to spare. I've done 231 miles since the last charge in Perth, 843 miles from Land's End, about 290kWh in total, if that means anything to you, which has cost me about £88. Charging at home, at low tariff rates, would have been much less. There is another signpost for picture opportunities at John o'Groats: nothing to pay, no queue, oystercatchers instead of gulls. And, best of all, a working EV charger.

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Refugees

How an RNLI training pool gave me an insight into crossing Channel as a migrant

Sitting in a small dinghy in darkness as it took on water was frightening enough in a sea survival exercise let alone for real



Rachel Hall takes part in a Royal National Lifeboat Institute survival session intended to give reporters and the public an idea of what it's like to cross from France in an small open boat. Photograph: Gareth Iwan Jones Photographer/The Guardian

Rachel Hall takes part in a Royal National Lifeboat Institute survival session intended to give reporters and the public an idea of what it's like to cross from France in an small open boat. Photograph: Gareth Iwan Jones Photographer/The Guardian

Rachel Hall
@rachela_hall

Wed 28 Jul 2021 01.00 EDT

As I paddled through crashing waves in the darkness, stomach churning, I watched our small dinghy starting to fill up with water with a sinking feeling – it wouldn't be long before we went overboard, and I was worried that at least one person in my boat was paddling in the wrong direction. But, then again, it might have been me: I was wielding an oar twice my size and it was impossible to tell in the frenzy.

Before we knew it the odyssey was over and the lights were back on. I emerged soaked through – with aching muscles and shot nerves – relieved to be out of the water.

This was the RNLI's sea survival pool, used to train volunteers in the rigours of life-or-death aquatic rescue. All I had done was traverse a 25-metre swimming pool four times, but it was enough to assure me that repeating that at least 325 more times across the Channel would be a deeply traumatic experience. What's more, it is a journey that would probably be much longer as a migrant is, in many cases, guided by only a smartphone compass.

The experience was intended to give me a sense of what it's like for migrants crossing the Channel in small unseaworthy boats filled with up to 50 passengers, all of whom are frightened and desperately hoping that their long, difficult journeys across Europe, which have followed months or years of suffering and hardship, are about to draw to a close.



Rachel Hall with a group of journalists experiencing what it is like to try to cross the Channel in a small dinghy at the RNLI's Sea Survival centre in Poole, Dorset. Photograph: Gareth Iwan Jones Photographer/The Guardian

But my experience was nowhere near as fraught with peril as what they would endure. The water was 20C rather than the channel's current 12C (which, even then, is warm compared with other times of year). We were also in a swimming pool, not one of the world's busiest shipping lanes, and my four fellow sailors and I had a language in common and our flotation devices were lifejackets – and not lemonade bottles.

The main difference, of course, was that we knew we would get out alive, with clean towels waiting on the side and comfortable homes to return to.

However, even gaining a shred of understanding of what it might be like to be adrift with a group of strangers, whose experience of the sea would often be – like mine – limited, gave me a sense of how desperate anyone must be to attempt such an ordeal.



The CEO of the RNLI, Mark Dowie, is concerned that the public don't understand the extreme dangers that migrants face when crossing the Channel. Photograph: Gareth Iwan Jones Photographer/The Guardian

Organised by the Royal National Lifeboat Institute, the sea survival session forms part of its work helping the public understand and empathise with migrants' human struggle. The RNLI's chief executive, Mark Dowie, is worried that photographs of migrants pushing boats out on to calm seas on sunny afternoons are fuelling criticisms of their rescue work, persuading people that arriving on British shores seeking asylum is akin to a casual summer jaunt through peaceful waters.

It is this failure to acknowledge the human face of [the crisis](#) that the RNLI believes underpins the accusations levelled by Nigel Farage that the volunteer-run charity is operating a "a taxi service for illegal immigration" – rather than fulfilling its duty to save lives at sea without passing judgment on how they got there.

['We tried to be joyful enough to deserve our new lives': What it's really like to be a refugee in Britain](#)

[Read more](#)

The RNLI wants people to understand that migrants are real people just like them, who are going through an experience more harrowing than most of us can even begin to conceive of.

I know that my brief sojourn in wild waters will leave me thinking for a long time about all those boats out there in the stormy night, full of men, women and children attempting to survive towering waves, hulking ships and the freezing cold, hoping they will soon encounter dry land and human compassion.

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Stage

Interview

‘Totally fresh and weird’: Marshall Brickman on Jersey Boys, Dylan and Woody Allen

[Sarfraz Manzoor](#)



‘I’m not the person to ask. I love Woody’ ... Brickman with Allen in 1973.

Photograph: TCD/Prod DB/Alamy

‘I’m not the person to ask. I love Woody’ ... Brickman with Allen in 1973.

Photograph: TCD/Prod DB/Alamy

He wrote gags for The Tonight Show, won an Oscar for Annie Hall – and had a near-miss with the Manson family. As his musical Jersey Boys returns, the writer looks back on 82 years of sex, drugs and jokes

Wed 28 Jul 2021 01.00 EDT

“When you describe it like that,” says Marshall Brickman, “it sounds like I’ve never been able to stick with anything I like!” I had given Brickman a quick run-through of his career highs, from scoring hits with folk band [the Tarriers](#) in the 60s, moving into comedy to become head writer on [The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson](#), then winning an Oscar as co-writer of Annie Hall in the 70s, followed by a Tony in 2006 for co-writing the musical Jersey Boys. “My life,” he says, “is no example of how to plan a creative life whatsoever. My only philosophy is that I pick projects where I don’t mind having lunch with the people.”

When he was first approached to write [Jersey Boys](#), based on the life of Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons, Brickman turned it down. He only changed his mind when he met founding member Bob Gaudio, who told him about their colourful lives, which featured petty crime and encounters with the mafia. “They regaled me with all these stories, many of which were included in the libretto – and then I listened to their music.”

Jersey Boys opened on Broadway in 2005 and won four Tonys, including best musical. It has been seen by more than 65 million people worldwide – and this week makes a return to the London stage. After its success, it was even adapted into a film directed Clint Eastwood. “Can I take the fifth on that?” he says when asked what he made of [the result](#).



Colourful stories ... Brickman turned down Jersey Boys at first. Photograph: Joan Marcus

Brickman was born in Rio de Janeiro but grew up in New York. His parents were leftist activists – [Paul Robeson](#) sang at a fundraiser at their home – and the young Brickman became entranced by folk music. “It was like an ancillary connection to the progressive movement,” he says, speaking via Zoom from his Manhattan apartment. He says when he first “heard the banjo, it made me levitate. There was something compelling to it.”

Dylan showed up in a suit and tie and said he was going to go to be bigger than Elvis

Brickman’s banjo-playing, and his parents’ political associations, led him to be invited to Moscow as a 16-year-old in 1958. “I played on the stage of the Bolshoi,” he recalls. “I won a gold medal in the international talent competition. I think it’s in my closet.” The Russians wanted him to tour China but his parents said he had to return to school. Brickman ended up studying in Wisconsin, where he quickly became part of the folk scene. “Our apartment was the centre of folk music,” he says, “and people who passed through would stay with us.”

In January 1961 a young folk singer, on his way to visit New York for the first time, crashed at Brickman’s apartment. “He showed up in a suit and tie and said he was going to go to New York and become bigger than Elvis.” The young singer, who called himself Bob Dylan, made his New York debut days later and signed with Columbia soon after.

Brickman, meanwhile, joined the Tarriers, a band that also boasted Alan Arkin in its lineup. They were managed by the legendary [Jack Rollins](#), who also managed Dick Cavett, a writer on The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson. Cavett wanted to quit, to try his hand at standup, and Brickman was offered a writing job. “On my third day,” he recalls, “the head writer quit and said, ‘You’re now the head writer.’ He handed me his joke file and a box of cigars, which you had to have as a writer.”



'It was a highly sexualised environment' ... Brickman was head writer on The Tonight Show With Johnny Carson (pictured interviewing George Burns). Photograph: NBCUniversal/Getty Images

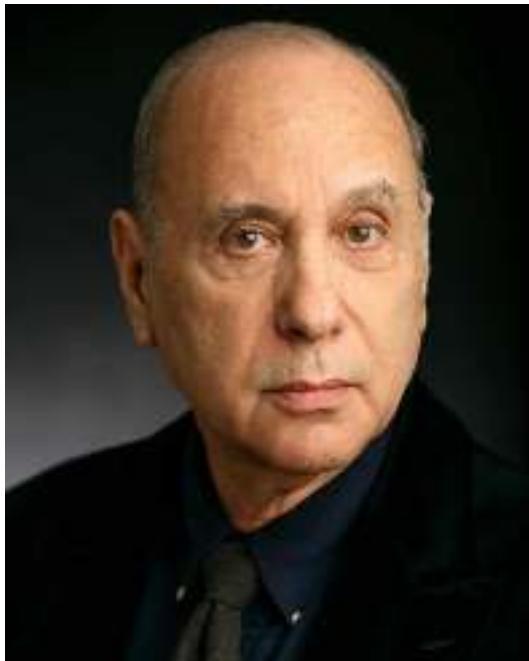
Brickman was head writer for three years, starting in 1967. "It was a highly tense, highly sexualised environment," he says. "There was a lot of stuff going on. Somebody should some day do a movie – probably for the Hustler channel."

Four times a year, The Tonight Show would record from California. When Brickman was in Los Angles, he would hang out with John Phillips. Brickman had been in a folk band called the New Journeymen with Phillips before the latter formed the Mamas and the Papas. "It was such a drugged-up scene," he says. "John was the pope of drugs. You'd go to his house and it was like something out of Coleridge. There was John and his wife Michelle sitting on enormous cushions with these strange little waifs floating around. There was a big pile of mescaline on the table and, before you knew it, you didn't know where you were."

One night in the summer of 1969, Brickman got a call from Phillips to say there was a party at a friend's home and did he want to come. Brickman passed up the invitation. "I'm a Jew from New York and I didn't like to feel out of control," he says. "And I had to get up early and work." It was only

the following day he learnt that five people, including the actress Sharon Tate, had been murdered at the party under the direction of the cult leader [Charles Manson](#).

Rollins also managed a young New York standup who would open for the Tarriers when they were in the Big Apple. “I would stand at the back of The Bitter End and listen to this guy who was getting no laughs,” he says. “He was using material that was totally fresh and weird. It was like discovering a great author you never knew existed.” Rollins suggested that Brickman and the standup, called [Woody Allen](#), work on material. “I would go over to his house and we would write jokes,” he says. “His housekeeper would bring out a tuna fish sandwich for each of us.”



‘What else would I do?’ ... Brickman still works at 82. Photograph: Joan Marcus

Allen and Brickman moved on to films, collaborating on *Sleeper* in 1973, then later on [Annie Hall](#) and *Manhattan*. “With *Annie Hall*, we were trying to show off, trying to prove how clever we were. It’s a slice of what life was like at a particular time and place, but it can’t give you any clues as to how to write a movie. There were endless re-shoots and the first cut was two hours 40 minutes.” Still, *Annie Hall* went on to win four Oscars including best original screenplay, which Brickman accepted as Allen always refuses

to attend. “After we won the Oscar, I became bankable. The spill light off the Oscar lasts a long time.”

Given the allegations against Allen, which he has always denied, what would Brickman say to anyone who felt uncomfortable watching one of his movies now? “They’re fools because Woody didn’t do anything,” he says. “I think [the hatchet job they did on HBO](#) is nothing to be proud of. I’m just waiting for the backlash. Sometimes, there will be a piece in one of the papers and they’ll put Harvey Weinstein and Bill Cosby and Woody Allen in the same sentence. I think that’s terrible. I think that this cancel culture has ruined too many lives already.”

I tell Brickman I have always loved Manhattan but since reading that Allen, when he was 41, had dated a 16-year-old aspiring model called Babi Christina Engelhardt, it had made watching the film – which stars Allen as a middle-aged man in a relationship with a teenage girl – problematic for me. “Yes, I think he was seeing someone,” he says, adding that it was “consensual”. He goes on: “Does an artist get a pass on things that people who aren’t artists aren’t allowed? I can’t answer that. But I’m the wrong person to ask. I love Woody.”

[Jackie Mason: compellingly blunt joke-teller who was part of standup history](#)

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Brickman and Allen still take walks through the city. “Every once in a while, we’ll hook up and talk,” he says. “Many years ago, we would walk through the park and see two old guys sitting on a bench eating a sandwich. Now we walk through and say, ‘That’s us.’”

Brickman says he would like to write with Allen again. “It would be fun, just for the process,” he says, but in the meantime he remains, even at 82, busy. His forthcoming projects include a musical based on the life of Roy Rogers, king of the cowboys. “My early training was in television and you had to deliver something every night,” he says. “That was the ethic I was educated on. And what else would I be doing? When you enjoy it, why would you not do it?”

- [Jersey Boys](#) begins performances at the Trafalgar theatre, London on 28 July.
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Migration and development

‘We walked 18 hours, no food’: Taliban advance triggers exodus of Afghans

As the conflict intensifies amid the withdrawal of US-led forces, a new wave of families are being forced to flee via perilous routes to Iran and Turkey



Zebah Gul sits with her eight children in the room at the transit centre in Herat, Afghanistan, after being arrested at the Iran-Turkey border.
Photograph: Charlie Faulkner

Zebah Gul sits with her eight children in the room at the transit centre in Herat, Afghanistan, after being arrested at the Iran-Turkey border.
Photograph: Charlie Faulkner

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About this content

Charlie Faulkner in Herat

Wed 28 Jul 2021 01.01 EDT

A weary Zebah Gul and her eight children are gathered quietly in a small room at a transit centre in Herat, north-eastern [Afghanistan](#). Their six-month attempt to escape the war and find safety has failed.

They have just spent a week in Iranian police detention after being caught trying to cross the border into Turkey, and are beginning to make their way back to their besieged home province of Takhar, on the opposite side of the sprawling country.

“Our village was surrounded by [Taliban](#) and government forces. Airstrikes and firefighting between both sides were a daily occurrence,” says Gul, 35, whose husband is still in Iran after evading arrest.

Her husband had worked as a farmer until it became too dangerous. Their plan had been to stay only a short time in Iran because the pandemic and US sanctions have made it tough to find work there, and life is more expensive. The family’s priority was their children’s safety; they were so desperate to leave they didn’t even know which Turkish city they’d arrive in.

“Afghanistan is not a good place to be – there is war and the security situation is not good,” says Gul.

The family agreed to pay a smuggler \$650 (£471) for each person if the crossing was successful, but their attempt was thwarted by Iranian border police. Everyone apart from Gul’s husband was arrested.

“We are devastated to have to return to Takhar. It is not safe,” says Gul.

Owning no property and with few work prospects, and facing daily conflict, the family have little to go back for, apart from a few relatives. Their story is not unique; as Taliban fighters have swept across the country in recent weeks, civilians have been caught in the crossfire. On 21 July, [the Pentagon admitted](#) that half of all district centres are now in the hands of the Taliban, which surround 17 of Afghanistan’s 34 provincial capitals.

Afghanistan is battling additional crises, including severe drought, the impact of Covid and diminishing aid funding – the [UK has slashed its direct aid](#) to Afghanistan by 78%, amid international [military withdrawals](#) and the huge [territorial gains for the Taliban](#).

[Less than a quarter](#) of the the \$1.3bn (£290m) in global aid the UN says is [needed this year](#) has been delivered in Afghanistan, leaving humanitarian organisations unable to deliver on-the-ground assistance.

Cross-border returns have increased [since the start of the pandemic](#) in early 2020. Approximately 550,000 people have returned to Afghanistan so far this year, says Nick Bishop, emergency response officer for the International Organization for Migration (IOM). That’s double the usual rate, he says, and 55% of those people arrived after being deported back to the country.

There are new powers in many areas ... people are concerned about what will happen to education and the future for women

Nick Bishop, IOM

“Normally we see 500,000 [people] a year; there are quite a lot of circular migration flows, which are linked to the agricultural seasonal migration, so it’s not unusual to see that number. But in the last five years particularly, the

socioeconomic conditions have really deteriorated – 90% of Afghans live on £1.50 a day,” says Bishop.

“As the conflict intensifies, more people will be driven into displacement. There are new powers in different parts of the country, and a lot of people are concerned about what comes next in terms of [education and the future for women](#).”

Smuggling networks across Afghanistan take people across the border, and entering Turkey through Iran is a common route.



Hafizullah with his pregnant wife, Shaiesta, and their two young children at a transit camp in Herat, where they were taken after being arrested in Tehran, Iran. Photograph: Charlie Faulkner

Hafizullah and Shaiesta, and their two young children, left their home in Takhar two months before arriving at the transit centre. It was a perilous journey to Tehran, from where they had planned to travel to Turkey and eventually to Europe, but Hafizullah was arrested by Iranian police before the family had a chance to make the crossing.

['Shot at by both sides': Families flee as Taliban battles for territory in Kandahar](#)

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“I had no job in Takhar and there was so much fighting ... there were suicide attacks, the security situation in Afghanistan is bad,” says Hafizullah, who did not give his second name. “We walked for 18 hours with no food at one point to make it to Iran. The children were crying, my wife and I were both terrified we’d be shot by police.”

In Tehran, Hafizullah says he worked illegally as an assistant in a shop for 200 Afghanis (£1.83) a day, until he believes he was reported to the authorities.

Since the start of the year, the fighting has driven nearly 223,000 people from their homes, according to the UN. Turkish media has reported that between 500 and 1,000 Afghans are crossing the border into Turkey illegally every day.

“The Turkish-Iranian frontier is heavily fenced. The fact is that, for Afghans to cross, there will be family separation, and attempts to cross Lake Van. There will be a lot of Afghan deaths,” says Bishop, who says 8,400 Afghans have been sent back on deportation flights from Turkey this year.



A group of people walk next to a railway in Van city after crossing the Iran-Turkey border, on 8 June 2021. Most migrants cross this route from

Afghanistan, Iran or Pakistan, but it is fraught with risk. Photograph: Sedat Suna/EPA

He says opportunistic criminals are targeting Afghans in Iran.

“We have a number of Afghans held in captivity for extortion. A family of 17 had sold all of their possessions, moved to Iran with the intended destination of Turkey and then were extorted for \$20,000. They had to raise that money – an extortionate amount of money – then they were handed over to the Iranian authorities,” says Bishop.

“People are attempting to find new solutions for themselves. Afghans would like to stay at home, they are very nationalistic. It is a symptom of a broader economic security dynamic across the country.”

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A performance at The Winter's Tale by OVO at Minack Theatre in Cornwall
[The Guardian picture essay](#)

'I have a scene to do, run!': backstage at Minack Theatre

A performance at The Winter's Tale by OVO at Minack Theatre in Cornwall

Our photojournalist explores the famed outdoor venue in Cornwall as it welcomes back full houses

by [Jonny Weeks](#)

Wed 28 Jul 2021 02.00 EDT

“I knew of it from pictures I’d seen online and I thought it looked pretty, but when you arrive and see it yourself, it’s like, ‘Oh wow, this is insane,’” says actor Guido Garcia Lueches about the Minack [Theatre](#). “It’s probably the best theatre I’ve ever performed in.”

Carved largely by hand into a craggy, granite cliff-face, the dizzying outdoor venue on the south coast of [Cornwall](#) looks magnificent in the summer sunshine. Tiers of subtropical foliage splash colour throughout the landscape and weathered concrete seats bearing the titles of past shows rise abruptly from the stage. The ocean, 100ft below, looks an enticing shade of turquoise.

“When you’re on stage, there’s a wall of people in front of you – it feels like the audience goes on into the sky,” Garcia Lueches adds. “I wouldn’t say it’s daunting as an actor, but it makes you want to live up to it. Sometimes you get distracted when you look around at the sea while you’re changing backstage. Then you’re like, ‘No, shit, I have a scene to do, run, run’!”



Guido Garcia Lueches as the lovable rogue Autolycus in *The Winter's Tale*





Actors change backstage, with a view of the sea below



Visitors take their seats ahead of a performance



A view from one of the private balconies

Created by Rowena Wade in the early 1930s, the Minack is a towering feat of landscaping. The basic stage and surrounding terraces were shaped within six months, though Wade would spend the rest of her life continuously improving and redesigning the site. An exhibition room at the top of the cliff pays homage to her work.

“She was extraordinarily out of her time and fiercely independent,” says Zoe Curnow, executive director at the Minack. “Originally, she just wanted to create a performance space for *The Tempest* in 1932 in what was essentially her garden.

“The astonishing thing is how much work she did in those first few winters, but even into her late 70s she was still changing things. Right after a show, she would talk about getting the boys in from the mines to use dynamite to blow bits up. I don’t think she ever sat back and thought, ‘I’ve finished it.’



An image of Rowena Cade sitting in a wheelbarrow, part of the on-site exhibition



Archive snaps of Cade at work and performances in the early years

One of Minack's groundskeepers, Claire Batten, describes the cliff garden as "paradise". Batten clammers gamely from terrace to terrace, secateurs in hand, explaining how each small patch has a microclimate within a microclimate – "a bit like Russian dolls". The temperature is 25C and the plants are in their element.

"All the plants here are predominantly South African, South American and Mediterranean," she says. "The soil is poor but acid-rich and free-draining, plus we get high UV, low pollution and lots of reflection off the sea. So it's the perfect storm for plants from those regions."

"My favourite plant at this moment is the red crassula coccinea, which is a vibrant succulent. We introduced a lot more colour during lockdown and people seem to be loving it."



Claire Batten, one of the grounds team, climbs up to the pathway after tending to some of the plants





Backstage at the Minack, actors and musicians performing in *The Winter's Tale* are readying themselves for their next show. Their warm-up routine includes a sequence of tongue twisters and mouth exercises followed by a rendition of *Sweet Child O' Mine* "so that we're all starting on a high", says actor Lucy Crick. During the interval, she also rehearses a line-dance routine, an amusing feature of the show's unorthodox second half.

However, Crick warns that you can't always prepare for what might happen during a live outdoor performance. "I've been upstaged by a pod of dolphins here before. But it's like with all outdoor theatre – you have to be spontaneous. There's no way 700 people are going to ignore 20 dolphins going by, so you just bring it into the show."



Faith Turner and Lucy Crick rehearse a line dance





Anna Franklin in the dressing room shortly before curtain call



Ryan Hopevere-Anderson, Sam Claridge, Lucy Crick and Faith Turner perform their vocal warm-ups



Emma Watson and Sam Claridge wait by the sound tent ahead of their entrances

Mark Harandon is a veteran performer at Minack and routinely plays the character of Billy Rawlings, Wade's gardening assistant, through which he recounts the venue's rich history. He mimics Rawlings' unusual Cornish

twang but comically avoids using the kinds of expletives for which Rawlings and Cade were both well known.

“Minack is a difficult place to play because it has many peculiarities,” he says. “The stage has a reverse rake which tilts away from the audience and the seating is much more steep than a normal theatre.

“I played here in 1984, before there was any sound reinforcement [microphones and speakers]. In those days, if the sea was big and the wind blowing against you, you really had to project your voice.

“It has a special atmosphere here because it faces out to the ocean and Logan Rock. I always say to people, even if the play is no good, it’s stunning regardless.”



Mark Harandon on stage as Billy Rawlings

When Covid-19 restrictions were lifted on 19 July, Minack welcomed a full house of spectators for *The Winter's Tale*. It marked the end of a miserable year for much of the theatre industry. “To look around and see this gorgeous theatre full was quite moving,” says Helena Gullan, a musician and actor.

“All my contracts last year were completely cancelled and financially it had a massive impact. I’ve been busking and I’ve retrained as a cocktail mixologist, but I always knew I’d come back to the music and theatre industry.

“It’s been lovely to have the appreciation from the audience, acknowledging how hard it’s been for us and what we’ve been through.”



Dusk at Minack theatre overlooking Logan Rock





A woman applauds the performers

Sitting under the purple haze of the stage lights at the end of the evening, Adam Nichols is reflecting on the day's performances. Nichols, co-director of the show, who also played King Leontes, describes *The Winter's Tale* as "a beast of a play" due to its distinctive halves.

He and his cast perform it with a twist: the first half follows a traditional, tragic narrative; the second erupts into a wild fusion of dancing, comedy and music, featuring tunes by the likes of Billie Eilish and Whitney Houston.

“I love to see people in the audience watching a Shakespeare play who wouldn’t normally do so,” he says. “With outdoor theatre you get a lot of people who aren’t regular theatregoers, especially here, because it’s a tourist attraction. If you can hook them in with things they recognise – which is exactly what Shakespeare did – that really helps.”

Glancing around at the climb back up to the exit gates, he adds: “It takes quite a long time to come down from the high of a show, so I don’t feel exhausted yet. But I’m not looking forward to those steps!”



Adam Nichols as Leontes, the king, behind fellow cast members Mat Betteridge and Lucy Crick



The cast perform a vibrant musical number based in the fictional land of Bohemia



Queen Hermione, depicted as a stone figure who later comes to life





Adam Nichols collects his thoughts as the last remaining spectators leave the Minack at the end of the night

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[Glastonbury holidays](#)

A Worthy Farm camping trip isn't quite Glasto, but it's the best we'll get this year



Pastures new ... the Worthy farm campsite

Pastures new ... the Worthy farm campsite

There's less noise and fewer people, but a family trip to the Glastonbury site delivers enough of the festival experience to make great memories

Kate Leahy

Wed 28 Jul 2021 01.30 EDT

There are some things every Glastonbury festivalgoer is guaranteed to experience. You'll lose yourself in the endless fields and pathways (and your tent at least once). You will plot the perfect itinerary to take in your favourite artists and each area of the site, but only see a fraction of it all. And it will definitely rain.

This year, though, thanks to Covid, the Glasto experience is rather different. A mini online-only version of the festival ran in June (last year was

cancelled), but owner Michael Eavis and family are welcoming people to Worthy Farm this summer by, for the first time, opening it as a campsite. For six weeks, visitors can stay in one of 750 pre-erected tents dotted across the site. There's room for a total of 3,500 visitors at any one time – a smattering compared with the 200,000 of a festival weekend. Gone are the shoulder-to-shoulder crowds, the music and the welly-stealing mud. Instead, there are resident cows (it's a working farm), free children's activities and a vibe so relaxed you could actually get some sleep, even with little ones.



Kate Leahy and family with their tent at Worthy Pastures

Home to the Eavis family for two centuries, Worthy Farm lies on the edge of Pilton village, a 15-minute drive from the hippy, historic town of Glastonbury. It has hosted the festival for 50 years, starting in 1970. I've bagged tickets to the last five festivals, embracing the mayhem with my partner, Jonjo. And, despite my home being 20 minutes' drive from the site, it's always as if for those five days nowhere else exists. I've often spotted revellers brave (or foolhardy) enough to have their kids in tow, quite sure I'd never do the same. But this time as we drive along the A361, our three-month-old twins, Ted and George, are asleep in the back, en route to their first ever "Glastonbury". It feels like a safer test run than the full throng of a festival, but there is a chance we, too, are being foolhardy.

We spent time climbing on hay bales and taking photos with one of the world's most famous stages in the background

The quiet country roads are a far cry from the usual festival weekend, when you can spend hours inching towards the car park, but the hi-vis wearing staff are just as kind and helpful. As turn down the dirt track to the check-in hut – in the shadow of the Pyramid stage frame, a permanent feature at the farm – it feels eerie yet lovely not to have to dodge thousands of festivalgoers lugging bags, bedding and booze. Instead, there's a slow ebb of families unpacking cars while children excitedly chase each other, kick footballs or ride their bikes along the stony tracks. The festivals' flags are at full mast.

The site is simple: plots by the entrance for campervans, colourful pre-erected tents spread out over a chunk of the site, and a central “village green” where the popular William’s Green stage, named after Michael’s grandfather, normally lies. There are trucks serving pizza, pasta, burgers, toasties and vegan dishes, and more will be introduced over the summer, according to Poppy Handy, the site coordinator. There’s also a general store, information and merchandise tent.



The pizza stand at Worthy Pastures

Apart from the bar set up in the festival crew block, the entertainment is largely geared towards kids. There's a giant pink castle in the Kidzfield, a play ship called Cadmus, and a massive stone dragon water feature hidden among trees, as well as bedtime stories, crafts, games and workshops. There's lots of space for little legs to run around too, with the site spread out across a few large fields, much like the festival.

It's most definitely not Glastonbury by another name but there is a strong sense of the festival all around

And, after two forced fallow years, there's plenty of opportunity to see the rejuvenated wildlife, including tawny and little owls, kingfishers and, come nightfall, glow worms. Families can picnic in the Pyramid field but we, along with other visitors, spent the time joyously climbing on the hay bales and taking photos with one of the world's most famous stages in the background.

The tents are not equipped, so campers need to bring the basics. After a sunny day, in true Glastonbury style, it lashed it down at night and turned cold – so come prepared. Most campers kept their noise levels low for the sake of the families, but a few groups of hardened festivalgoers came with sound systems and sat up late chatting.

It's important to note that Worthy Pastures isn't trying to be a miniature festival. Handy said: "It's a camping experience. Somewhere people can relive memories and meet like-minded people who either share experience of the farm or maybe, if you've never been, see it as a great opportunity to get a sense of the space."



Kate Leahy and family with Michael Eavis

And that's exactly what people are doing. We see visitors pointing out areas of the festival, reliving moments and getting excited for when the festival is back. And we do the same. The morning we leave, we bump into Michael Eavis on the Village Green. "Is it nice to have people back on the farm?" I ask. "Oh yes", he says, beaming.

For campers wanting to explore beyond the site, there's the real Glastonbury, with its tor, ruined abbey and surrounding Levels, all good for learning more of the area's history, myths and legends. Cheddar Gorge and Wookey Hole caves, Avalon Marshes and one of the UK's smallest cities, Wells, are all relatively nearby.

It's most definitely not Glastonbury by another name but there is a strong sense of the festival all around. We ventured up to the Stone Circle for sunset and could almost hear the crowd. Almost. For now though, this is a great way to explore the fields that have created – and will, hopefully, continue to create – many a treasured memory. Next time, though, I might leave the little ones at home.

Ridge tent sleeping two adults and two children from £195 for three nights, larger tents available. Campervan pitches from £150, worthypastures.com

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'Please explain what OG means': delight as Fiji politician discovers Twitter

Pio Tikoduadua, president of the opposition National Federation Party, has won praise and followers with his faltering attempts to understand social media



Pio Tikoduadua, the president of the National Federation Party, has discovered Twitter Photograph: Wikipedia

Pio Tikoduadua, the president of the National Federation Party, has discovered Twitter Photograph: Wikipedia

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Wed 28 Jul 2021 00.59 EDT

A leading opposition MP from Fiji is delighting new social media followers with his wide-eyed discovery of [Twitter](#), even as the country is experiencing heightened political tensions.

Pio Tikoduadua, who is the president of the National Federation Party, announced on Monday that while his Twitter account had been created a while ago, it had been run by his staff until now.

[Nine Fiji opposition MPs arrested over criticism of land bill](#)

[Read more](#)

“This is my first week of actively using it,” he wrote. “I have discovered what a ‘retweet’ and a ‘quote tweet’ is. I hope to engage with you more! God Bless [Fiji](#).”

Since then, Tikoduadua has been documenting his parliamentary engagements, as well as his faltering attempts to use the platform, bringing

joy to followers, despite the political ructions that have come to the fore in Fiji this week.

[Tikoduadua and eight other opposition figures were arrested over the weekend](#) and questioned by police for statements made about a contentious land bill that is set to be debated by parliament on Friday.

There are fears that tensions over the bill could lead to political protests and civil disobedience, leading to an increased police presence in major towns and cities across Fiji.

In a video shared on Twitter late on Wednesday, Tikoduadua said he was going back to continue his interview with police. “I don’t know how long I’ll be,” he said and invited people to “at me” with questions about the investigation which he would look at when he got back.

Good morning Friends, just wanted to say Hi before Parliament begins. Hope you have a good day, the sunshine is nice! I will be making a budget reply speech today focusing on the the health system. (Something close to my heart as my wife is an RN)

God Bless Fiji.  [#teamfiji](#) pic.twitter.com/fIvnIItf53

— Pio Tikoduadua MP (@tikoduaduamp) [July 26, 2021](#)

Tikoduadua’s tweets, which include questions to followers about how notifications work on Twitter, as well as courteous replies to criticism, have offered respite from the political tension, as well as considerable amusement.

On Tuesday, ahead of the Rugby 7's Olympics quarter-final which saw Fiji trounce Australia 19-0, he tweeted: “Bula friends, I hope that your evening is going well as we all wait for Fiji’s game. Today I learn that ‘FFS’ does not mean “‘Fiji First Supporters’. God Bless Fiji.”

Fiji First is the name of the country’s ruling party.

In another tweet, Tikoduadua responded to a follower whose Twitter handle is KitKat who wrote that “You may be new here sir, but tweeting like a real OG!!!!”

“Bula KitKat,” came the MP’s formal reply in a quote tweet. “Please explain what ‘OG’ means. I’m assuming it means ‘Old Girl’?”

When another user – whose handle is “Mama Dragon” – explained it meant “Original Gangster” and was a compliment, he replied: “Bula Mama, thank you for that important clarification. These terms are confusing!”

Confusion was a common theme in the politician’s tweets over the last three days, with Tikoduadua writing: “I’m trying hard to respond to everyone. The notification structure here is a bit hard to understand. This has caused me much confusion.”

Upon learning that the acronym “TL” meant “timeline” and not “Tailevu” – a province in Fiji – he wrote “this has caused me much anxiety”.

Good morning again friends, I'm told that posting old photos are all the rage. So here is one from 2020.

These are my friends and Parliamentary colleagues Lenora and Prof. Prasad. We usually ride together in one car on our way to Parliament.

God Bless Fiji. ☺️ [#TeamFiji](#) pic.twitter.com/R3upw7Vjyh

— Pio Tikoduadua MP (@tikoduaduamp) [July 27, 2021](#)

“Hello Friends,” he tweeted late on Monday. “Sorry if I’m keeping you up. I’ve just been asked to incorporate hashtags on my posts. I only know [‘#FijiNews’](#) because I saw the NFP youth account use it. Are there any more I can use? Do I have to ask for permission? God Bless Fiji.”

Tikoduadua’s honesty about his unfamiliarity with the platform and the authenticity of his posts have endeared him to followers, who have offered praise and encouragement, as well as advice.

[Fiji reports record Covid deaths, including two pregnant women](#)

[Read more](#)

His courteous, serious engagement with their responses to him are striking, given Twitter's reputation for being a hothouse of anonymous abuse and snark.

After posting a picture of the prime minister and attorney general, a follower tweeted him to ask whether it was necessary for him to include the picture given the country's current political divisions, fuelled by the land bill and the government's handling of a [Covid outbreak that is currently devastating the Pacific nation](#).

“Bula,” Tikoduadua replied. “I’ll keep that in mind when I look for photos next time. Thank you for your kind suggestions, I appreciate it.” And he signed off, as he has in every tweet: “God Bless Fiji.”

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Vagina tunnels and sneaker closets: the escapist appeal of celebrity house tours



Cara Delevingne emerges from her vagina tunnel in the Architectural Digest Open Homes series. Photograph: Architectural Digest/YouTube

Cara Delevingne emerges from her vagina tunnel in the Architectural Digest Open Homes series. Photograph: Architectural Digest/YouTube

In new column **Internet wormhole**, Guardian Australia writers take you to their favourite corner of the web. First up: an inviting – and voyeuristic – YouTube series

[Walter Marsh](#)

Tue 27 Jul 2021 13.30 EDT

Looking back to early pandemic times, it was probably [Architectural Digest's video tour of Dakota Johnson's Hollywood home](#) that nudged me

down the YouTube hole of celebrity house tours.

Like many millennials my Instagram feed is at any given moment peppered with aspirational content from sites like The Design Files and a stream of homogenous pastel-hued influencers. But sitting housebound with my partner and cat in our rented, single bedroom flat, the Fifty Shades of Grey star's whimsical tour of her tastefully decorated mid century Hollywood home and kitchen stocked with unreasonable quantities of limes ("I love limes, they're great and I like to present them like this in my house," she explained) offered a welcome hit of late night escapism from the more foreboding stuff unfolding across the internet in March 2020.

A YouTube-era successor to MTV's Cribs, Architectural Digest's Open Door series and a smattering of similar channels all seek to imbue the concept's car crash voyeurism with the lofty pretence of caring about design. But of course, much of the appeal lies in gawking. It's a denim-clad Lenny Kravitz on horseback cantering into view to welcome you to his [sprawling Brazilian farm and villa](#). It's the menagerie of exotic taxidermy in [Dita Von Teese's Tudor house](#)-turned goth burlesque museum.

We watch with bewilderment as Cara Delevingne [shows off the "vagina tunnel"](#) that connects two rooms in her wildly incongruent "adult playhouse". In the trophy room adjoining Serena Williams' in-house art gallery the tennis champion [casually sifts through grand slam dishes and cups like mismatched silverware](#). A YouTuber who has since been accused of endangering his friends for content waves a flamethrower in his living room, while a house producer I had never heard of points out the indoor tree that his entire \$16m LA compound was built around. ["Unfortunately," he adds, "it is dying."](#).

At other times, there's an endearing tension between all the excess on display, and the more universal qualities of domestic life. On a tour of Robert Downey Jr and his wife Susan's Hamptons summer house – a converted windmill that's somehow simultaneously bland and gaudy – we learn that even Iron Man's home life is ruled by the behaviour of his cats, with [laminated homemade warnings of "Don't let the cats out!"](#) posted to every door. Hilary Duff points out the cabinets where she's [stashed all her](#)

kids' junk ahead of AD's visit, while Mark Ronson admits to shoving his self-help books "down where no one can see them".



Susan Downey does not want the cats to be let out. Photograph: Architectural Digest/Youtube

In my personal favourite, Maggie Gyllenhaal and Peter Sarsgaard affectionately thrust their ginger rescue cat at the camera ("it's really the only way to get a pet") and earnestly speculate how many people their giant sofa would shelter in an emergency. A less charitable follow-up question might be: how many people might have lived in a four-storey Brooklyn brownstone in the less gentrified past?

Fortunately, Liv Tyler provides an answer as she floats ethereally through her West Village home: "Each bedroom was like a two-bedroom, two-bathroom apartment," she whispers, before crawling into her attic to dig out an Elven sword from her cache of unopened Tolkien merchandise.

But as YouTube's algorithm keeps serving up mansions, villas and warehouse conversions, a hypnotic uniformity emerges. Celebrity after celebrity proudly points out the exposed wooden beams that first made them fall in love with the house. The identical kitchens with forest green cabinetry and vast marble countertops blur into one, as do the subway-tiled steam

showers, bedrooms converted into sneaker closets, and giant crystal collections (“People tend to give crystals as gifts in LA,” Johnson adds helpfully in her episode).



A neon sign with a quirky message is the Ikea bookshelf of young famous people: Kendall Jenner with a Tracey Emin work. Photograph: Architectural Digest/Youtube

Just as every sharehouse I visited in my 20s had the same Ikea bookshelf, every famous young person today seems to have independently decided a neon sign with a quirky message is the perfect expression of their personality – to the extent that even the pink [Tracey Emin artwork mounted in Kendall Jenner's bedroom](#) begins to resemble the millennial equivalent of a “Live, Laugh, Love” wall hanging.

It becomes evident that many celebrities – or their teams of designers – are swimming in the same aesthetic feedback loop of curated white, beige and terracotta inspo as the magazine’s readers. “I have been waiting for this day my entire life,” Troye Sivan says as he opens the gate to his [immaculately Insta-ready Melbourne home](#). “[I spend a lot of time on Pinterest ... and a lot of Arch Digest pins,](#)” Jessica Alba admits in her \$10m mansion.

Perhaps this is why Dakota Johnson's episode represents the pinnacle of the genre, and has inspired a wave of memes and TikTok parodies to boot. Johnson conveys a knowing bemusement at the artifice and unreality of it all, reaffirmed in January when [she admitted to Jimmy Fallon](#) that the limes were all a lie, styled by the magazine to complement her twist on the green kitchen: "I actually didn't even know they were in there," she said, "it was set dressing – I'm actually allergic to limes".

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The ‘Boris effect’ is a symptom of Britain’s decaying political system

[Rafael Behr](#)



The prime minister’s unlikely alliance of voters can hold only because nothing has broken the country’s two-party mould



‘Without electoral reform there is no obvious reason why the pattern will change. And yet it is unhealthy and unstable.’ Boris Johnson, left, and Keir Starmer. Photograph: Stefan Rousseau/AFP/Getty Images

‘Without electoral reform there is no obvious reason why the pattern will change. And yet it is unhealthy and unstable.’ Boris Johnson, left, and Keir Starmer. Photograph: Stefan Rousseau/AFP/Getty Images

Wed 28 Jul 2021 02.00 EDT

There is a growing feeling in the Conservative party that Boris Johnson’s performance as prime minister would be much improved by him being a bit less [Boris Johnson](#).

MPs don’t express the thought in those terms. They praise their leader’s winning ways with voters but regret that his agenda is unfocused. They are thankful for the boost that Covid vaccinations gave to their poll ratings but grumble that the dividend is being squandered while tough decisions go unmade. They admire Johnson’s way with words but despair of the way he mismanages people.

Every policy dish comes slathered in rhetorical condiment – “levelling up” was the “[ketchup of catch-up](#)” last week – with no meat underneath. This week there is a stew of initiatives targeting crime and antisocial behaviour:

more tagging and CCTV, [offenders on litter-picking duty](#), extended stop-and-search. The Police Federation, aggrieved over frozen pay, dismisses it as gimmickry. It will not satisfy Tory MPs' hunger for substance. They should know the menu by now.

Johnson cannot deliver strategic diligence any more than Theresa May could dazzle with dextrous wit. It doesn't come naturally and can't be faked. The Conservative party chose its current leader precisely because he was uninterested in the practical reality of government. May failed because she tried to get Brexit done in some meaningful, technical sense. Johnson triumphed by getting it done in the realm of pure imagination and carrying with him a lot of people who couldn't conceive of voting Tory under anyone else.

There is tension between the election-winning force that is "Boris" – a one-off phenomenon – and the Conservative party as an institution that would like to have a future in government under less capricious leadership. It is easy to forget that there were two nationwide ballots in 2019 and the Tories were [humiliated](#) in the first one – the European parliamentary election in which they came fifth, behind the Greens, Labour, Liberal Democrats and, in first place, the Brexit party.

That was a wild result in extreme conditions, but it was hardly the first time British voters have registered an interest in breaking up the two main parties' duopoly. It is already broken beyond repair in Scotland. David Cameron thought the political pendulum was swinging his way in 2010, only to find it [snagged](#) on a spike in support for the Lib Dems. Their tenacity as a third-party spoiler is itself a legacy of the SDP's brief breakthrough in the 1980s.

[The pandemic has opened up a deep rift within the Conservatives. It will grow | Polly Toynbee](#)

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The failure of that schism to break the two-party mould is what persuaded many opponents of Jeremy Corbyn to stick with Labour even when they felt their party had been captured by dangerous fanatics. Some moderates quit on points of principle. Most sat tight and waited for the Corbynite tide to

recede. But the high waters swept in tens of thousands of new members, with the result that Labour became, in effect, two parties – one for moderate social democrats, and a radical socialist challenger. In continental European countries with proportional electoral systems, no one expects those two tribes to live under one roof.

The same is true of the national populists and orthodox conservatives who mingle under Johnson’s banner. The Tories solved their Brexit party problem by total assimilation, and some MPs argue that this is a sustainable arrangement. The prime minister, they say, is charting a new centre ground. He leans left on economics (borrowing money to spend on stuff voters like) and veers right on cultural values (extending the perpetual crackdown on immigration). That upsets small-state Thatcherites, fiscal hawks and social liberals, but it ticks enough boxes with the public to lock the opposition out of power for another term at least.

Another view is that only a “Boris effect” glues together an improbable alliance of ex-Labour stalwarts, shire Tories and people who simply couldn’t stomach the idea of Corbyn as prime minister. In that interpretation, there is no alchemy of a new centre ground and no roadmap there for 21st-century Conservatism: just old-fashioned charisma, plus luck.

It is hard to know either way because allegiances have been so volatile in recent years. In the aftermath of the Brexit referendum, leaver and remaineर identities seemed to have trumped previous loyalties. Tory pro-Europeans met Labour’s anti-Corbyn faction in a symmetrical centrist recoil from their respective leaders. “None of the above” soared in opinion polls. Whips lost control of their parties. MPs switched sides or declared themselves independent.

But when it came to the 2017 and 2019 general elections, first past the post and the question of who should be prime minister had their usual effect. When only two parties can credibly claim to be running candidates for No 10, votes get funnelled back down the old red and blue channels.

In the absence of electoral reform there is no obvious reason why the pattern will change. And yet it is unhealthy and unstable for the country’s two big parties to be sustained only by polarising mutual animosity and a system that

suffocates political startups. That is how we now have a Labour party where admirers of Corbyn in exile cohabit with supporters of the successor who banished him. That is how we have a Conservative prime minister whose [superpower](#) is persuading people to overlook the fact that he is a Tory.

It suits Labour and the Tories to tell people that each is the only alternative to the other. It suits them to pretend that votes cast under those conditions indicate popular support. But it insults the intelligence of everyone who held their noses in 2019 and marked the ballot paper with fists clenched in frustration at the choice on offer.

There is less surface volatility now, but the deeper currents are, I suspect, still turbulent. The two big political brands have primacy in a failed marketplace. It is not easy to envisage what the force will be that disrupts their arrangement. But that is the nature of dramatic change. It is unimaginable right up until it happens, at which point everyone agrees that it was inevitable.

- Rafael Behr is a Guardian columnist
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Pegasus spyware is just the latest tool autocrats are using to stay in power

[George Monbiot](#)



From silencing opponents to spying on citizens, the world's authoritarians are refining a strategy for perpetual rule



A protest in Budapest against the Hungarian government for using Pegasus spyware. Photograph: Márton Mónus/Reuters

A protest in Budapest against the Hungarian government for using Pegasus spyware. Photograph: Márton Mónus/Reuters

Tue 27 Jul 2021 12.22 EDT

Democracy depends on an equality of arms. If governments acquire political weapons unavailable to their opponents, they become harder to dislodge. They now possess so many that I begin to wonder how an efficient autocracy, once established, might ever again be overthrown.

The [Pegasus spyware](#), whose widespread use by governments the Guardian has helped reveal, is just the latest variety of asymmetric force. The ability to peer into someone's life from a distance, to track their every movement, word and intention, grants autocrats an unprecedented power. It turns us into informants against ourselves. No one subject to this spying can now plan, however peacefully and democratically, to replace a government without those plans being known in advance and in all likelihood thwarted.

Since the Berlin Wall came down, autocrats have refined a new strategy for perpetual governance: to maintain the process and appearance of democracy – including elections and parliaments – while ensuring it doesn't work.

Power is sucked out of democratic structures and relocated to a place where it can [scarcely be challenged](#): an inner circle defended from opposition by a forcefield of money and patronage, a compliant judiciary and a grovelling media. Narendra Modi, Viktor Orbán, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Jarosław Kaczyński, Vladimir Putin and Alexander Lukashenko all know how it works.

Protest, as we have seen from Belarus to Hong Kong, often becomes ineffective. Huge numbers take to the streets, pull the lever of democratic moral authority that has toppled so many regimes in the past, and nothing happens. The autocrats sit and wait for the protest's energy to fizzle out, crack heads and imprison leaders, knowing they no longer need fear the people. They now have the means either to win elections through rigging, suppression or beguilement, or to ignore the result if they lose. The arc of history no longer bends towards justice.

The new surveillance tools complement a formidable array of modern weapons. Dark ads on [social media](#); thinktanks using dark money to turn outrageous ideas that favour the ruling class into apparent [common sense](#); voter suppression; the stuffing of the courts; the long march through the institutions, shutting down opposition in the [civic sphere](#); cleverly prosecuted culture wars: these are the ever more sophisticated tools of autocratic power in nominal democracies.

Many of them are being deployed in the UK. While there is no evidence that the government has been using Pegasus spyware, we have seen ever greater snooping on citizens, from the surveillance networks developed by the government intelligence agency GCHQ and exposed by [Edward Snowden](#) to the undercover police deployed against peaceful protesters, some of whom they deceived into [sexual relationships](#). The cops promised, as revelations from this scandal piled up, to reform themselves. But last week, a former police officer who joined Extinction Rebellion alleged that the Metropolitan police had sought to [recruit him](#) as a spy. Given the characterisation by Priti Patel, the home secretary, of peaceful environmental protesters as "[criminals](#)", I would find it surprising if police spying had not resumed.

The government is turning politics into a one-way mirror. Just as it learns more about our lives, it ensures we learn ever less about its own

machinations. Its proposed changes to the Official Secrets Act would treat journalists and other citizens making “unauthorised disclosures” as if they were spies, threatening them with “increased maximum sentences”, which probably means 14 years. It has so far resisted calls for a public interest defence. But unauthorised disclosures of government malfeasance are essential to democracy. While illegitimate scrutiny is ramped up, legitimate scrutiny is stifled.

For the past 35 years, our political freedoms have been eroded by a series of draconian acts of parliament, imposed by both Conservative and Labour governments: the Public Order Act 1986, the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act 1992, the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, the Terrorism Act 2000, the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005, the Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act 2014, the Trade Union Act 2016, the Covert Human Intelligence Sources Act 2021, to name just a few. But none has gone as far as the police, crime, sentencing and courts bill that has now passed unamended through the House of Commons. It grants the police powers to shut down protests on grounds defined so vaguely – including causing “serious unease” to bystanders – that they could apply to any public expression of dissent. Serious unease is the motor of democracy. When and how do we recover these lost political liberties?

The demand for proof of identity at polling booths is a blatant attempt at voter suppression, of the kind pioneered by US Republicans. To solve a nonexistent problem (widespread identity fraud at elections), it could disqualify 2 million people, generally the poorest and most marginalised, who are unlikely to vote Conservative, from casting their ballots.

The government has floated the idea of disbanding the Electoral Commission, stripping away the last, feeble controls on how it conducts elections and raises money. Its judicial review and courts bill will limit our ability to challenge its decisions. As recent cases involving environmentally damaging projects and Covid contracts show, legal challenges are essential to hold it to account. It has used culture wars to try to stamp out criticism in universities and other public institutions, and combined with the billionaire press to demonise anyone confronting the interests from which it draws its power, often to devastating effect.

The government's only remaining weakness is its own incompetence. Donald Trump is no longer in office not because the US system worked, but because he was an inept autocrat: unfocused, impulsive, contradictory. He did not possess what Modi, Putin, Orbán, Erdoğan, Kaczyński and Lukashenko possess: a strategic, sophisticated drive for power.

Boris Johnson is a spectacularly incompetent administrator, as the 130,000 deaths from Covid-19 testify. It remains to be seen whether or not he is a competent autocrat. He has certainly been more effective at suppressing opposition than at governing the country. Through lucrative pandemic contracts for court favourites and assaults on the planning laws that favour [property tycoons](#), his government has also started to build the networks of patronage and clientelism essential to all autocracies. Perhaps Johnson's general uselessness will prove fatal. Alternatively, his ruthless pursuit of power, assisted by new political weapons, could render his administrative failings irrelevant.

In either case, it seems to me that we have little time in which to move. If we cannot secure a change of government at the next election, and if the succeeding government is not prepared to return power to the people, I suspect there won't be another chance for a very long time.

- George Monbiot is a Guardian columnist
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Are Covid jabs ‘Trump vaccines’? No, but I’ll call them that if it means people will take them

[Arwa Mahdawi](#)



Trump sycophant Sarah Huckabee Sanders says the ex-president deserves credit for the jab rollout. If that’s the price of herd immunity, so be it



Donald Trump and Sarah Huckabee Sanders in Des Moines, Iowa, in January 2020. Photograph: Jonathan Ernst/Reuters

Donald Trump and Sarah Huckabee Sanders in Des Moines, Iowa, in January 2020. Photograph: Jonathan Ernst/Reuters

Wed 28 Jul 2021 01.00 EDT

Forget Pfizer or AstraZeneca, the hottest shot this summer is the Trump vaccine. Hang on, you might cry: there is no such thing. Well, Donald Trump's former White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders – a woman who has always had an unusual relationship [with facts](#) – begs to differ. Sanders is [running for governor of Arkansas](#), a state with [one of the lowest Covid vaccination rates in the US](#). She seems to want to change that: on Sunday, she [published a column](#) explaining her reasons for getting “the Trump vaccine” and arguing that Covid vaccines are safe and effective.

Are you wondering whether Sanders, a Trump sycophant, has turned over a new leaf? Is it possible she suddenly cares more about the public good than political gain? I'm afraid not. Sanders, you see, wasn't content with using her platform simply to encourage her fellow Arkansans to get vaccinated; she also took numerous jabs at Democrats. The reason some people are scared that vaccines are not safe, according to Sanders, is Joe Biden and Kamala Harris's fault. If “the left truly care about increasing the vaccination

rate ... they should admit they were wrong to cast doubt on Operation Warp Speed and give President Trump and his team the credit they are due,” Sanders wrote.

Ah yes, of course. Vaccine hesitancy is entirely the fault of Democrats and the left! Fox News stars such as Tucker Carlson, who has spent months challenging the safety of the vaccines, have absolutely nothing to do with it. It’s incredible how some conservatives, who love preaching personal responsibility, are so quick to jump at the chance to blame others.

That said, it’s important to concede that Sanders isn’t entirely wrong. We can’t blame conservatives alone for politicising the vaccines. A lot of Democrats – along with liberal media outlets such as the New York Times – curried doubt about a vaccine connected to Trump. Andrew Cuomo, the governor of New York, said last September that New York would review Covid vaccines approved by the federal government because Trump’s “election day miracle drug” was not trustworthy. Biden and Harris said they wouldn’t take Trump’s word on the vaccine. This is something liberals need to reckon with.

In the meantime, if Sanders calling the various vaccines “the Trump vaccine” results in more people getting it, I’m all for it. Heck, maybe we should introduce that strategy to different areas. The Trump Green New Deal, anyone?

Arwa Mahdawi is a Guardian columnist

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[OpinionCancer](#)

The incredible true story of the cancer patient who didn't have cancer

[Ranjana Srivastava](#)



People deserve better than a never-ending stream of unproven practices dangled before them in the guise of hope



‘She was a new mother who didn’t want to die. After all, wasn’t early detection of cancer the holy grail?’ Photograph: Doucefleur/Getty Images/iStockphoto

‘She was a new mother who didn’t want to die. After all, wasn’t early detection of cancer the holy grail?’ Photograph: Doucefleur/Getty Images/iStockphoto

Tue 27 Jul 2021 20.32 EDT

Ten years ago a desperate young woman walked into my office and declared: “I need your help. I am dying of cancer.”

Her story was incredible. At an integrative medicine seminar she had won a special blood test as a door prize. Thinking of having some bloods done anyway, she had taken advantage of the free offer, only to receive a call telling her she had cancer. It was only after an expensive course of intravenous vitamins that her sceptical cousin asked why no one had at least ordered a CT scan to find the cancer. She convinced her GP to order the scan, which detected two tiny lung nodules. The GP sent her to a surgeon who ordered a different scan, by which time the benign nodules had disappeared. The surgeon told her she did not have cancer but she did not believe him. Then she saw me.

“I have cancer; your job is to find it.”

[I am a doctor. Here's what I know about communicating with reluctant patients | Ranjana Srivastava](#)

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After months of costly private consultations, her unfulfilled need was both concerning and poignant. She was a new mother who didn't want to die. After all, wasn't early detection of cancer the holy grail? I realised that while the easiest thing was to dismiss her as anxious, the right thing was to help her see what had happened.

Flabbergasted, I received the patient's consent to pen a cautionary [essay in the New England Journal of Medicine](#). The editors must have been equally dumbfounded because, in all my years of writing, it was the only time I was required to attest that the story was true. I replied that not even the most feverish imagination could have conjured it – who gives out a blood test as a door prize?

The patient had received a test founded on a clever principle – although at the time many clinicians had barely heard of circulating tumour cells, which are microscopic fragments of cancer shed into the bloodstream. The appealing theory is that a simple blood test for such cells can detect asymptomatic cancer or, in the case of operable disease, define recurrence risk and hence stratify the need for chemotherapy.

There is good cause for optimism but researchers caution that the measurement of circulating tumour cells remains an experimental tool. There is sufficient ambiguity that laborious and randomised studies will be required to establish the test's analytical validity and, crucially, clinical relevance. In other words, being able to measure something is not the same thing as it being useful, and a new test isn't necessarily better than the old.

Doctors know from experience that even those who struggle to buy food will somehow cobble together the money if told it might help their cancer. The latest news of circulating tumour cells having resurfaced and being promoted as a validated test has oncologists dismayed over yet another unapproved offer dangled in front of patients in the guise of hope.

We are getting better at treatments but are still lagging in whole-patient care

Hapless patients are expected to pay to have an unproven test and receive controversial advice, which they are subsequently asked to check with their oncologist. This is meant to send a reassuring signal of “we are all in this together”. [Cancer](#) patients need all the collaboration they can get but, make no mistake, this isn’t one of them.

Chemotherapy is a blunt and toxic instrument that should be used more sparingly, but certain therapies do prolong quality and extent of life; for an oncologist to have an informed discussion about avoiding chemotherapy is one thing but to be nudged to do so using an unvalidated, unproven test raises serious ethical concerns to me. Our patients deserve better.

One might reasonably suggest that just because a test has been performed doesn’t compel the oncologist to use it. But this isn’t how patients think. Imagine “investing” your savings and hope into a test and then being told to disregard the result. Or spending thousands of dollars on vitamin infusions, an alternative medicine staple, only to find out that, far from flushing out any cancer, it was the vitamins that got flushed away.

Armed with spurious results, my young patient refused to believe she was *not* terminally ill. Suddenly, the onus was on me to prove that she did not have cancer. And the responsibility mine to coax her into enjoying her child rather than being ruled by the fear of dying. After spending as much time as I could, I had to tell her that there simply wasn’t room in my cancer clinic to see patients without cancer. She gracefully conceded and I never heard from her again, but I still remember her terror-stricken face.

So long as there is a market, oils, potions and other “promising” but unproven therapies will survive. Something we can do in response is reduce healthcare fragmentation so that all the advice cancer patients need is found in one place. We are getting better at treatments but are still lagging in whole-patient care. Patients know their chemotherapy schedule by heart but puzzle over what to eat and how much to exercise. They don’t know to whom to reveal their anxieties or whether asking probing questions is

tantamount to disloyalty. When they walk out of the doctor's office, they need someone else. Where that "someone else" is a cancer care nurse, the patient experience changes, but such nurses are still relatively rare.

[What do doctors say to 'alternative therapists' when a patient dies? Nothing.](#)
[We never talk | Ranjana Srivastava](#)

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When I think back to the many patients who travelled the route of questionable therapies, many did so because, above all, the alternative provider listened and exuded a higher "care factor". But the eventual cost to the healthcare system was unforgivably high.

There is nothing more scandalous to professionals than the journey of a cancer patient made unnecessarily more difficult. If we want to keep protecting vulnerable cancer patients from unproven and even bogus therapies, we will need strong and agile regulatory oversight. At an individual level, we can't get past better communication.

When someone is diagnosed with cancer, there is an endless stream of people raring to give advice. From the neighbour's second cousin to the natural healer, everyone wants in, and overwhelmed patients understandably listen to those who sound most convincing. The real job of medicine, then, is to redouble its efforts to win the trust of patients who will prefer to listen to their doctors and nurses instead of those who appear to promise the world and deliver very little.

Ranjana Srivastava is an Australian oncologist, award-winning author and Fulbright scholar

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Unions could have helped to avoid this ‘pingdemic’ mess – but no one asked them

[Frances O'Grady](#)

Ministers have been more interested in placating libertarian Tories than talking to England’s essential workers

- Frances O’Grady is general secretary of the Trades Union Congress
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‘People who have gone into work right through the pandemic are fed up being taken for granted.’ Asda delivery to a Nisa corner store in Windsor.
Photograph: Maureen McLean/Rex/Shutterstock

‘People who have gone into work right through the pandemic are fed up being taken for granted.’ Asda delivery to a Nisa corner store in Windsor.
Photograph: Maureen McLean/Rex/Shutterstock

Tue 27 Jul 2021 11.09 EDT

Last week, as the country was hitting peak “[pingdemic](#)”, I met key workers, in places ranging from food plants to care homes, in Manchester. They had been clapped and thanked many times, including by the prime minister. But they told me they still didn’t feel valued – and not just over their pay.

Time and again, ministers have launched schemes from their desks in Westminster that profoundly impact health, safety and lives without ever asking the views of workers and their unions. Dealing with the [economic chaos](#) caused by workers in critical sectors being pinged by the NHS app is just the latest example.

These are people who have gone into work right through the pandemic, putting in exhausting extra shifts and sleeping separately to keep their families safe. They are fed up of being taken for granted, and patience is running out.

With the notable exception of the successful furlough scheme, ministers have been notoriously unwilling to consult unions or business properly. The [latest proposals](#) have been to create exemptions for self-isolation for essential workers – so they could come in to work and keep services running. This could have gained the support of unions and employers alike – if there had been a chance to help design the scheme. After all, workers want to protect their safety and livelihoods. They understand how their industries and supply chains work better than Whitehall. And nobody wants to see the lights go out.

If unions have not rushed to rubber-stamp the government’s exemption scheme, ministers only have themselves to blame. They should have consulted business and unions in the weeks before [England](#) moved to step 4 with its “freedom day” last week. But they were more interested in negotiating with hard-right libertarians on the Conservative backbenches.

The exemption scheme has often seemed like it is being made up on the hoof for broadcast interviews. And the list of those who might not have to self-isolate [grew again yesterday](#) – from the rail signallers and air traffic control

staff announced by ministers on 19 July, to roles in emergency services, border control and other transport sectors.

[England's 'pingdemic' is a convenient distraction from the real problem | Stephen Reicher](#)

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The application process is bureaucratic and opaque, requiring employers to individually contact government departments and seek permission to exempt named workers. It's a recipe for chaos and confusion – and one that could have been avoided. Workers are keen not to inadvertently infect their colleagues or be exposed to infection themselves.

With the right consultation, we could have anticipated the risk of staff shortages from a rise in self-isolation. And businesses and unions could have advised government how best to prevent the surge in self-isolation and mitigate its impact.

First, the spread of infection could have been slowed. But ministers relaxed the rules recklessly on 19 July. Face coverings should have remained a legal requirement in all enclosed workplaces to help keep everyone safe. Shop workers, already subject to abusive and aggressive behaviour, are dismayed that they must now police the use of masks and other commonsense public health measures that ministers now deem a matter of “personal choice” for people in England.

What's more, the government published inadequate guidance on safe working just two working days before the restrictions changed. And ministers have still failed to task the Health and Safety Executive with proactive enforcement – meaning that not one employer has been prosecuted for a breach of Covid workplace safety rules. The upshot is that many workplaces risk becoming less safe, and sites where the virus is transmitted.

Second, for self-isolation to play its part in controlling the virus, it must be a realistic option for all. But the government's failure to pay decent sick pay to everyone, at a rate they can live on, means people can't afford to self-isolate.

Just last week ministers went back on their promise to make all workers [eligible for sick pay](#) – leaving 2 million people without cover if they have to isolate. This is a political choice. Giving everyone access to statutory sick pay would cost less than 1% of the test-and-trace scheme. And it would make a major contribution to containing transmission.

Third, ministers should urgently restore free lateral flow tests to employers for staff. They are an essential part of containing infections. With firms [having to pay](#) for them, use will drop off. Without comprehensive lateral flow testing, we could have a dangerous situation of actual infections rising while identified infections fall.

And finally, the government has an obligation to ensure that individual workers understand what the scheme means for them and their legal rights to be safe at work.

It's not too late for ministers to come to the table with unions and employers to work out how to improve the scheme and keep the services we all rely on running. Working people have earned that respect and a fair hearing.

- Frances O'Grady is general secretary of the TUC
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Viewpoint columnInternational Monetary Fund (IMF)

The IMF is right: global economic recovery from Covid could go wrong

Larry Elliott



Better-off countries should be concerned by the north-south divide caused by the pandemic

- Failure to help poor countries ‘could cost global economy \$4.5tn’



The global economy has been hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic.
Photograph: Marco Longari/AFP/Getty Images

The global economy has been hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic.
Photograph: Marco Longari/AFP/Getty Images

Tue 27 Jul 2021 09.19 EDT

Given the ebbs and flows of the Covid-19 [pandemic](#), the International Monetary Fund's [assessment](#) of the state of the global economy has changed little over the past three months. Back in April the IMF said world growth would be a [chunky 6% this year](#) and it has left that forecast unchanged.

Beneath the surface, though, plenty has been going on. The outlook for advanced countries has improved while that for emerging market economies has deteriorated. A new north-south divide is opening up and that's a big concern.

The explanation for the rift is simple: rich countries have the financial power to support their economies through the crisis while poor countries do not. The IMF's forecast for UK growth (which predates the “pingdemic”) has been revised up to 7% – the strongest since the second world war – because of the vaccination programme and Rishi Sunak's continued support for wages.

[Failure to help poor countries fight Covid ‘could cost global economy \\$4.5tn’](#)

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Poorer countries are less fortunate, which is why their vaccine programmes lag well behind those in advanced countries and, in some cases, have barely begun at all. The world is now two blocs: better-off countries that can look forward to life returning to something like normal by the end of the year; and those that still face rising infection rates and death tolls.

But, as the IMF rightly notes, permanent recovery is not guaranteed even in parts of the world where infection rates are relatively low so long as the virus is circulating elsewhere. A lesson painfully learned over the past 18 months is that the virus does not respect national boundaries.

So what could go wrong? The IMF has come up with two downside scenarios: one in which emerging countries are hit by a new wave of the virus this year and advanced countries rapidly reverse stimulus policies in the face of rising inflation; and a second in which rising infections affect rich countries as well as poor. In the first scenario, global growth would be 0.75% lower this year and 1.5% lower next than the IMF is currently forecasting. In the second, 0.8 percentage points are shaved off growth in both years. In both cases, the global economy ends up \$4.5tn (£3.3tn) smaller than expected by 2025.

Precautions can and should be taken to prevent these scenarios from happening. There needs to be a multilateral push to ensure vaccines are more widely available. Rich countries don't really need their share of a recently agreed \$650bn allocation of IMF special drawing rights, which boost the reserve assets of member countries. They should redistribute them so that poorer countries have greater fiscal firepower. Domestically, advanced nations need to be extremely careful about withdrawing stimulus too soon. The IMF's message is that plenty could still go wrong. It is a warning worth heeding.

Moonpig shows high street sales might yet fly

The doubling of profits at the online greetings cards and gifts retailer [Moonpig](#) is testimony to how lockdowns have changed consumer behaviour. Those who in the antediluvian days of 2019 wandered into WH Smith or Clinton cards when it was a friend's or relative's birthday have increasingly plumped for the digital option. A sign of the times is that customers buying a paper or magazine from WH Smith are now offered a 25% voucher for money off greetings cards.

Even so, shares in Moonpig fell after announcing its latest results. Investors were less interested in how the company performed in the exceptional circumstances of the year just gone than they are in how it will perform in the years ahead. [Moonpig said sales had started to return to more normal levels](#) as pandemic restrictions were lifted and consumers were allowed to return to shop in person.

The latest snapshot of retailing from the CBI says the same is happening across the board. Growth in internet sales slowed for a fifth month and was the weakest since the business lobby group first started surveying retailers about their online sales 12 years ago.

That doesn't mean a new golden era is about to dawn for bricks and mortar retailers. It does mean, though, that the imminent death of the high street narrative has been overdone.

Bezos raises eyebrows in the billionaire space race

Just fancy that. [Jeff Bezos thinks it an outrage that Nasa has given the contract to make the spacecraft](#) for the next generation of moon landings to Elon Musk, without his rival bid being given a fair shot.

Many of the retailers put out of business by [Amazon](#), the company Bezos founded, will raise an eyebrow at what seems like a Damascene conversion to the idea that competition is preferable to monopoly.

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Black women's hair products are killing us. Why isn't more being done?

[Tayo Bero](#)

Black women who use lye-based hair relaxers at least seven times a year for 15 or more years have a 30% increased risk of breast cancer



‘White-centric beauty standards have led many Black women to embrace hair and skin treatments that could pose serious risks to their health, often without their knowledge.’ Photograph: Hero Images Inc./Alamy Stock Photo/Alamy Stock Photo

‘White-centric beauty standards have led many Black women to embrace hair and skin treatments that could pose serious risks to their health, often without their knowledge.’ Photograph: Hero Images Inc./Alamy Stock Photo/Alamy Stock Photo

Tue 27 Jul 2021 06.21 EDT

A new [study](#) reveals what some scientists and researchers have suspected for years – that frequent and long-term use of lye-based hair relaxers may have serious health effects, including breast cancer. Published in Oxford University’s Carcinogenesis Journal, the study found that Black women who used these products at least seven times a year for 15 or more years had a roughly 30% increased risk of developing breast cancer compared with more infrequent users.

The research team also analyzed [survey data](#) from Boston University’s Black Women’s Health Study, which followed more than 50,000 African American women for more than 25 years and observed their medical diagnoses and any factors that could influence their health. The results? Of the women followed from 1997 to 2017, 95% reported using lye-based relaxers, and ultimately 2,311 developed breast cancers.

This additional risk factor is just one part of a wide race gap in breast cancer rates among American women. We already [know](#) that Black women have the highest occurrence of breast cancer before reaching the age of 40, are more likely than white women to develop highly aggressive breast cancers, and are more likely to die from it at any age – 40% more likely, to be precise.

And when it comes to the role of haircare products in that imbalance, none of this is new. In 2019, research [published](#) in the International Journal of Cancer found that permanent dye use was associated with a 45% higher breast cancer risk in Black women, compared with a roughly 7% higher risk among white women who used these products.

It’s important to examine why Black women are so overrepresented in the market for these harmful products to begin with. For centuries Black women

in the west have been told that their skin tones and hair textures were inferior, unprofessional and largely undesirable.

Even today, [anti-Black hair discrimination](#) is rampant in many professional settings, particularly in corporate and customer-facing roles – so much so that Black advocacy groups and US legislators have been working to pass new laws that would [make hair discrimination illegal](#). So far, however, only 13 states have passed the “Crown Act.”

Biased, white-centric beauty standards have led many Black women to embrace hair and skin treatments that pose serious risks to their health, often without their knowledge. And despite the abundance of evidence pointing to these risks, corporations and government regulators [aren't doing](#) nearly enough to protect the Black women who are the main consumers of these products.

For context, [one in 12](#) beauty and personal care products marketed to Black women in the US were found to contain highly hazardous ingredients such as lye, parabens and formaldehyde-releasing preservatives. Research from the nonprofit [Environmental Working Group](#) also found that fewer than 25% of products marketed to Black women scored low in an assessment of their potentially hazardous ingredients, compared with 40% of products marketed to the general public which researchers classified as low-risk.

This issue cuts across all aspects of the beauty industry. [Skin lightening products](#), another legacy of the cultural idea that dark skin is less desirable, are a thriving industry in the US. Women of color reportedly [spent](#) more than \$2bn on such products in 2020. Users have reported chemical burns and lifelong scars.

Warnings about the dangers of these products are minimal, leaving many Black women with insufficient information with which to make decisions on what products they use. To combat this, the EWG created a [database](#) listing all known personal care products targeted toward Black people, with information about their ingredients and potential problems. Unfortunately, this kind of effort isn't happening on any large scale, or being supported by the companies who actually make and market these products – a gap that will no doubt continue to leave Black women at risk.

In a society that imposes largely Eurocentric standards of beauty, desirability and respectability on all women, Black women in particular are placed under immense pressure to mold themselves to these standards in order to be accepted in social and professional settings. It's crucial that personal care companies and the government do their part to keep Black female consumers safe and healthy.

- Tayo Bero is a freelance journalist
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Climate change

Critical measures of global heating reaching tipping point, study finds

Carbon emissions, ocean acidification, Amazon clearing all hurtling toward new records



Vast areas of the Amazon rainforest are being burned and cleared for grazing cattle — a double blow to global warming, as cattle produce methane and cleared forests release carbon into the atmosphere. Photograph: Florian Kopp/imageBROKER/REX/Shutterstock

Vast areas of the Amazon rainforest are being burned and cleared for grazing cattle — a double blow to global warming, as cattle produce methane and cleared forests release carbon into the atmosphere. Photograph: Florian Kopp/imageBROKER/REX/Shutterstock

Katharine Gammon

Tue 27 Jul 2021 20.00 EDT

A new study tracking the planet's vital signs has found that many of the key indicators of the global climate crisis are getting worse and either

approaching, or exceeding, key tipping points as the earth heats up.

Overall, the study found some 16 out of 31 tracked planetary vital signs, including greenhouse gas concentrations, ocean heat content and ice mass, set worrying new records.

“There is growing evidence we are getting close to or have already gone beyond tipping points associated with important parts of the Earth system,” said William Ripple, an ecologist at Oregon State University who co-authored the new research, in a statement.

“The updated planetary vital signs we present largely reflect the consequences of unrelenting business as usual,” said Ripple, adding that “a major lesson from Covid-19 is that even colossally decreased transportation and consumption are not nearly enough and that, instead, transformational system changes are required.”

While the pandemic shut down economies and shifted the way people think about work, school and travel, it did little to reduce the overall global carbon emissions. Fossil fuel use dipped slightly in 2020, but the authors of a report published in the journal *BioScience* say that carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide “have all set new year-to-date records for atmospheric concentrations in both 2020 and 2021”.

In April 2021, carbon dioxide concentration reached 416 parts per million, the highest monthly global average concentration ever recorded. The five hottest years on record have all occurred since 2015, and 2020 was the second hottest year in history.

The study also found that ruminant livestock, a significant source of planet-warming gases, now number more than 4 billion, and their total mass is more than that of all humans and wild animals combined. The rate of forest loss in the Brazilian Amazon increased in both 2019 and 2020, reaching a 12-year high of 1.11 million hectares deforested in 2020.

Ocean acidification is near an all-time record, and when combined with warmer ocean temperatures, it threatens the coral reefs that more than half a

billion people depend on for food, tourism dollars and storm surge protection.

However, there were a few bright spots in the study, including fossil fuel subsidies reaching a record low and fossil fuel divestment reaching a record high.

In order to change the course of the climate emergency, the authors write that profound alterations need to happen. They say the world needs to develop a global price for carbon that is linked to a socially just fund to finance climate mitigation and adaptation policies in the developing world.

The authors also highlight the need for a phase-out and eventual ban of fossil fuels, and the development of global strategic climate reserves to protect and restore natural carbon sinks and biodiversity. Climate education should also be part of school curricula around the globe, they say.

“Policies to alleviate the climate crisis or any of the other threatened planetary boundary transgressions should not be focused on symptom relief but on addressing their root cause: the overexploitation of the Earth,” the report says. Only by taking on this core issue, the authors write, will people be able to “ensure the long-term sustainability of human civilization and give future generations the opportunity to thrive”.

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Climate crisis in the American west

Video shows salmon injured by unlivable water temperatures after heatwave

A conservation group recorded the video after a heatwave in the Pacific north-west on a day when water temperatures breached 70F



Red lesions and white fungus on the salmons' bodies are the result of high water temperatures and stress. Photograph: Conrad Gowell/Courtesy of Columbia Riverkeeper

Red lesions and white fungus on the salmons' bodies are the result of high water temperatures and stress. Photograph: Conrad Gowell/Courtesy of Columbia Riverkeeper

Hallie Golden in Seattle

Tue 27 Jul 2021 12.00 EDT

Salmon in the Columbia River were exposed to unlivable water temperatures that caused them to break out in angry red lesions and white fungus in the

wake of the Pacific north-west's record-shattering heatwave, according to a conservation group that has documented the disturbing sight.

In a video released on Tuesday by the non-profit organization Columbia Riverkeeper, a group of sockeye salmon swimming in a tributary of the river can be seen covered in injuries the group say are the results of stress and overheating.

['The air is toxic': how an idyllic California lake became a nightmare](#)

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The salmon had been traveling upstream in the Columbia River from the ocean, to return to their natal spawning areas, when they unexpectedly changed course, explained Brett VandenHeuvel, the executive director of Columbia Riverkeeper. He described the sockeye as veering off to the Little White Salmon River, a tributary of the Columbia River where the video was recorded, in an effort to essentially “escape a burning building”.

The conservation group recorded the video following the heatwave on a day when water temperatures breached 70F (21C), a lethal temperature for these anadromous fish if they are exposed to it for long periods. The Clean Water Act prohibits the Columbia River from rising over 68F (20C).

VandenHeuvel compared the situation to a person trying to run a marathon in over 100F (38C) temperatures.

“The difference is that this isn’t recreation for the salmon,” he said. “They have no choice. They either make it or they die.”

The video released by Columbia Riverkeeper shows the injuries to the sockeye salmon. Video by Conrad Gowell, courtesy of Columbia Riverkeeper

The salmon in the video won’t be able to spawn in the tributary, and are expected to die from disease and heat stress.

This scene is yet another example of the tragic toll taken by the recent heatwave, which killed hundreds of people across the Pacific north-west and

Canada, probably caused more than [1 billion marine animals](#) to perish, and contributed to fires across the region.

But VandenHeuvel said the incident went beyond the heatwave, and was exacerbated by the many dams that for decades have held up the water flows across [Washington state](#) and beyond, and thus increased water temperature. Climate change and the recent deadly heatwave simply threw the situation to the extreme.

A videographer captured the scene for the Columbia Riverkeeper earlier this month as part of the organization's effort to try to keep track of the salmon's progress in the heat.

VandenHeuvel said it was too early to say exactly how many salmon have died as a result of the hot water. But there are tens of thousands of sockeye still in the Columbia and Lower Snake rivers, and so as these waterways grow hotter over the next two months, many more fish could die. And given that Snake River sockeye are already considered endangered, the death of just a small section of their population could have dire effects.

[Salmon face extinction throughout the US west. Blame these four dams](#)
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VandenHeuvel recalled traveling out to the area in the days after the video was recorded, and said he saw salmon suffering in a similar way in other tributaries. He even spotted several sockeye carcasses downstream.

"It's heartbreaking to watch animals dying unnaturally," he said. "And worse, thinking about the cause of it. This is a human caused problem, and it really makes me think about the future."

In the video, the salmon can be seen with what looks to be fuzzy white patches, which is likely a fungal infection that appears when salmon become stressed from hot water.



A sockeye salmon in the Columbia river that died as a result of hot river temperatures. Photograph: Conrad Gowell/Courtesy of Columbia Riverkeeper

Don Sampson, a member of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and an advisory board member for the Northwest Tribal Salmon Alliance, described watching the video as akin to seeing his relatives die.

“That’s how bad I felt,” said Sampson, who is also hereditary chief of the Walla Walla tribe. “I mean I was near in tears when I saw it.”

He compared it to 2015, when about 250,000 sockeye died in the Columbia River and its tributaries after an especially hot summer.

Sampson predicted that the situation was only going to get worse, and said it was vital to move forward with a proposal of [breaching four dams](#) in eastern Washington state.

“It’s really appalling that we have solutions to save salmon, but we’re not doing it,” said Sampson. “We don’t have the political will, our members of Congress in the north-west don’t have the political strength or will to stand up to protect salmon for future generations.”

VandenHeuvel agreed that these types of scenes would continue to play out if officials did not take direct action.

“I see this as a deeply sad vision for our future. But I also see it as a call to action. There’s mitigation measures we can take to save the salmon, to cool our rivers,” he said. “And if this video doesn’t inspire some serious reflection, then I don’t know what will.”

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The age of extinctionEndangered species

New IUCN green status launched to help species ‘thrive, not just survive’

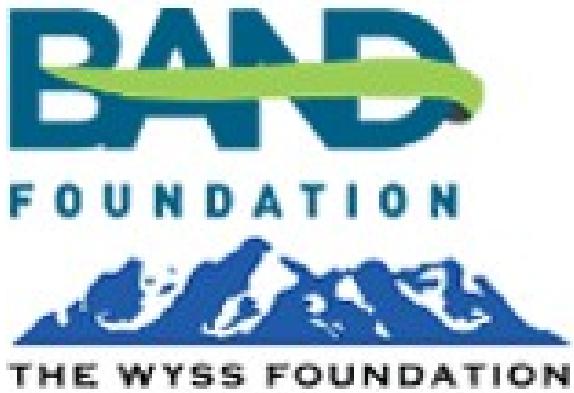
Conservation tool will focus on recovery efforts to give a fuller picture of threats to plant and animal populations



More than 200 scientists have spent 10 years working towards the new measure. The first assessments for 181 species include the pink pigeon, found in Mauritius. Photograph: Mauritius Wildlife Photography/Alamy

More than 200 scientists have spent 10 years working towards the new measure. The first assessments for 181 species include the pink pigeon, found in Mauritius. Photograph: Mauritius Wildlife Photography/Alamy

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Wed 28 Jul 2021 02.01 EDT

A new conservation tool could help put thousands of threatened animal and plant species on the road to recovery, allowing creatures such as the Sumatran rhino and the California condor to flourish once again.

Scientists have typically focused on monitoring how close endangered species are to extinction, regularly updating the severity of the risk on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) red list, which includes iconic wildlife such as the [mountain gorilla](#) and rare flowering plants such as the [Bayard's adder's-mouth orchid](#).

Now, a new global standard known as the [IUCN green status of species](#) will help provide a richer picture of a species' conservation status by detailing how close it is to recovering its original population size and health.



Shimajiri Mangrove forest on Miyako island, Japan, home to green status *Kandelia obovata* mangrove trees. Photograph: TokioMarineLife/ Getty Images

More than 200 scientists representing 171 institutions have spent 10 years working towards the new measure. The first assessments for 181 species have been published in the journal [Conservation Biology](#). Included are the pink pigeon, found in Mauritius, the grey wolf and the *Kandelia obovata* mangrove in east Asia.

By analysing a species' historical population size, present-day distribution, the success of previous conservation efforts and viable habitat, the new standard will allow researchers to plot a path to recovery for some of [the one million species](#) threatened with extinction on Earth, largely through human activities.

Researchers point to the example of the California condor. Only [201](#) of the birds are old enough to breed in the wild and they are exclusively found in Arizona and southern California, resulting in a critically endangered classification on the IUCN's red list. But the first green status assessment has found that [continued conservation efforts](#) could result in a big rebound over the next century to nearly 75% of its fully recovered state.

[Breeding success: how tattoos and aviaries are helping save the saker falcon](#) [Read more](#)

Molly Grace, a University of Oxford researcher who led the development of the IUCN's green status tool, said the new assessment would help paint a fuller picture of the threats to at-risk species and their conservation potential.

"Extinction risk, which we've used to measure conservation progress for decades, is a very absolute thing. A species is either at risk of extinction or it's not. Recovery, however, is relative. Every species exists in different abundances and different distributions across the planet, so recovery has to be measured relatively," Grace said. "We've created a standardised definition of recovery that captures what it looks like for each individual species and measures progress from zero to 100%."

While developing the metric, scientists did not exclusively analyse the status of the most at-risk endangered plant and animal species. Researchers looked at species such as the grey wolf, which is not threatened but is far from being ecologically recovered across its original habitat, and the river clubtail dragonfly that is now classified as [a species of least concern](#) on the IUCN red list after environmental legislation helped improve river health and reduce water pollution in Europe.

"The dragonfly has already reached full recovery. It wasn't doing very well in the past but, due to some EU regulations, the polluted water was cleaned up and the species was able to fully recover across its range and become ecologically functional again," said Grace. "We do see good news stories."



The river clubtail dragonfly is a green status success story, having fully recovered across its range. Photograph: PlazacCameraman/Getty Images/iStockphoto

Despite warnings from some scientists that the Earth is experiencing its [sixth mass extinction event](#), conservationists have had some success in protecting species. [A paper published last year found](#) that up to 48 bird and mammal extinctions had been prevented by conservation efforts, including the Iberian lynx and pygmy hog.

It is hoped the new analytical tool will help frame conservation efforts for animals such as the Sumatran rhino, classified as critically endangered and which is still in decline. Its green status assessment indicates that populations could substantially recover through sustained conservation efforts and new technology to aid reproduction.

“We have come to understand that true success would be to revert the decline to the point where animals, fungi and plants fulfil their ecological functions throughout their range – resulting in species that are not just surviving but thriving,” said Jon Paul Rodríguez, chair of the IUCN species survival commission. “The IUCN green status will help inform conservation plans and steer action to meet national and [international goals for 2030](#) and beyond.”

Green status species

Pink pigeon

Found only in Mauritius, the wild population of this charismatic bird fell to about 10 in the early 1990s. It remains threatened by logging, invasive species and the climate crisis, and is listed as vulnerable to extinction. The new green status assessment shows the success conservation has had, with a few hundred mature birds now found in the south of the island. However, the assessment also warns that its future is dependent on protection and threats to the pink pigeon need to be managed.

Burrowing bettong



The Australian burrowing bettong is at low risk of extinction – but remains a long way from making a full ecological recovery. Photograph: AAP

The small marsupial found in a few parts of Australia has been chosen by scientists as an example of a species at low risk of extinction but that remains far from achieving a full ecological recovery. Despite having a historically large range, the mammal nearly disappeared due to the introduction of invasive species, surviving on just four islands in 1950. While only listed as near threatened on the red list, its green status

classification is critically depleted, highlighting how much its recovery depends on the eradication of invasive species.

Sumatran rhino

Since 1996, the Sumatran rhino has been classified as critically endangered and has continued to decline. [Conservation](#) efforts have so far been unsuccessful but its recovery potential, one of the considerations for its green status classification, shows that the tide could yet be turned. Advances in breeding technology and maintaining efforts could help it rebound, reintroducing the rhino in areas it has long been absent.

Find more [age of extinction coverage here](#), and follow biodiversity reporters [Phoebe Weston](#) and [Patrick Greenfield](#) on Twitter for all the latest news and features

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US Capitol attack

Trump officials can testify to Congress about his role in Capitol attack, DoJ says

Move declines to assert executive privilege for then acting attorney general Jeffrey Rosen, clearing path for others to testify



The justice department's decision marks a sharp departure from the Trump era, when the department repeatedly intervened on behalf of top White House officials. Photograph: Leah Millis/Reuters

The justice department's decision marks a sharp departure from the Trump era, when the department repeatedly intervened on behalf of top White House officials. Photograph: Leah Millis/Reuters

[Hugo Lowell](#) in Washington

Tue 27 Jul 2021 15.50 EDT

Former [Trump administration](#) officials can testify to Congress about Donald Trump's role in the deadly January attack on the Capitol and his efforts to subvert the results of the 2020 election, the justice department (DoJ) has said in a letter obtained by the Guardian.

The move by the justice department to decline to assert executive privilege for Trump's acting attorney general, Jeffrey Rosen, clears the path for other top former officials to also testify to congressional committees investigating the Capitol attack without fear of repercussions.

The justice department authorised witnesses to appear specifically before the two committees. But a DoJ official, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive matters, said they expected that approval to extend to the 6 January select committee that [began proceedings on Tuesday](#).

Bennie Thompson, the chairman of the House select committee, [told the Guardian](#) in a recent interview that he would investigate both Trump and anyone who communicated with the former president on 6 January, raising the prospect of depositions with an array of Trump officials.

Rosen and Trump administration witnesses can give "unrestricted testimony" to the Senate judiciary and House oversight committees, which are scrutinising the attempt by the Trump White House to stop Congress certifying Joe Biden's 2020 election win, the letter said.

The justice department's decision marks a sharp departure from the Trump era, when the department repeatedly intervened on behalf of top White House officials to assert executive privilege and shield them from congressional investigations into the former president.

It also represents a significant move by the White House Office of Legal Counsel under Biden, which in authorising the decision, pointedly noted that executive privilege protections exist to benefit the country, rather than a single individual.

Trump has argued that conversations and deliberations involving the president are always protected by executive privilege. He can sue to block any testimony, which would force the courts to decide the extent of such protections.

But the justice department said in the letter that Rosen and Trump administration officials can testify to Congress about Trump's attempts to subvert the 2020 election because of the extraordinary nature of the circumstances.

In his last weeks in office, Trump pressured justice department officials to use the vast powers of the federal government to undo his defeat, asking them to investigate baseless conspiracies of voter fraud and tampering that they had already determined to be false.

"The extraordinary events in this matter constitute exceptional circumstances warranting an accommodation to Congress," Bradley Weinsheimer, a senior career official in the office of the deputy attorney general, said in the letter.

The justice department told Rosen and Trump administration officials that they could appear before Congress as long as their testimony was confined to the scope set forth by the committees and did not reveal grand jury or classified information, or pending criminal cases.

Rosen's approval letter, which was sent on Monday night according to a source familiar with the matter, comes after the Senate judiciary committee asked to interview several Trump administration officials as part of their oversight efforts started in January.

Negotiations for their testimony were stalled as the justice department weighed how much information former officials could reveal, concerned that many of the conversations were covered by executive privilege, which keeps executive branch deliberations confidential.

The justice department ultimately relented after consulting with the White House Office of Legal Counsel, which said it would not be appropriate to

assert executive privilege over the specific topics in question, according to the letter.

“It is the executive branch’s view that this presents an exceptional situation in which the congressional need for information outweighs the Executive Branch’s interest in maintaining confidentiality,” wrote Weinsheimer, citing Richard Nixon and Watergate.

The Senate judiciary committee chairman, Dick Durbin, said on Twitter that he was working to now schedule interviews with the officials. The panel is also still receiving materials and documents from the justice department, the source said.

[The 6 January special committee – everything you need to know](#)

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The House oversight committee chairwoman, Carolyn Maloney, said in a statement that she was pleased with the decision: “I am committed to getting to the bottom of the previous administration’s attempts to subvert the justice department and reverse a free and fair election.”

Trump exerted significant pressure on the justice department to help him remain president. In one instance, Trump schemed with Jeffrey Clark, the former head of the DoJ’s civil division, to force Georgia to overturn their election results, the New York Times reported.

The Senate judiciary and House oversight committees opened wide-ranging investigations into Trump and the justice department shortly after, with Durbin also demanding materials from the National Archives for records and communications concerning those efforts.

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[New Zealand](#)

Greenpeace criticises New Zealand Rugby deal with petrochemical company Ineos

Ineos has been accused of using sports to ‘greenwash’ its reputation



Greenpeace has slammed New Zealand Rugby’s six-year deal with petrochemical company Ineos. Photograph: Dave Rowland/Getty Images

Greenpeace has slammed New Zealand Rugby’s six-year deal with petrochemical company Ineos. Photograph: Dave Rowland/Getty Images

[Eva Corlett](#)

Wed 28 Jul 2021 00.20 EDT

New Zealand Rugby's decision to sign a six-year deal with global petrochemical company Ineos has been criticised by Greenpeace, who said it fundamentally goes against the country's "clean, green" values.

NZ Rugby announced the company will become the official performance partner for its seven teams from 2022. Ineos is a UK oil, gas and petrochemical conglomerate – the third largest company of its kind in the world. Its main shareholder is billionaire Jim Ratcliffe, and the company has lobbied to [weaken green taxes](#) and [reduce restrictions on fracking](#).

The company partners with multiple sport teams and it is not the first time it has been accused of using sports to ['greenwash'](#) its reputation. In 2019 the company's deal with the UK's top cycling team was [met with protest](#).

Earlier this year, [Ineos agreed to become a cornerstone investor](#) in a new "clean" hydrogen fund. On its website, it said its businesses have "put in place the plans and actions needed to ensure that they lead the transition to a net zero economy by no later than 2050, whilst remaining profitable, and staying ahead of evolving regulations and legislation".

NZ Rugby's chief executive Mark Robinson said the partnership is "an exciting new venture".

"Ineos will bring an innovative approach and dedication to the partnership with our Teams in Black, qualities we see across all aspects of their business, particularly around sustainability with their commitment to deliver a zero-carbon emission future in line with the Paris Agreement," Robinson said.

The Ineos logo will appear on the backs of playing shorts and on the front of the training jersey of each of NZ Rugby's Teams in Black, including the All Blacks and the Black Ferns, from 2022.

In a statement, Ratcliffe said the company was delighted to partner with the All Blacks.

"They have consistently shown the grit and determination needed to perform at the highest level of sport and there will be a lot that we can learn from

them,” he said.

But Greenpeace has spoken out against the decision. Last month, the group attempted to lobby against the then-pending deal.

“In the thick of the climate crisis, it’s gutting to see NZ Rugby sign a sponsorship deal with an oil and gas polluting conglomerate like Ineos that is responsible for driving us deeper into the climate crisis, and fouling the oceans with plastic pollution,” Greenpeace campaigner Juressa Lee said.

According to the [Plastic Waste Makers Index](#), Ineos sits at 13th in the world for production of single-use plastics – one of 100 companies that produce 90% of the world’s single-use plastics.

“Oil companies like Ineos know that their time has come and that the world is turning away from fossil fuels and plastic. They are desperate to associate themselves with popular brands like the All Blacks and with New Zealand’s good name, but we shouldn’t let them get away with it,” said Lee.

She added that many rugby players are Maori and Pasifika, and shouldn’t have to be made to wear the logo, when their communities are on the “frontline of sea level rise and extreme storm events.”

“The sponsorship deal also goes against one of the most important stands New Zealand has taken against climate change by being one of the first countries [to ban new offshore oil and gas exploration](#),” Greenpeace campaigner Steve Abel said last month.

Mark Robinson told [RNZ](#) he was comfortable with the decision and said it was a move NZ Rugby did not take lightly.

“We know that rugby in this country attracts a lot of scrutiny and any major decision we make comes with a fair degree of accountability as well. So, we expect that, we welcome it, we think it’s healthy for the game and for discussions within New Zealand and certainly we’re really comfortable with the due diligence we’ve done,” Robinson said.

The Guardian has approached Ineos and NZ Rugby for comment.

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Tunisia's political crisis greeted with indifference on streets of capital

There is little sign of anger against apparent coup, but some lament the threat to fragile democracy



Tunisians walk along Avenue Habib Bourguiba in Tunis on Tuesday, two days after the suspension of parliament. Photograph: Fethi Belaid/AFP/Getty Images

Tunisians walk along Avenue Habib Bourguiba in Tunis on Tuesday, two days after the suspension of parliament. Photograph: Fethi Belaid/AFP/Getty Images

[*Simon Speakman Cordall*](#) in Tunis, and [*Martin Chulov*](#)

Tue 27 Jul 2021 14.00 EDT

Two days after Tunisia's stumbling democracy ground to a halt, the streets of the country's capital were quiet, even indifferent on Tuesday, with the presence of army troops near a TV station one of the few symbols of a new and unsettling normal.

Protesters who had raged on Sunday before President Kais Saied sacked the county's prime minister and suspended parliament were absent from sites that days before had been febrile hubs of discontent. Instead, passersby seemed to go about their business caring little about the gravity of the moment. In some parts of Tunis, the mood was almost celebratory.

After the storied success of Tunisia's revolution and decade-long crawl towards democracy, the standard bearer of the Arab spring appears exhausted and uncertain. The slow pace of change has worn down many of its citizens, and the Covid-led global slowdown has led some to defer to the certainty of strongman rule over pledges of a brighter future made by political leaders.

[Powerbrokers of Arab world will be closely watching Tunisia](#)

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In a popular square, makeshift stalls vied for space with taxis and mopeds. Near a cart stacked with prickly pears, Abderrazak Gasouma, 53, said he supported the president's decision. "The decisions are 99% correct, I'm just not sure about the methods," he said. "They should have been more democratic.

"They've lost people's trust," he said of the parliament. "They need more youth. Less people fighting. The parliament is needed. You can't have a country without the parliament, but it needs trust."

Further along the crowded street, Firas Gallah, a 24-year-old student, suggested the intervention, which has been described by elected officials as a coup, was overdue. "It should have been like this for 10 years. Those corrupt politicians, they took the money and they did nothing. You have to go and see our hospitals. They would shock you. Look at our hospitals, our houses, our cars. It's wrong."

He added: “Democracy is fine, the problem is Tunisian democracy. We’re all fine. We want to live together, and we should. You want to pray, I want to drink beer, so what? Everyone can do what they want.”

The sacked prime minister, Hichem Mechichi, on Tuesday said he would not contest his dismissal, as Saied [tightened his grip](#) on the north African state by imposing a nationwide [curfew](#) from 7pm to 6am and banning gatherings of more than three people. Movement between cities has also been limited under comprehensive emergency powers.

Saied warned violent protests would be met by force. But there was little immediate sign of anger, or mobilisation against the measures. Tunisia’s political leaders appeared stunned by the president’s move and the absence of police on the streets of towns and villages suggested those who had seized power had little fear of imminent pushback.

[Kais Saied: the ‘Robocop’ president accused of launching Tunisia coup](#)
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Sayida Ounissi, an MP from the ruling Ennahda party, said the suspension of parliament set a foreboding precedent in a country that had fought hard to seed democracy since the overthrow of [Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali](#) at the outset of the regional revolts that came to be known as the Arab spring. Ennahda, an Islamist democratic bloc, had played a dominant role in the country’s affairs ever since and Tunisia had survived as the only genuine democracy in the region after a decade of turmoil in other parts.

“Is this how you resolve democratic issues?” she asked. “I don’t think closing these institutions is a solution. We have been elected, as has Saied.”

The suspension of parliament followed nationwide protests on Sunday, where demonstrators railed against economic failings, which had been amplified by a response to the coronavirus pandemic that is widely considered to have failed. In recent years unemployment has hovered at about 16%, while the value of the dinar has fallen and living costs have increased. The ruling party bore the brunt of accusations of economic mismanagement.

“[Coronavirus] has been big, very big,” said Ounissi. “It’s one of the main challenges. When the government decided to prioritise the economy over the health situation, this is what happened. All other countries that have done that have never won.”

[The Guardian view on Tunisia’s coup: a spring that turns to winter | Editorial](#)
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Speaking by phone from Tunis, Rached Chadli, 34, who was struck by bullets during the uprising a decade ago, said the apparent coup had set Tunisia back. “I don’t care how people want to present this, it’s wrong,” he said. “We have fought too hard to fade away. What we fought for was worthy. Numbly reverting to the pre-Ben Ali days isn’t. Look at Egypt. Look at Syria. Learn the lessons of history.”

In the years since revolts reverberated through Egypt, Libya and Tunisia, north [Africa](#) had become a focal point of regional agendas, with the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Egypt lined up against Turkey, Qatar and the remnants of Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood movement in a contest for regional influence.

“Is what happened here because of their rivalries?” Chadli asked. “I don’t know. Time will tell.”

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[Morocco](#)

Morocco authorities arrest Uyghur activist at China's request

Supporters fear Yidiresi Aishan will be extradited and say arrest is politically driven



Yidiresi Aishan has been arrested in Morocco Photograph: AP

Yidiresi Aishan has been arrested in Morocco Photograph: AP

Associated Press

Tue 27 Jul 2021 20.54 EDT

Moroccan authorities have arrested a Uyghur activist in exile because of a Chinese terrorism warrant distributed by Interpol, according to information

from Moroccan police and a rights group that tracks people detained by [China](#).

Activists fear Yidiresi Aishan will be extradited to China and say the arrest is politically driven as part of a broader Chinese campaign to hunt down perceived dissidents outside its borders.

Morocco's national security directorate said on Tuesday that a Chinese citizen was arrested after landing at Mohammed V international airport in Casablanca on 20 July, upon arrival from Istanbul.

[UK must match rhetoric with action on China's treatment of Uyghurs, say MPs](#)

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"[He] was the subject of a red notice issued by Interpol due to his suspected belonging to an organisation on the lists of terrorist organisations," the directorate said.

The red notice – the equivalent of being on Interpol's most-wanted list – was issued at the request of China, which was seeking his extradition, the directorate said, adding that Moroccan authorities notified Interpol and the Chinese authorities about the arrest, and the Chinese citizen was referred to prosecutors pending the extradition procedure.

Moroccan police did not publicly name the arrested man, but nongovernmental organisation Safeguard Defenders identified him as Aishan. The group specialises in cases of people detained by China.

Aishan, a 33-year-old computer engineer and father of three, has been based in Turkey since 2012, where he worked as a web designer and activist and has residency papers, according to friend and colleague Abduweli Ayup. Aishan worked on a Uyghur diaspora online newspaper and assisted other activists in media outreach and collecting testimonies of abuse in China's [Xinjiang](#) province.

After repeated arrests in Turkey, Aishan left Istanbul for Casablanca on the evening of 19 July, Ayup said. Aishan called his wife on Saturday and said

he was being deported, according to Ayup, who is in touch with Aishan's family.

[Beijing using its financial muscle to target Uyghurs living abroad – report](#)

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Interpol and the Chinese embassy in Morocco did not immediately respond to requests for comment on the arrest. The exact charges against him were unclear.

Morocco ratified an extradition treaty with China in 2017, among several such treaties China has made in recent years.

China has described its sweeping lockup of a million or more [Uyghurs](#) and other largely Muslim minorities as a “war against terror” after knifings and bombings by a small number of extremist Uyghurs native to Xinjiang. Researchers say many innocent people have been detained for things like going abroad or attending religious gatherings.

Safeguard Defenders has appealed to the Moroccan ambassadors in Washington and Brussels not to extradite Aishan. It was “not uncommon” for Chinese authorities to obtain Interpol red notices for Uyghurs and other dissidents abroad, said Peter Dahlin of Safeguard Defenders.

In a similar case, a Chinese teenager who says he is a US permanent resident was arrested in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, in April while transferring for a flight. Chinese officials had sought Wang Jingyu, a 19-year-old student, over his online comments about deadly border clashes between Chinese and Indian forces last year. The US state department called it a human rights concern. Wang was freed in May, and he and his fiancee fled to the Netherlands.

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BHP

London court reopens \$7bn Brazil dam collapse lawsuit against BHP

Six years after deadly Fundao dam rupture, lawsuit against Anglo-Australian mining giant proclaimed as ‘an opportunity for real justice’

00:58

Terrifying moment of Brazil dam collapse caught on camera – video

Reuters

Tue 27 Jul 2021 22.30 EDT

London’s court of appeal made a U-turn on Tuesday by agreeing to reopen a US\$7bn lawsuit by 200,000 claimants against Anglo-Australian mining giant BHP, reviving a case over a dam rupture behind Brazil’s worst environmental disaster.

Lawyers for one of the largest group claims in English legal history have been pushing to resurrect the £5bn (\$6.9bn) lawsuit against [BHP](#) since a lower court struck out the lawsuit as an abuse of process last year – and a court of appeal judge upheld that decision in March.

But in a highly unusual move, three appeal court judges on Tuesday reversed course and granted permission for an appeal, saying they believed it had a “real prospect of success”.

The collapse in 2015 of the Fundao dam, owned by the Samarco venture between BHP and Brazilian iron ore mining giant Vale, killed 19 and obliterated villages as a torrent of more than 40m cubic metres of mining

waste swept into the Doce river and Atlantic Ocean over 650km (400 miles) away.

['That's going to burst': Brazilian dam workers say they warned of disaster](#)
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Tom Goodhead, a PGMBM managing partner who is bringing the claim on behalf of Brazilian individuals, businesses, churches, organisations, municipalities and indigenous people, called it a “monumental judgment”.

Frederico de Assis Faria, attorney general of Brazil’s hard-hit district of Mariana, said victims now had “an opportunity for real justice” six years after the disaster.

BHP, the world’s largest mining company by market value, has labelled the case pointless and wasteful, saying it duplicates proceedings in Brazil and the work of the Renova Foundation, an entity created by the company and its Brazilian partners to manage reparations and repairs.

“BHP’s position remains that the proceedings do not belong in the UK,” it said in a statement.

Contacted in Brazil, Vale declined comment.

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‘A good day for justice’

The case was revived after PGMBM in April applied for an oral court of appeal hearing – reserved only for exceptional cases – and argued the appeal judge had not properly grappled with arguments about why the case should proceed.

Martyn Day, the Leigh Day lawyer who has taken on miner Vedanta and oil giant Shell in English courts on behalf of villagers over alleged pollution in Zambia and oil spills in the Niger delta respectively, welcomed the ruling.

“It is highly unusual for the court of appeal to use this mechanism [of an oral hearing] for reviewing a decision of a fellow member of the court,” he said. “A good day for justice.”

Claimant lawyers have argued that most of their clients have not brought proceedings in Brazil, that they are entitled to sue BHP in England and that Brazilian litigation is so lengthy that it cannot provide full redress in a realistic timeframe.

The lawsuit is the latest battle to establish whether multinationals can be held liable for the conduct of overseas subsidiaries on their home turf.

The appeal is expected to be heard next year and any ruling is likely to be further appealed to the supreme court in London.

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[Drones \(military\)](#)

Former intelligence analyst sentenced to prison for drone program leak

Air Force intelligence analyst gave military documents to journalist to ‘dispel the lie that our lives are worth more than theirs’



‘I believe that it is wrong to kill, but it is especially wrong to kill the defenseless,’ Daniel Hale told the court. Photograph: Bob Hayes/AP

‘I believe that it is wrong to kill, but it is especially wrong to kill the defenseless,’ Daniel Hale told the court. Photograph: Bob Hayes/AP

Guardian staff and agencies

Tue 27 Jul 2021 15.01 EDT

A former air force intelligence analyst was sentenced to 45 months in prison on Tuesday for leaking top secret information about the US government's drone strike program to a journalist.

Daniel Hale of Nashville, Tennessee, has said he was motivated by guilt and a desire for transparency when he disclosed to an investigative reporter details of a military drone program that he believed was indiscriminately killing civilians in [Afghanistan](#) far from the battlefield.

"I believe that it is wrong to kill, but it is especially wrong to kill the defenseless," he said in court, according to the [Washington Post](#). He said he shared what "was necessary to dispel the lie that drone warfare keeps us safe, that our lives are worth more than theirs".

In issuing the sentence, US District Judge Liam O'Grady cited the need to deter others from disclosing government secrets and told Hale that he had other options besides sharing classified information with a reporter.

"You are not being prosecuted for speaking out about the drone program killing innocent people," said O'Grady. "You could have been a whistleblower ... without taking any of these documents."

Charges were brought against Hale amid a crackdown on government leaks by Donald [Trump's administration](#). The prosecution is one in a series of cases the justice department has brought in recent years against current and former government officials who have disclosed classified secrets to journalists.

[Ex-NSA official charged with leaking classified drone documents](#)
[Read more](#)

As in other other leak cases, the arguments on Tuesday were less about whether Hale illegally shared information – he has openly acknowledged having done so – and more about whether the action harmed national security and the extent to which his motives should be taken into account.

Prosecutors had asked for a nine-year sentence, which would have been the longest punishment yet in a leak case.

They argued that Hale, who deployed to Afghanistan in August 2012 and was honorably discharged less than a year later, abused the government's trust and knew the documents he was sharing "risked causing serious, and in some cases exceptionally grave, damage to the national security" but leaked them anyway. The prosecutors say documents leaked by Hale were found in an internet compilation of material designed to help Islamic State fighters avoid detection.

"[A]s a result of Hale's actions, the most vicious terrorists in the world obtained documents classified by the United States as 'Secret' and 'Top Secret' – and thought that such documents were valuable enough to disseminate to their own followers in their own manuals," the prosecutors wrote.

A signals intelligence analyst, Hale's job when he deployed to Afghanistan entailed locating targets for drone strikes and tracking down cellphone signals linked to people believed to be enemy combatants.

After leaving the air force, Hale – feeling guilty over his role and believing he could make a difference in how targeted strikes were conducted – shared with a journalist he had previously met documents that showed the drone program was not as precise as the government claimed in terms of avoiding civilian deaths.

He described in an 11-page handwritten letter from jail the horror he said he felt as he watched videos of Afghan civilians killed in part because of work he had done to track them down.

"Not a day goes by that I don't question the justification for my actions," Hale wrote.

His lawyers argued in court papers that his altruistic motives, and the fact that the government had not shown that any actual harm occurred from the leaks, should be taken into account for a light sentence.

"He committed the offense to bring attention to what he believed to be immoral government conduct committed under the cloak of secrecy and

contrary to public statements of then-President Obama regarding the alleged precision of the United States military's drone program," they wrote.

Associated Press contributed to this report

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[Google](#)

Google, Apple and Microsoft report record-breaking profits

‘Perfect positive storm’ for big tech as pandemic fuels huge quarterly sales and stock market gains



Collectively the five companies market value is worth more than a third of the entire S&P 500 index of America’s 500 largest traded companies.
Photograph: Justin Tallis/AFP/Getty Images

Collectively the five companies market value is worth more than a third of the entire S&P 500 index of America’s 500 largest traded companies.
Photograph: Justin Tallis/AFP/Getty Images

[Rupert Neate](#) and [Dominic Rushe](#)

Tue 27 Jul 2021 16.54 EDT

Google, Apple and [Microsoft](#) reported record-breaking quarterly sales and profits on Tuesday night as the firms continue to benefit from a pandemic that has created a “perfect positive storm” for big tech.

Apple made a \$21.7bn (£15.6bn) profit for the three-month period that ended in June, its best fiscal third quarter in its 45-year history, boosted by strong sales of the iPhone 12 and growth in its services business.

Alphabet, Google’s parent company, reported second-quarter revenue of \$61.8bn (£44.5bn), a 62% increase on the same period a year earlier, and a profit of over \$18.5bn (£13.3bn), more than twice its profits for the same period last year. The company’s advertising revenues rose 69% from last year.

Microsoft, too, beat expectations, reporting revenues of over \$46bn (£33bn) for the quarter – a rise of 21% compared to the same quarter last year.

The results come after [Tesla reported a record profit](#) on Monday in one of the busiest ever weeks for quarterly US earnings results. The big tech blowout earnings continue with Facebook on Wednesday and Amazon on Thursday.

Collectively, the market value of Google, Amazon, Apple, Microsoft and [Facebook](#) is now worth more than a third of the entire S&P 500 index of America’s 500 largest traded companies, as their share prices have soared during the pandemic.

Thomas Philippon, an economist and professor of finance at New York University, said big tech firms have been [the biggest economic winners from the pandemic](#) as global lockdowns have pushed more businesses and consumers to use their services.

[\\$1tn is just the start: why tech giants could double their market valuations](#)
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“They were already on the rise and had been for the best part of a decade, and the pandemic was unique,” Philippon said. “For them it was a perfect positive storm.”

Analysts at Morgan Stanley reckon Alphabet is on course to achieve full-year net income of \$65bn, a 59% increase on 2020. Its annual sales are, the bank reckons, on track for \$243bn – a \$60bn increase on last year.

Alphabet's shares have risen by 75% in the past year to a record \$2,670, but analysts predict they could climb higher still despite regulators around the world threatening to curb its dominance of the internet search market. Morgan Stanley said the stock could reach as high as \$3,060, and even under a worse case scenario is unlikely to fall below \$1,800.

Morgan Stanley analyst Brian Nowak said pandemic lockdowns had boosted [Google](#) as consumers spent more time online researching potential purchases. He said survey data showed that 54% of retailers ranked Google search products, including YouTube, as “their first place to go to research products online, up from 50% in past surveys”.

“Google websites growth is likely to rebound in '21 as we believe there are several underappreciated products driven by mobile search, strong YouTube contribution, and continued innovation, such as Maps monetisation,” Nowak said in a note to clients.

Apple has been making so much money that over the past eight years it has bought back \$421bn worth of shares, but it still has about \$80bn of cash sitting on its balance sheet.

When Microsoft reported a 31% rise in profits at its last quarterly results, its chief executive, Satya Nadella, said it was “just the beginning” as the shift to digital technology was “accelerating” fast.

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The share price rise of the big tech firms has made billions for their super-rich founders and early investors. [Forbes magazine calculated recently](#) that there are now 365 billionaires who made their fortunes in technology, compared with 241 before the pandemic.

Collectively, the world’s tech billionaires hold personal fortunes of \$2.5tn, up 80% on \$1.4tn in March 2020. Amazon’s founder and chief executive,

Jeff Bezos, remains the world's richest person with an estimated \$212bn fortune, and is closely followed in the league table of the wealthy by Tesla co-founder Elon Musk with \$180bn, Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates with \$151bn, and Facebook's [Mark Zuckerberg](#) with about \$138bn.

Zuckerberg believes the internet will take on an even bigger role in people's day-to-day lives in the future, and instead of interacting with it via mobile phones people will be immersed via virtual reality headsets.

He said Facebook would transition from a social media platform to a "metaverse company", where people can work, play and communicate in a virtual environment. Zuckerberg said it would be "an embodied internet where instead of just viewing content – you are in it".

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Reward offered after beloved monk seal found killed in Greece

Conservationists offer €18,000 bounty for information about who harpooned Kostis in Alonissos



Monk seals such as Kostis are considered among the world's most threatened species. Photograph: P Dendrinos/MOm

Monk seals such as Kostis are considered among the world's most threatened species. Photograph: P Dendrinos/MOm

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[Helena Smith](#) in Athens

Tue 27 Jul 2021 13.23 EDT

A reward has been announced by a Greek environmental group intent on finding “all those responsible” for the brutal death of a celebrated monk seal discovered harpooned in waters off the island of Alonissos.

MOm, the Hellenic Society for the Study and Protection of the Monk Seal, said it was offering a €18k (£15k) bounty for information, or evidence, that “will lead to the arrest of the person(s) responsible for the killing of the seal, known as Kostis”.

“We hope this will provide the extra push to find who did it,” said the group’s coordinator, Dimitris Tsiakalos. “And at the very least if that doesn’t happen, help ensure that it never happens again.”

Fewer than 750 Mediterranean monk seals remain, making them among the world’s most endangered species. The vast majority inhabit Greek waters, with most located in a marine park near Alonissos in the Northern Sporades. What is left of the population elsewhere can be found mostly off the Atlantic coast of Mauritania in north-west Africa.

Named after the fisher who found him washed up on a Cycladic island beach when a hurricane-like storm battered the country in 2018, Kostis was discovered floating off Alonissos last weekend, “executed at close range with a spear gun”, according to the group.

The news elicited outrage, with local people and conservationists demanding the culprit be found.

Barely three years old, Kostis was adopted by the island as a mascot. The creature could often be seen clambering on to boats moored in Alonissos’s port and posing for photographs. “He’d play with swimmers. He was very friendly, perhaps overly friendly,” Tsiakalos said. “He’d let people hug him and pet him.”

It was the first time, he said, that the non-profit group, which works exclusively to protect the monk seal, had ever offered a reward.

“We hope that the culprit is found, because this is a criminal act,” Panagiotis Dendrinos, who heads the organisation, said earlier. “It is not only an immoral act, it is also illegal.”

[Pandemic gives breathing room to endangered sea turtles](#)

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On Tuesday, a public prosecutor ordered an investigation into the seal’s death, instructing the local coastguard to begin taking testimony from witnesses. Conservationists believe Kostis was almost certainly killed deliberately, citing the size of the harpoon – which was more than a metre in length – and the direction from which it was fired as proof that his death was unlikely to have been an accident.

“Everything points to this being done on purpose,” said Dendrinos. “The way the animal was hit, the weapon used. It has greatly saddened and enraged us, and not only us, but also the majority of residents and visitors of Alonissos island, who knew Kostis, this seal that hung around the port.”

Although adored by many local people and visitors, the marine mammals are often regarded as a menace by fishers who regularly complain of seals

destroying their nets to feast on the catch of the day.

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Stop and search

Policing minister defends changes to stop and search in crime plan

Kit Malthouse says there are few other options but to make officers' wider powers permanent



Officers and special constables talk to a suspect following a stop and search in south London. Photograph: Victoria Jones/PA

Officers and special constables talk to a suspect following a stop and search in south London. Photograph: Victoria Jones/PA

[Jessica Elgot](#) and [Helen Pidd](#)

Tue 27 Jul 2021 06.21 EDT

The policing minister has defended plans to ease restrictions on stop and search powers for police, saying there is no feasible alternative if knife

crime is to be tackled.

Amid alarm from campaigners at the permanent relaxation of section 60 powers for police in England and Wales to search anyone for a weapon if they have “reasonable grounds” to think they are involved in crime, Kit Malthouse said there were few other options.

The powers were restricted in 2014 by Theresa May when she was home secretary so they could only be used if police believed there was an immediate violent threat, during a limited number of hours.

[What's Boris Johnson offering in his crime reduction plan?](#)

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Those restrictions were eased by Priti Patel in 2019 to allow police to carry out searches 24 hours a day and on grounds of possible violence. These changes will be made permanent [under the government's crime-fighting proposals](#).

Human rights group Liberty said the powers were discriminatory, but Malthouse said: “I am afraid I just don’t agree with that … I often say ‘OK, if we can’t do stop and search what else can we do?’ But it has to be something we can do tonight.”

He said the powers were necessary while long-term crime reduction measures were introduced.

“We know that those people with knives in their pockets going out to injure and kill are out there tonight, and if I were a parent of one of these young men, and it is often young men sadly, I would want to know that the killers might have been stopped and searched on the way to perpetrating that awful act,” he said.

“To those people who are critics of the tactics, I would say look at the numbers, particularly somewhere like London, and tell us what the tactic should be instead. There’s long-term work, I agree, it is not the long-term solution. But in the short term it can have a big impact on suppressing knife crime.”

Boris Johnson will launch the plan later on Tuesday, but both he and Patel are facing a backlash on pay from frontline police officers.

On Tuesday, the chairman of the [Police](#) Federation, John Apter, will take a letter to No 10 setting out officers' anger at the pay freeze.

The Police Federation of England and Wales, representing more than 130,000 officers, [passed a motion of no confidence in Patel last week](#).

Johnson said the "beating crime plan" was part of the commitment to "levelling up" parts of the country plagued by crime and antisocial behaviour, but Labour criticised the strategy as lacking vision and said police were demoralised.

Andy Burnham, the mayor of Greater Manchester, said he had a "real concern" about the government's proposal to increase the use of stop and search.

He said he was particularly worried about the increased use of the section 60 powers. "We have a real concern about the move in this direction and it will need to be dealt with with great caution. We support stop and search as a tool that the police need at their disposal, but it has to be used with real care," he said.

A report into race equality in Greater Manchester police (GMP) on Tuesday found that black people in the region were 5.3 times more likely to have been stopped and searched than their white counterparts. Despite this, black people searched were only marginally more likely to be found to be carrying anything illegal, with 27.5% of searches on black people resulting in an arrest, caution, summons, or other penalty, compared with 25.9% for white people.

Among the proposals is a pledge to give all victims of crime a named officer to deal with their reports, a move the Labour leader, Keir Starmer, dismissed as a "ridiculous gimmick" that would be an easy promise to break.

Offenders doing community service will wear hi-vis as they clear canals or clean graffiti and the plan will also trial the use of alcohol tags – which

detect alcohol in the sweat of offenders guilty of drink-fuelled crime – on prison leavers in Wales.

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Police

MPs and campaigners alarmed at UK's 'discriminatory' crime reduction plans

Government's proposals include more frequent stop and search and making community service street cleaners 'more visible'



Police performing a stop and search. Liberty said the permanent relaxation of search powers would 'compound discrimination in Britain and divide communities'. Photograph: Stuart Emmerson/Alamy Stock Photo

Police performing a stop and search. Liberty said the permanent relaxation of search powers would 'compound discrimination in Britain and divide communities'. Photograph: Stuart Emmerson/Alamy Stock Photo

*Jessica Elgot
@jessicaelgot*

Mon 26 Jul 2021 19.01 EDT

MPs and campaigners have sounded alarm at a series of proposals in the government crime reduction plan, including more frequent stop and search, a trial of “alcohol tags” and criminals undertaking “visible” community service cleaning streets.

Liberty said the permanent relaxation of search powers would “compound discrimination in Britain and divide communities” and the former shadow home secretary, [Diane Abbott](#), said it was “alarming and counter-productive.”

Labour said the policy was a “rehash” of a number of preannounced proposals and expansions of existing pilots.

[What's Boris Johnson offering in his crime reduction plan?](#)

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The strategy will include a plan for every neighbourhood in England and Wales to have [a named and contactable police officer](#) as well as a league table for 101 and 999 answering times.

Boris Johnson said the “beating crime plan” was part of the commitment to “levelling up” parts of the country plagued by crime and antisocial behaviour, but Labour criticised the strategy as lacking vision and said police were demoralised.

Among the proposals in the strategy are:

- Permanently relaxing conditions on the use of section 60 stop and search powers for police to tackle knife crime
- Expanding the use of electronic monitoring for thieves upon release from prison
- Trialling the use of alcohol tags – which detect alcohol in the sweat of offenders guilty of drink-fuelled crime – on prison leavers in Wales
- Making unpaid work “more visible” by getting offenders to clean streets and open spaces

Offenders doing community service will wear hi-vis as they clear canals or clean graffiti. “The intention is to make the price of crime visible,” one Home Office source said.

Emmanuelle Andrews, policy and campaigns officer at Liberty, said: “We all want to feel safe in our communities, but expanding what have proven to be discriminatory police powers isn’t how we get there.

“Many communities, particularly communities of colour, experience overbearing and oppressive policing and the package the government has put forward will only worsen this. It will subject more young people to further coercion, punishment and control.”

[Ministers’ pledge to raise police numbers dismissed as ‘hypocrisy’](#)

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The Home Office said the plan put special emphasis on causes of crime including alcohol and illegal drugs, citing statistics that half of all homicides last year were drug-related.

That will include the £31m expansion of Project ADDER to eight more local authorities, a strategy that combines police resources to target local gang leaders driving drugs trade, while also investing in addiction recovery.

The government also said it would be investing over £45m in specialist support in mainstream schools and alternative provision in serious violence hotspots to support young people to re-engage in education.

The plan includes a £17m package for violence reduction units to give specialist support from trained youth workers when a young person is arrested or admitted to A&E with a knife injury.

Johnson said the government “cannot level up the country when crime hits the poorest hardest and draws the most vulnerable into violence”.

The prime minister is to make a series of visits to promote the strategy but is likely to encounter tension with frontline officers after the government said the majority of officers would see no increase in pay this year.

The Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW), which represents 130,000 officers, last week said it had [no confidence in home secretary Priti Patel](#), saying the government “could not be trusted”.

Shadow home secretary Nick Thomas-Symonds said: “This announcement of rehashed policies won’t make our streets safer. The Conservatives are all talk and no action when it comes to tackling crime.

“On their watch, police numbers are down and community policing has been decimated. Coupled with an insulting pay freeze, it is no wonder frontline police have declared no confidence in the home secretary.”

Thomas-Symonds said named officers were not a substitute for the effects of cuts on community policing. “Little wonder that, on their watch, antisocial behaviour is rocketing, there are record low convictions for rape and violent crime is devastating communities across the country.”

Abbott said the plan was “a checklist of gimmicks designed to get [Priti Patel](#) good headlines in the tabloid press in the short term but it does nothing about the long term problems in the criminal justice system.”

Johnson had initially pledged in an article for the Express that “if you are the victim of crime, you have a named officer to call – someone who is immediately on your side.”

However, Labour said the policy appeared to have been diluted, pledging only that “every neighbourhood in England and Wales will have a named and contactable police officer dedicated to its service”.

A Home Office source called that a misreading – saying personal details for a named officer would be available for the area on [police.uk](#) which all victims of crime and concerned residents could call.

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Politics live with Andrew Sparrow
Coronavirus

Johnson's hi-vis chain gang plan for offenders 'will cause long-term harm', campaigners claim – as it happened

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Tokyo Olympic Games 2020

Tokyo Olympics: Japan lead US in medal table, more GB success – as it happened

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UK news

Magic Monday: how the papers celebrated Team GB's Olympic glory

Medals for swimming, diving, mountain biking, triathlon and taekwondo – plus Tom Daley's happy tears – fill the front pages



The UK papers on Tuesday 27 July 2021 after team GB scooped up 3 medals in the Tokyo 2020 Olympic games (held in 2021). Composite: Various

The UK papers on Tuesday 27 July 2021 after team GB scooped up 3 medals in the Tokyo 2020 Olympic games (held in 2021). Composite: Various

Helen Sullivan
@helenrsullivan

Mon 26 Jul 2021 22.47 EDT

This morning's giddy UK front pages are devoted to [Team GB's Olympic glory on Monday](#), after its athletes won gold medals for swimming, diving and mountain biking – and a flashy pair of silver medals, too, for triathlon and taekwondo.

The **Guardian**'s splash is focused on [diver Tom Daley](#), pictured with teary eyes above his face mask. Daley won gold with his diving partner Matty Lee 13 years after his first Games, and had supporters reaching for towels to dry their eyes after he said: "I feel incredibly proud to say that I am a gay man and also an Olympic champion. When I was younger I didn't think I'd ever

achieve anything because of who I was. To be an Olympic champion now just shows that you can achieve anything.”

Guardian front page, Tuesday 27 July 2021: Ministers urge caution as Covid cases plunge again pic.twitter.com/1JfsRJuqUp

— The Guardian (@guardian) [July 26, 2021](#)

Guardian Sport’s front page headline is “Three glorious golds in Tokyo for Team GB”.

Tuesday’s GUARDIAN Sport: “Magic Monday”
[#TomorrowsPapersToday](#) pic.twitter.com/UKGizFTYS0

— Allie Hodgkins-Brown (@AllieHBNews) [July 26, 2021](#)

The **Daily Express** calls the champions “Golden Wonders” on its front page, and has a jubilant sports front page, with the headline “Big in Japan” and a photograph of swimmer Adam Peaty, who was the first member of Team GB on Monday to win big, also becoming the first British swimmer to defend an Olympic title, after retaining [his 100m breaststroke title](#). Peaty said he hopes the wins will “lift the nation out of Covid gloom”, the Express reports.

Tomorrow's front page: Tears of joy as British heroes are victorious in Tokyo
[#TomorrowsPapersToday](#) pic.twitter.com/ZjrOBcCAuI

— Daily Express (@Daily_Express) [July 26, 2021](#)

Tuesday's EXPRESS Sport: “Big In Japan”
[#TomorrowsPapersToday](#) pic.twitter.com/r0b6zopKaO

— Allie Hodgkins-Brown (@AllieHBNews) [July 26, 2021](#)

The **Times** has a calmer front page with “Gold rush on magic Monday for Team GB” and a picture of Daley and Lee showing off their medals. The

story calls the win “unexpected – and hugely satisfying”.

Tuesday’s TIMES: “PM gets tough on burglars”
[#TomorrowsPapersToday](#) pic.twitter.com/V8Xb6oS4le

— Allie Hodgkins-Brown (@AllieHBNews) [July 26, 2021](#)

The **Independent** is also slightly more subdued, with pictures of each of the gold medal winners under the headline “The golden boys”. Its sport front page it calls Adam Peaty and his victory “unstoppable, inevitable”.

Tuesday’s INDEPENDENT Digital: “Strain on hospitals ‘now equal to peak of Covid’”.
[#TomorrowsPapersToday](#) pic.twitter.com/gQ5BpDi4r7

— Allie Hodgkins-Brown (@AllieHBNews) [July 26, 2021](#)

Tuesday’s INDEPENDENT Digital Sport: “Magic Monday gold rush for GB”
[#TomorrowsPapersToday](#) pic.twitter.com/8ceCD0VHEH

— Allie Hodgkins-Brown (@AllieHBNews) [July 26, 2021](#)

The **Daily Telegraph** is emblazoned in ecstatic photos of the champions with the headline “Magic Monday: Three golds for Team GB (and one agonising near miss) as Tom Daley finally tastes Olympic glory”.

Tuesday’s Daily TELEGRAPH: “Freed burglars to wear 24-hour tags”
[#TomorrowsPapersToday](#) pic.twitter.com/oJcQWIrDLv

— Allie Hodgkins-Brown (@AllieHBNews) [July 26, 2021](#)

The **FT** features an elegant vertical shot of Daley and Lee in action – suspended in the air with their legs up and toes pointed, under the headline “Diving for gold”.

Tuesday's FINANCIAL TIMES: "Aon's \$30bn Willis tie-up collapses after US blocks deal" [#TomorrowsPapersToday](#)
pic.twitter.com/LxevSPmvfK

— Allie Hodgkins-Brown (@AllieHBNews) [July 26, 2021](#)

The **i**'s headline is "Magic Monday" over a photo of the gold winners. "Baby of Beijing finally comes of age in Tokyo", it writes of Daley.

Tuesday's front page: Magic Monday [#TomorrowsPaperToday](#)

- Three gold medals for Team GB before breakfast
<https://t.co/zbQln8v2CP>
- Tom Daley's long journey to gold <https://t.co/oHUPIgth6L>
- Adam Peaty obliterates competition to defend 100m title
<https://t.co/ianez78SiE> pic.twitter.com/lwlp5UUUrv

— i newspaper (@theipaper) [July 26, 2021](#)

The **Daily Mirror**'s splash is "Pool's Gold".

Tomorrow's [#frontpage](#) - POOL'S GOLD! Team GB kicks off the gold rush with three wins in a day[#tomorrowspaperstoday](#)

Read more: <https://t.co/N8mJclhUNn> pic.twitter.com/EyuuZgAds6

— The Mirror (@DailyMirror) [July 26, 2021](#)

Metro has the image of Daley in his mask, too, under the glittering headline "Golden Bawls".

Tomorrow's paper tonight □

GOLDEN BAWLS □

Hero Tom's tears as Team GB taste triple Olympic glory in Tokyo ☺
[#TomorrowsPapersToday](#) pic.twitter.com/SHLGn6RgWM

— Metro (@MetroUK) [July 26, 2021](#)

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UK reports 23,511 cases in seventh daily drop in a row – as it happened

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Covid quarantine to be dropped for some Britons vaccinated abroad

Vaccines minister says government will recognise UK-authorised jabs given overseas from next month

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British citizens arriving from green or amber list countries who have been vaccinated overseas currently have to isolate for 10 days. Photograph: Mark Thomas/Alamy

British citizens arriving from green or amber list countries who have been vaccinated overseas currently have to isolate for 10 days. Photograph: Mark

Thomas/Alamy

*Aubrey Allegretti Political correspondent
@breeallegretti*

Mon 26 Jul 2021 11.08 EDT

Some Britons who have been double-vaccinated abroad will soon be able to travel to the UK more easily as the government prepares to recognise jabs administered overseas.

Current restrictions mean only those who have been fully inoculated by the NHS are able to take advantage of [avoiding quarantine if coming from countries](#) graded amber under the traffic light system.

Hundreds of thousands of British citizens who are dual nationals or have been living or working abroad have still been forced to isolate for up to 10 days, but the rules are expected to be changed for some from August.

[Heathrow wants travel opened up for vaccinated as Covid losses near £3bn](#)
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Those who have had both jabs in other countries but are registered with a GP in the UK will be able to apply to register these with the NHS – but the doses must have been made by either Moderna, Oxford/AstraZeneca, Pfizer/BioNTech or Janssen.

The vaccines minister, Nadhim Zahawi, signalled the move in a little-noticed response to an MP during a Commons debate last week.

He said: “By the end of this month, UK nationals who have been vaccinated overseas will be able to talk to their GP, go through what vaccine they have had, and have it registered with the NHS that they have been vaccinated.”

Zahawi said GPs would vet whether the jabs had been approved for use in the UK, with the more long-term goal of coordinating a commonly agreed vaccine standard with the World [Health](#) Organization and medicines’ regulators in the US and EU.

He also hinted that all travellers coming from abroad who had been double-vaccinated with a jab authorised in the UK could have their doses recognised – not just those who were registered with a British GP – saying: “We want to offer the same reciprocity as the 33 countries that recognise our [NHS] app, and that will also happen very soon.”

Ministers are expected to announce the change later this week as part of a review of the wider rules governing international travel due to be held before 31 July.

Given the NHS is a residency-based system, the number of people living overseas who are registered with a GP in the UK is likely to be fairly limited, leading to criticism that a tweak to the rules is “useless” for the millions of Britons living abroad for whom this will not make any significant change.

Expats who have been living outside the UK for some time and therefore are not registered with a GP (as they are told to deregister when they move abroad) will hope for a bigger overhaul of the rules later in the summer to also recognise their double-vaccination status.

Chris Goater, a spokesperson for the International Air Transport Association, said it was good news the UK appeared to be on the verge of “showing overdue recognition of vaccinated visitors” – but that it made no sense to restrict it to those with a UK GP.

He said: “Approved vaccines should be recognised as soon as possible not just for those from [Europe](#) but also on the crucial transatlantic routes, to help to put the UK aviation industry back on its feet.”

John Holland-Kaye, the chief executive of Heathrow airport, said “the travel sector is still the only part of the economy which is still under very tight controls by the government” and that there had been no “freedom day” for those who wanted to visit friends and relatives in another country.

The next update to the red, amber and green lists is not expected to happen until 5 August. Particular attention will be paid to the fate of France, which

earlier this month [ministers were advised to put on the red list](#) over the spread of the Beta variant.

Instead, the government put [France](#) on what has become known as the “amber plus” list, meaning double-vaccinated travellers returning from the country are not able to avoid quarantine and must instead isolate for 10 days at home or use the “test to release” system after day five.

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[Bhutan](#)

Bhutan's rapid Covid vaccine rollout hailed as international success story

More than 85% of adults in the tiny Himalayan kingdom were given a second dose in just one week

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A woman is given the Covid-19 vaccine in Thimpu, Bhutan. Photograph: Upasana Dahal/AFP/Getty Images

A woman is given the Covid-19 vaccine in Thimpu, Bhutan. Photograph: Upasana Dahal/AFP/Getty Images

Agence France-Presse
Mon 26 Jul 2021 20.40 EDT

Bhutan has inoculated most of its eligible population with second doses of Covid-19 vaccinations in a week, in a speedy rollout hailed by Unicef as a “success story” for international donations.

More than 454,000 shots were administered over the past week in the remote Himalayan kingdom – more than 85% of the eligible adult population of about 530,000 – after a recent flood of foreign donations.

Unicef’s Bhutan representative, Will Parks, said the ambitious vaccination drive was a “great success story for Bhutan”.

[Thailand’s hospitals under pressure as Covid crisis deepens](#)
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“We really need a world in which the countries which have surplus vaccines really do donate to those countries that haven’t received [shots] so far,” he said from the capital, Thimpu.

“And if there’s anything that I hope the world that can learn, is that a country like Bhutan with very few doctors, very few nurses but a really committed king and leadership in the government mobilising society – it’s not impossible to vaccinate the whole country.”

The country had quickly used up most of the 550,000 AstraZeneca jabs donated by India in late March and early April for first jabs, before the neighbouring country halted exports over a massive local surge in infections.

Faced with a growing time gap between first and second doses, Bhutan launched an appeal for donations.

Half a million Moderna doses donated by the US via Covax – the distributor backed by the World Health Organization and the Gavi vaccine alliance – and another 250,000 AstraZeneca shots from Denmark arrived in mid-July.

More than 400,000 AstraZeneca, Pfizer and Sinopharm shots are also expected to arrive in the country of 770,000 people from Croatia, Bulgaria, China and several others.

The government has meanwhile bought 200,000 Pfizer doses that are expected to be delivered later in 2021.

Bhutan has reported just under 2,500 Covid-19 infections and two deaths so far.

The country's rapid rollout of jabs stands in contrast with other south Asian nations, which have also been hit by India's suspension of vaccine exports.

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Chefs

Savour the flavour! Chefs on 20 terrific ways to tickle tired tastebuds



(Clockwise from top left) Anyone for celeriac sorbet, coffee-grounds steak, paté with pineapple or scrambled eggs and strawberry jam? Composite: Guardian Design; Dorling Kindersley; The Picture Pantry; LoudTrombone/Alamy; Rozenbaum Isabelle/PhotoAlto; Lena Zajchikova/iStockphoto; Nirut Punshiri/EyeEm; vikif/iStockphoto; PixelBay/Getty Images

(Clockwise from top left) Anyone for celeriac sorbet, coffee-grounds steak, paté with pineapple or scrambled eggs and strawberry jam? Composite: Guardian Design; Dorling Kindersley; The Picture Pantry; LoudTrombone/Alamy; Rozenbaum Isabelle/PhotoAlto; Lena Zajchikova/iStockphoto; Nirut Punshiri/EyeEm; vikif/iStockphoto; PixelBay/Getty Images

Lost your culinary spark after months of lockdown? From carrot-mel to celeriac sorbet, here are simple, surprising secrets to transform your home cooking

[Tony Naylor](#)

Tue 27 Jul 2021 01.00 EDT

Some of us have thrived in the kitchen in the past 18 months, finding it a creative sanctuary. For others, trapped indoors, life on hold, busier than ever but with more meals to cook, it has been easier to fall into a repetitive routine of reliable dishes that, by now, are deeply boring.

The answer to this malaise? Fresh thinking from some of Britain's best chefs. We asked for their most arresting ideas: revelatory hacks, unexpected flavour combos and daring dishes that will stir the curiosity of even the most jaded home cook.

Strawberry ragu

Alex Rushmer, the chef-owner at [Vanderlyle](#) in Cambridge, creates a strawberry ragu with a remarkably meaty, umami flavour, to serve with pasta or crumpets. (It is inspired by Jeremy Fox, a Californian chef nicknamed the “vegetable whisperer”.) To feed four, soften finely diced fennel, white onion, celery and carrot (125g each) in 240ml olive oil with 135g pine nuts for 45 to 60 minutes. Add 1kg roughly chopped strawberries and, on a low heat, cook for two to three hours, stirring regularly while the magic happens. It produces what Rushmer describes as “a thick, dark, rich sauce. It’s an incredible technique.”

Olive oil ice-cream



Not so vanilla ... ice-cream with olive oil. Photograph: Ryan Benyi Photography/Getty Images/Cultura RF

Drizzling complex extra virgin olive oils (“aromatic, fruity, botanical, grassy”) over ice-cream is a simple way to “spruce up neutral clotted cream or basic vanilla ice-cream”, says Taylor Sessegnon-Shakespeare, the head pastry chef at [Tavolino](#) in London. Chefs are all over this hack. Nitisha Patel, the owner of the Birmingham-based delivery kitchen [Dhalings](#), adds sea salt flakes and olive oil to create a flavour similar to salted caramel.

Tom Barnes, a chef who oversees the kitchens at [Simon Rogan’s restaurants](#) in Cumbria, does the same, but with chocolate ice-cream. “The oil brings out the chocolate’s bitter tones. The sea salt adds a savoury note. It gives an elevated restaurant twist to a simple bowl of ice-cream.”

Citrus seasoning

Usually added late in the cooking process or as a final flourish, lemon and lime juice or zest are used by many chefs to fine-tune and sharpen savoury dishes, from bolognese to butternut squash soup. “Lime zest livens up the squash nuttiness and brightens the whole soup,” says Judy Joo, the owner of [Seoul Bird](#) in London. “Squeezing lime juice on grilled halloumi cuts the saltiness and makes it all the more addictive.”

Smoked fruit

When barbecuing over coals, place raspberries or grapes in a colander or perforated steaming pan, away from the heat, where they can absorb smoke. The berries take 30 minutes, grapes up to three hours (remove if any begin to shrivel). “Smoking ingredients doesn’t necessarily mean they will end up with an acrid taste. It’s trial and error. For instance, smoked grapes taste like mulled wine and are a delicious spiced flavour to add to duck or venison dishes. We serve ours with pork ribs,” says Pip Lacey, the chef and co-owner at [Hicce](#) in London. Smoked raspberries work well in creamy, boozy trifles, with chocolate mousse or paired with fresh peaches.

Fish with vanilla

“If you’ve not had it, this sounds unusual and super-cheffy, but it’s a proper gamechanger for run-of-the-mill midweek suppers,” says Elliot Hill, the chef at [Panoramic 34](#) in Liverpool. He makes a tomato sauce for cod or sea bass for between four and six people by blitzing half a garlic clove, four basil leaves and half a deseeded vanilla pod with 500g of plum tomatoes, passing it through a fine sieve and adding the vanilla seeds. He then gently warms the sauce to create a rounded, subtly creamy dressing – the vanilla moderates the basil and elevates the fish while intensifying the flavour of the tomatoes. “It almost seasons the whole dish.”

Instant pineapple chutney



Totally tropical ... pineapple jam. Photograph: Image Professionals/Alamy

Pickles or posh chutney might seem like a natural fit for rich, livery patés, but Aktar Islam's go-to is Hartley's pineapple jam. "On crusty bread, its sweet, fresh finish balances perfectly," says the chef-owner at [Opheem](#) in Birmingham. Perhaps even more radically, Islam is adamant that ketchup beats mint or tamarind chutneys with samosas. "The sweetness and acidity is perfect – everything else pales in comparison."

Beyond salt

Chris Leach, the chef-founder at [Manteca](#) in London, achieves "extra depth of flavour" by using salty ingredients – miso, fish sauce, anchovies, soy – rather than salt itself. "Infusing smoked bacon into milk to add to mashed potatoes is a tasty one."

Carrot-mel

Yes, carrot caramel. Liz Cottam, the chef-owner of [Home](#) in Leeds, says it brings an adult edge to desserts such as chocolate fudge cake and is a useful condiment with slow-cooked beef short-rib, duck or venison, where it serves to "offset game's iron-y tang".

Over a high heat, reduce 750ml of carrot juice to 150ml, add 50ml of double cream and keep the mixture warm. In a separate pan, stirring continuously to avoid burning, melt 200g sugar until toffee-coloured and bubbling. Add the carrot cream (it will spit) and combine. Once cool, it should be thick but spreadable. “There’s intense sweetness there, but it’s also vegetal and savoury – it’s almost 50:50,” says Cottam. “Your brain goes: ‘What the?!’ But in a good way.”

Cured-fat flavour bombs

Selin Kiazim, the chef and co-owner at [Ok lava](#) in London, creates “sweet-salty nuggets” of beef and lamb fat that bring a “moreish” dimension to leafy, vinaigrette-dressed salads. Take 3cm chunks of fat and coat them in a 3:2 salt and demerara sugar mix seasoned with a few good pinches of dried oregano. Refrigerate for seven days, then wipe off the curing mix. Refrigerated, the fat will keep for two weeks. To use, dice into 1cm cubes, bake in the oven (150C fan, 15 to 20 minutes) and scatter away.

Spent-coffee steak

Wait a second before you compost all your coffee grounds. Ruth Hansom, the chef at [Princess of Shoreditch](#) in London, has an idea. When preparing cheaper, tougher cuts of steak – skirt, for example – bring 30g spent coffee grounds, 100ml soy, 100ml honey and 10g crushed cardamom to the boil (enough for four 200g steaks). Let it cool, then rub it into the steaks and marinate overnight. “It tenderises the meat and gives it an incredible intense flavour,” says Hansom.

Pork and peaches



A cut above ... pork chops with glazed peaches. Photograph: Sergii Koval/Alamy

“The ultimate,” maintains Sam Grainger, the co-founder of [Madre](#) in Liverpool. Sweet, slightly acidic peaches work best with fatty pork cuts, such as belly or collar. “Pan-fry a chop. While it’s resting, colour halved peaches in the pan on a medium heat for four or five minutes – they should soften, but not turn to mush. For a great sauce, deglaze with fino sherry or white wine and add a good knob of butter to finish.”

Scrambled eggs and strawberry jam

“Strawberry jam was my sandwich of choice as a kid and, similar to the way bacon and maple syrup works on pancakes, one of my favourite weekend breakfasts is scrambled eggs on strawberry jam toast, topped with nutty yaji spice mix,” says Akwasi Brenya-Mensa, a chef-restaurateur who this autumn will open [Tatale](#) at the Africa Centre in London. In lockdown, Brenya-Mensa started experimenting with west African yaji, often used to marinate beef kebabs, and one thing led to another. “It allowed me time to repurpose some cupboard staples. For me, yaji spice is such a simple way to add warmth and flavour to dishes. In this meal, it nicely balances out the sweetness of the strawberries.”

Secret star anise

Used sparingly – roughly half a star anise to one large onion, slowly caramelised as a sauce, stew or soup base – this works “as a life-changing flavour enhancer”, says Mary-Ellen McTague. “Not aniseedy, just deeply savoury, like MSG.” McTague, the chef-owner at [The Creameries](#) in Manchester, once worked at the Fat Duck, where Heston Blumenthal had noticed star anise’s savoury, flavour-enhancing power in Chinese cooking.

Condensed milk on toast



The sweet spot ... condensed milk on toast. Photograph: Quality Stock/Alamy

A Hong Kong breakfast favourite, loved by the owners of [Bao](#) in London. “It’s similar to putting honey on toast: sweet, creamy, milky,” says the creative director, Erchen Chang. “It just works perfectly. I quite like it without the crust.”

Gochujang pineapple barbecue marinade

Riffing on Mumbai street food's tendency to combine heat and tartness, Tanya Gohil, the chef-owner at [Silk Road Deli](#) in Glasgow, found gochujang – a Korean red chilli paste – and pineapple “a barbecue match made in heaven”. Add 200g gochujang to a drained tin of pineapple chunks with enough soy, sesame oil, sugar and lime juice to create a loose, balanced sweet-sour-hot marinade. The bold flavours work brilliantly with tofu and fried-then-barbecued paneer.

Celeriac sorbet

Gabriel Waterhouse, the chef at [Water House Project](#) in London, is fond of pairing raw vegetable sorbets, boasting a “salty earthiness”, with sweet desserts such as chocolate fondant and strong flavours such as coffee and whisky. This is easy at home, too. To serve six, blend 50g diced, raw celeriac with 500ml milk, 75g sugar and ½ tsp salt until smooth, then pass it through a sieve and freeze the liquid in an ice-cube tray. To serve, put the cubes in a food blender and blitz to a sorbet. “Parsnip, celeriac and sweet potato make the best,” says Waterhouse.

Turbo-charged chicken powder

Shaun Hurrell, the chef-owner at [Barrio Comida](#) in Durham, loves the intense boost east Asian chicken powders provide (he uses the RosDee brand). These are used to make stock and as dry rubs. “I use it to season whole oiled birds before roasting, in gravy or salad dressings. It’s finer than salt and dissolves easily.”

Lapsang souchong fries

“I’m always adding depth and ‘meaty’ accents from non-animal sources,” says Vanderlyle’s Rushmer, who uses lapsang souchong tea to infuse sauces. He adds it to the white wine reduction for a butter sauce, for example, before sieving it out. “Blend it into salt to add smokiness to a seasoning for chips.”

Strawberry and tomato sandwich

From salads to soups, chefs are exploring the natural affinity of these simultaneously sweet-acidic fruits. [Little Chartroom on the Prom](#) in Edinburgh recently served a flatbread of lightly grilled halved strawberries (preferably barbecued; a little char gives them a savoury edge), with salted, sliced tomatoes, mint, basil and soft goat's cheese or curd. "The acidity of the tomatoes and the sweetness of the strawberries balance each other out and the cheese gives it body and richness. The herbs lift everything," says Roberta Hall-McCarron, the chef-owner.

Anchovy steak vinaigrette

"Anchovy and beef fat is an amazing combination," says James Lowe, the chef-founder at [Lyle's in London](#). As you cook your steaks, pour off some of the rendered fat. Let the meat rest and, in the same pan, sweat some finely diced shallot and reduce a good slug of red wine vinegar. Add two or three anchovies and allow them to melt away, then whisk in some of the beef fat. "It should be punchy: high in acidity, salt and savouriness."

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Music

Laura Nyro: the phenomenal singers' singer the 60s overlooked



‘She kindled a loyalty fierce enough to withstand semi-obscurity’ ... Laura Nyro in San Francisco, 1971. Photograph: Robert Altman/Getty Images

‘She kindled a loyalty fierce enough to withstand semi-obscurity’ ... Laura Nyro in San Francisco, 1971. Photograph: Robert Altman/Getty Images

Elton John idolised her and she wrote hits for the likes of Barbra Streisand, but her musical ambitions were out of sync with the times. Now a new collection reveals her intense originality in full



Richard Williams

Tue 27 Jul 2021 01.00 EDT

Whatever role Laura Nyro chose to play – earth mother, soul sister, angel of the Bronx subways – she committed to it. With a soaring, open-hearted voice and ingeniously crafted compositions, Nyro transformed a range of influences into her own kind of art song. She made vertiginous shifts from hushed reveries to ecstatic gospel-driven shout-ups with an intensity and a courage that, as Elton John would point out, left its mark on many contemporaries who achieved greater commercial success.

As the music of the 1960s reached a climax, no one else merged the new songwriting freedoms pioneered by Bob Dylan with the pop sensibility of the Brill Building tunesmiths to such intriguing effect. As a teenager, she wrote *And When I Die* and *Stoney End*, songs that became hits for other artists. Her own enigmatically titled albums – *Eli and the Thirteenth Confession*, *New York Tendaberry*, *Christmas and the Beads of Sweat* – showed a precociously sophisticated sensibility.

Later, rejecting commercial pressures, she would help push the boundaries of popular music by writing songs celebrating motherhood, female sexuality and her menstrual cycle. In the hearts of admirers, she kindled a loyalty

fierce enough to withstand the semi-obscurity into which she had fallen by the time of her death from ovarian cancer in 1997, at 49. But a new generation will this month get to hear Nyro's music, as American Dreamer, a box set containing her first seven albums and an eighth disc of rarities and live tracks, is released.



'Broadway and the Brill Building in her soul' ... Nyro in the studio with Stephen Sondheim in New York, 1968. Photograph: Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images

The dimming of her fame had been gradual and, to an extent, self-actuated. If her early songs seemed to give listeners the thrill of overhearing her innermost thoughts, she lived her adult life edging towards the spotlight before withdrawing to cope with personal upheavals, then re-emerging years later with songs that confounded expectations by explicitly affirming new commitments to radical feminism, animal rights and environmental activism.

She made her anticipated UK debut at London's Royal Festival Hall in 1971, with her then-boyfriend, Jackson Browne, as the support act. Her final visit, 23 years later, was to the Union Chapel in Islington, a more intimate affair, where she performed as if to family or friends, bathed in an outpouring of warmth. She had become the property of true believers, a following that expanded again as new generations discovered her inspiring originality.

Laurel Canyon hippy chic was never her costume. She was a New Yorker, with Broadway in her soul

Early admirers had included not only female counterparts such as Rickie Lee Jones and [Suzanne Vega](#) but also [Todd Rundgren](#) (“I stopped writing songs like the Who and started writing songs like Laura Nyro”) and [Elton John](#) (“I idolised her. The soul, the passion, the out-and-out audacity ... like nothing I’d ever heard before”). But to the music industry, there was the enduring problem of who, or what, she really was and where she belonged.

In the late 1960s, helped by a partnership with the ambitious young agent David Geffen, who became her manager, she was one of a handful of rising singer-songwriters. But Laurel Canyon hippy chic was never her costume. She had not emerged from the folk or rock traditions. She was a New Yorker, with Broadway and the Brill Building in her soul. Even when Browne was her boyfriend, part of her belonged to a different, pre-Beatles world.

That dissonance was apparent in her much-discussed appearance alongside the likes of the Grateful Dead and Jefferson Airplane at the [1967 Monterey pop festival](#), a landmark event for the emerging counterculture. Jimi Hendrix set fire to his guitar and the Who destroyed their stage equipment, with career-defining impact in both cases. The mohair-suited Otis Redding, seemingly out of place, captivated what he called “the love crowd”. Janis Joplin so impressed Clive Davis, the president of Columbia Records, that she and her band, Big Brother and the Holding Company, were signed on the spot.

Nyro had made an effort. She took the stage in a sleeveless black gown, clutching the microphone with pale fingers that ended in long red-painted nails. She brought with her two female backing singers in matching dresses and a well-rehearsed band consisting of top Hollywood session men. The decision not to accompany herself on the piano robbed her of a certain credibility with this audience, and her songs sometimes seemed to be addressed elsewhere. “Kisses and love won’t carry me / ‘Til you marry me, Bill” – from Wedding Bell Blues – was a take on romance the audience associated with their parents’ generation.

Although some found her performance overwrought and uncomfortable, she was not booed off as legend has it. Footage shot by the documentary filmmaker DA Pennebaker shows that she was being listened to as [she drew out the a cappella delivery of Poverty Train's climax](#) for maximum effect: “Getting off on sweet cocaine / It feels so good ...” But the underlying vibe was wrong, and she was spooked.

It didn’t help that when other people had hits with her songs, they were the wrong people. The Fifth Dimension (Wedding Bell Blues) were a supper-club soul act of the highest class. Barbra Streisand (Stoney End) was Broadway royalty. Blood, Sweat & Tears had shaken off all traces of their Greenwich Village origins by the time they recorded And When I Die. In the public mind, their superficial showbiz gloss transferred to the writer. Nevertheless, shortly after Monterey, Clive Davis also signed her following a private audition in which he was impressed by her conviction.

The songs she wrote for her Columbia albums continued to mine deeper feelings. She cast a golden glow on female friendship in the exquisite Emmie and stripped away all ornamentation to sing about addiction in Been on a Train. Sometimes she luxuriated in the exotic: “Where is your woman? Gone to Spanish Harlem, gone to buy you pastels, gone to buy you books.” In 1971, the year of Marvin Gaye’s What’s Going On, she sang: “I love my country as it dies / In war and pain before my eyes.” Great musicians contributing to her albums included the harpist Alice Coltrane, the saxophonist Zoot Sims and the bassist Richard Davis, who had played on Eric Dolphy’s Out to Lunch! and Van Morrison’s Astral Weeks.

“Where did it come from?” Bette Midler would ask, wiping away real tears while inducting Nyro into the [Rock and Roll Hall of Fame](#) 15 years after her death. Her Italian-Ukrainian father, Lou Nigro, was a trumpeter in big bands; an uncle on her mother’s side was a cantor; on the record player at home there would be jazz, Broadway musicals, opera, folk songs and symphonies.



‘She wrote songs celebrating motherhood, female sexuality and her menstrual cycle’ ... Laura Nyro in New York, 1968. Photograph: Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images

As she grew, she listened to the doo-wop groups whose songs she and her school friends practised in the subways. Miles Davis and John Coltrane were among her musical heroes. From 14 to 17, she attended the High School of Music and Art in Harlem, studying classical singing and counterpoint while looking, in the words of a friend quoted in Michele Kort’s excellent 2002 biography, *Soul Picnic*, “very much like a beatnik”. Her graduation ceremony, in the summer of 1965, was held at Carnegie Hall, on a stage from which she would one day give concerts under the name she adopted (and pronounced “Nero”) as soon as she started writing and performing professionally.

But in 1971, without a hit of her own from four albums of original songs, she decided to make an album of covers reflecting her roots, sourced from Motown, doo-wop and uptown soul, with harmonies supplied by her friends [Patti LaBelle](#), Nona Hendryx and Sarah Dash, collectively known as Labelle. Two years before David Bowie’s Pin-Ups and Bryan Ferry’s These Foolish Things, Nyro’s exhilarating *Gonna Take a Miracle* proved to be ahead of its time.

Dismayed by its commercial failure and the acrimonious end of her close relationship with Geffen, she took initial comfort from a marriage to David Bianchini, a handsome young college drop-out who had served in Vietnam and worked sporadically as a carpenter. They moved to a house in Danbury, Connecticut and she disappeared from view.

By the time she re-emerged in 1975, promoting a new album titled *Smile*, the marriage was over. Three years later another album, *Nested*, coincided with the birth of a son, Gil, to whom she gave her ex-husband's surname even though the child was conceived during a brief relationship with another man. Her albums – the next, in 1984, was called *Mother's Spiritual* – reflected new concerns. A 17-year relationship with Maria Desiderio, a Danbury bookseller, was celebrated in songs that brought her a new audience.

"I was a foolish girl but now I'm a woman of the world," she sang in 1993 on a track from *Walk the Dog and Light the Light*, the last studio album released during her lifetime. The contours of her new songs were less startling and there were fewer verbal starbursts. But on tour, usually with two or three other women providing harmonies, she mixed the songs of her youth with those of her maturity in a way that left no doubt who this extraordinary artist really was.

A beginner's guide to Laura Nyro

Eli and the Thirteenth Confession (1968)

After a somewhat conservative debut album, her second effort – abetted by arranger and co-producer Charlie Calello – was an unstoppable display of musical and verbal fireworks, exploring the emotional extremes.

New York Tendaberry (1969)

To the hardcore fan, her masterpiece. The mood is darker, the arrangements more minimalist, highlighting the sense of desperation fuelling a soul-baring urban song-cycle. The finest distillation of her allure.

Gonna Take a Miracle (1971)

After four albums of original material, she and Labelle settled into

Philadelphia's Sigma Sound to record a joyful series of cover versions. Just hear how they turn the Originals' 'The Bells' into a soaring aria.

Walk the Dog and Light the Light (1993)

More measured in its maturity but still filled with spirit and urgency, the last studio album released during her lifetime reflects her new range of feminist and ecological concerns.

The Loom's Desire (2002)

Recorded in front of adoring audiences at New York's Bitter End in 1993-94, with a harmony trio providing support, this double set captures the warmth and intimacy of her final performances.

American Dreamer is released by Madfish on 30 July

- This article was amended on 27 July 2021 because an earlier version referred to Danbury, Massachusetts, whereas it is in Connecticut.

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Interview

‘I had to educate myself on gaslighting’: meet the cast of dark teen drama Cruel Summer

[Hannah J Davies](#)



Teen idols ... (l-r) Aaliyah Muhammad, Shelby Surdam and Chiara Aurelia.
Photograph: Bill Matlock/Freeform/Amazon

Teen idols ... (l-r) Aaliyah Muhammad, Shelby Surdam and Chiara Aurelia.
Photograph: Bill Matlock/Freeform/Amazon

A high-schooler is abducted in a series that is as provocative as it is soapy.
Could this be the next Euphoria?



[@hannahjdavies](#)

Tue 27 Jul 2021 04.00 EDT

“Sometimes I would be like: where are we? What’s happening? What’s going on? I’m confused. Someone talk to me!” Chiara Aurelia is describing her first major TV role. If it sounds stressful, that’s probably because it was: in Amazon’s new psychological thriller *Cruel Summer*, the 18-year-old newcomer navigates life – first as a chronically awkward teenager, then as the latest addition to the “popular set” – before being dubbed “the most hated girl in America.”

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Set in 1993, 1994 and 1995, *Cruel Summer*’s 10 episodes pull the rare trick of skipping between three fully-developed timelines, the mystery and intrigue only increasing with each jolt back or forward. Both moreishly soapy and sufficiently pitch black – think [Mean Girls](#), in the style of *Single White Female* – the series follows Kate (Olivia Holt), the queen bee high schooler whose life is forever changed when she is abducted by a mysterious assailant. Aurelia plays Jeanette, the good-natured geek who assumes Kate’s social status – and her boyfriend – following her classmate’s disappearance.

A year later, Kate is found alive, and publicly denounces Jeanette, whom she alleges knew where she was being held. The timeline then continues, taking in a third act where Kate must come to terms with her trauma, while Jeanette becomes a pariah in their small Texan town, and the nation at large.

Who is telling the truth and who is lying? Even the cast didn't know until the very end, says Aurelia. "We were obsessed with figuring out the mystery ... we would be on the phone together every week trying to talk through it and figure it out, hanging on to every last word from our creators like, okay, you heard this, and I heard that. So if we put that together...?"

Exec produced by Jessica Biel, *Cruel Summer* has been a huge hit in the US in 2021 – the most-watched series ever on the cable channel Freeform, in fact. It is the kind of show that critics were sufficiently impressed by ([Entertainment Weekly called it “addictive and fresh”](#)) but which came into its own as a word-of-mouth hit, with a second series already on the way. It's easy to see why: as well as that central mystery, the show is tinged with nostalgia, with the Cranberries, INXS and Mazzy Star on the soundtrack; the low-level dread associated with the social hierarchy of high school is present throughout; and there is plenty of throwback makeup on show. ("I didn't wear that much eyeliner before," says Holt of her character's 1995 look; "*I did* wear that much eyeliner," admits Aurelia.)

While the 90s setting is also a boon for fans of chokers, [Dawson's Creek](#)-style plaid shirts and creaky instant messenger conversations, it also allows the thriller element to come to the fore. Despite the fact that – shock horror – Aurelia was born in 2002, and 23-year-old Holt in 1997, there was a universality to what their characters experience.



Saved you a clique ... (l-r) Aaliyah Muhammad, Shelby Surdam, Olivia Holt, Froy Gutierrez and Nathaniel Ashton in Cruel Summer. Photograph: Bill Matlock/Freeform

"In 93, I can definitely relate to that kind of awkward, dorky, childlike wonder phase that she's initially going through," says Aurelia of Jeanette, who arrives on screen bright-eyed and frizzy-haired, but before long is shoplifting Liz Phair CDs and attempting to rebel. "Then I could relate to wanting to fit in and be cool and date the cute guy, and then to feeling really sad and alone. I think we all can, especially this last year and a half. I think that Covid taught me a lot about spending time with myself".

Holt, a former Disney star who plays Kate as alternately shiny and plagued by the horrors of captivity, agrees. "I learned a lot about myself in the last year. I think people change year to year, even if we don't notice it". Playing characters who are in flux, and often misunderstood by those around them, was something that Holt appreciated. "We're so quick to judge, and it's such a bummer ... we don't want to change our opinion about people after those first 15 seconds of meeting them".

Teen soaps have been increasingly explicit in their handling of tough topics in recent years. HBO's hit Euphoria, for example, recently dedicated two special episodes to its leads' drug addictions and trans identity. While Cruel

Summer takes a slightly lighter touch, difficult topics are never far from the surface – most notably an abuse of power from an older person, which is handled with care and subtlety.



Driven to the edge ... Chiara Aurelia. Photograph: Bill Matlock/Freeform

“I had to do a lot of research and educate myself on manipulation, gaslighting and grooming, and all of these things that are very real and alive,” says Holt. “We didn’t want to glamorise it, we didn’t want to romanticise it, we wanted to really showcase it in a way that was raw and transparent. We’re in 2021, like, let’s get real, let’s actually start talking about these issues”.

As well as cannily balancing past and present, realism and thriller tropes, *Cruel Summer*’s greatest trick is not making its two young female leads into mere enemies, or polar opposites. “[We had] the opportunity to dive into two drastically different people’s truths,” says Aurelia. “And we discovered that the truth is somewhere in the middle – I mean, it always is. I think it became more of a show about human experience. You’re not just good or bad ... in the end, it really isn’t a show about rivalry”.

Cruel Summer is available to stream on Amazon Prime Video from 6 August

Five more teen dramas, from darkest to daftest



Too cool for school ... Zendaya and Hunter Schafer in *Euphoria*.
Photograph: AP

Euphoria

[HBO's hit drama](#) starring Zendaya and Hunter Schafer grabbed headlines when its second episode featured 30 penises on screen. Thankfully, there was more to this boundary-pushing series, which has dealt with gender, addiction, rape culture and more.

Elite

[Netflix's salacious Spanish series](#) kicked off with a murder, followed by a reverse-chronological journey through class wars, queer romance and Islamophobia. While its four seasons have become increasingly implausible, its high production values cover a multitude of sins.

Gossip Girl

[The gamechanging US teen drama](#) mixed serious subject matter, from drugs to bulimia, with a campy conceit (and an ultimately absurd reveal of its titular gossipmonger). A 2021 update, which airs on the BBC in August, offers more diversity – if no more realism.

Pretty Little Liars

If you like your debauchery as pacy and nonsensical as possible, Pretty Little Liars' seven seasons are for you. An ominous-sounding reboot of the US mystery series is also on the way, following a group of teens "made to pay for the secret sin their parents committed two decades ago".

Riverdale

We're not in Euphoria anymore: offering bonkers, parody-verging teen fun based on the Archie comics, Netflix's series has seen a bear attack, the rise of an organ harvesting cult, and a character fake his own death. Why not ... but also why?

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Illustration: Guardian Design/David Rice

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‘A lesson in loss, humility and absurdity’: how rhythmic gymnastics

took over my childhood

Illustration: Guardian Design/David Rice

When I was six, a chance encounter with rhythmic gymnastics – all ribbons, sequins and smiles – opened up a sublime, sometimes cruel new world. By 12, I had quit. What had it all meant?

by [Rebecca Liu](#)

Tue 27 Jul 2021 01.00 EDT

Every four years, the same argument plays out. The Olympics reminds the public of the existence of rhythmic gymnastics and the public scoffs at this ridiculous spectacle, with its “ribbon dancing”, its sequins, its extravagant bending and pirouetting. Where artistic gymnastics – the one with the beam and the bars, the one with triple backflips and the constant risk of broken bones – is dignified and athletic, rhythmic gymnastics is frilly and absurd. How is this even a sport? Why is it part of the Olympics? These are the usual criticisms. In return, embattled admirers will point out that rhythmic gymnastics is extremely difficult, actually. There is immense skill involved in those backbends and leaps; besides, have *you* tried throwing and catching a ball while holding your foot above your head?

When I first caught sight of rhythmic gymnastics, I knew nothing of this. The reasons the sport is mocked – the sequins, the balletic dancing, the kilowatt-bright, beauty-pageant smiles of the gymnasts – were the reasons I found it delightful. I was six, sitting in my kitchen in Auckland, staring at the television. On screen, a gymnast at the 2000 Sydney Olympics tossed a bright red ribbon high into the air before catching it with astonishing ease. She was, to me, the height of womanly sophistication: beautiful, graceful, and covered in glitter. I dragged my mother into the room, pointed to the television and announced that this was the sort of lady I would like to become.

My mother was used to this. When I was a baby, she had moved us to New Zealand, while my father stayed in China, working to support our lives abroad. Like many immigrant parents, she wanted to provide her child with

opportunities that she, growing up as one of four siblings in rural 1970s China, did not have. By the time I was a toddler, I was going to Chinese dance lessons, which I loved, and Chinese language classes, which I hated. As I grew older, I built up a near-maniacal collection of hobbies. I wanted to play piano, then violin. I wanted to be a ballerina. I was gripped by figure skating. Much later, my mother started worrying about the lack of male influences in my life and I was sent to after-school electronics clubs, where I spent a lot of time soldering.

These fixations were intense and brief. I usually lost interest within weeks. But with rhythmic gymnastics, it was different. Not long after my epiphany in front of the TV, my mother searched through the Auckland Yellow Pages and found a gymnastics club near our house. A few weeks later, we set off on a 15-minute journey through the suburbs for my first class. It was a good opportunity, my mother thought, for her daughter to get some regular exercise.

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Later, when my gymnastics career was behind me, after all the accolades and the trophies and the gold medals, I would loudly reminisce about it to my friends, teachers, acquaintances, anyone who would listen – a 13-year-old wistfully reflecting on her glory days. But as I grew older, embarrassment crept over me. I wondered what it had meant to dedicate so much of my childhood to a sport that now seemed shamefully girly and unfeminist. This is a sport that first asks women to be graceful and model-thin, then scrutinises their every movement and facial expression for imperfections. The lifecycle of an elite rhythmic gymnast would please the most ardent misogynist. Ideally, you begin as early as possible, so you develop maximum flexibility before the grim reaper (puberty) comes knocking. Then, in the years when you are allegedly at your most beautiful, and certainly at your most emotionally insecure, you are expected to dazzle. Once you are no longer capable of dazzling, you exit the stage. Senior competitive gymnasts commonly retire in their early 20s.

At university, I made peace with my childhood passion by presenting it cynically, showing friends photos of myself on the gym floor, clad in

makeup and sequins, with an air that said, “Yes, I, too, have semi-read [The Second Sex](#)”. Mostly, though, when I looked at these photos, I felt old. One summer, watching yet another round of gymnasts getting their taste of Olympic glory, all of whom seemed to be rudely getting younger and younger, I phoned my dad in a panic, telling him that I had become a has-been. He replied that I was 18, and thus still had plenty left to live for.

Almost a decade on, I recently searched online for any remnants of my life in rhythmic gymnastics. Gone. I asked my mother if she still had any of the medals. Lost in an old house move. What about that time I was interviewed in the local paper? Gone, gone, gone. That child national champion, so driven and so athletic, feels like another person who somehow inhabited my body decades earlier, before bolting it without warning, shutting the windows and doors and leaving no trace. Was that even me?

I was hooked on rhythmic gymnastics from the very start. I loved the rush of feeling my body stretching and moving, propelled by the hope that I, too, might one day be as graceful as that ribbon-throwing Olympian. Under the tutelage of two kind teenage sisters, I began my education. Rhythmic gymnastics, I learned, is not just about sparkly leotards and ribbons; it is about sparkly leotards and ribbons and the ball, rope, hoop and clubs (in reality, two small batons). For each apparatus, rhythmic gymnasts have a separate routine.

To the six-year-old me, always prone to catastrophising, one of the most appealing things was that there were no terrifying, gravity-defying flips or tumbles. The movements, set to music, are instead rooted in dance and ballet. You have leaps and jumps; rotations, otherwise known as spins and pirouettes; and balances (just throw your leg out behind you to make an arabesque, then bend your knee and kick your foot towards your head, then catch it. Easy!). As you perform these movements, you must also effortlessly juggle, spin, throw and catch your ribbon or ball or rope or hoop or clubs. *Yes, it is a real sport.*

Judges score each routine by two criteria: the difficulty of the moves, and the execution of the performance. Afterwards, the gymnast, her face beaded with sweat and flushed with nervous euphoria, heads to the “kiss and cry”

area to await her score. Thus rhythmic gymnastics combines the pleasure of seeing ludicrously skilled athletes test the limits of what the human body can do, with the campy theatrics of shimmering leotards and slickly gelled hairdos, and the psychological drama – heightened by the wait for the judges' verdict – of reality TV, where behind the gorgeous spectacle lurks the shadow of a knife.



Jana Berezko-Marggrander of Germany performs on the ribbon during the London 2012 Olympics. Photograph: Kerim Ökten/EPA

Internationally, rhythmic gymnastics is dominated by Russia, Ukraine and Belarus: Russia has won every Olympic gold for the past five games, and are favourites to win again in Tokyo this year. In New Zealand, it was a niche sport; underfunded, misunderstood, not the thing to pursue if you wanted mainstream recognition. You could be the best rhythmic gymnast in New Zealand but struggle to place internationally.

And yet, from that first lesson on, life in Auckland became, for me, about spending time in the back seat of my mother's car being shuttled to and from gymnastics practice, forever stuck in traffic. The drive to my local club in the eastern suburbs wound past other childhood touchstones – my primary school, my favourite McDonald's, the dodgy hotel with a buffet my friends

and I would go to on birthdays, the public library. But the place that mattered most was the gym.

After a few months of practising, I was ready for my first competition. Watching gymnasts pile in from other parts of Auckland, then studying them up close through the fog of hairspray in the changing room, I grew nervous. Something you don't see when watching gymnastics on television is that as one athlete is performing their routine, another is standing in the wings watching, psyching themselves up to go next. I remember these moments in the shadows more clearly than I ever do performing. Performing takes you into the realm of the familiar and rehearsed, allows you to get lost in the music and the delight of showing just how *good* you are at this thing. The waiting, however, is hell.

As I stepped out on to the mat, something strange happened. Facing an audience and a panel of judges, I bloomed. My body expertly followed the directions issued by my mind. I instinctively felt what jump went when. I remembered to flash my smile to the crowd. The rapturous delight of showing off, the sudden bravado that blasted my nerves away, the rush of feeling my body leap and jump and spin – all this was new. Total pleasure, shot through with a complete conviction in my own power. I wanted to feel this way again.

I won a bronze for one of my routines, and on the car ride home I held the medal tight to my chest. I had no expectations for what would come next. All I knew was that they had given a few prizes to a select few kids that day, and, on my very first try, I had been one of them.

What can I say? Did I, at six – at seven, at eight, at nine – ever sit down and think, “Yes, I want to embody a conventional vision of femininity in the uncanniest and most unsettling of ways?” No. I had simply wanted to be pretty. Follow the ideological road from a childhood defined by Barbie dolls and ballerinas, and you may find yourself pining to be a rhythmic gymnast: conventionally beautiful, perennially cheery and shunted away from public life at 22.



Rebecca Liu training, circa 2003. Photograph: Rebecca Liu

The lack of respect that rhythmic gymnastics receives is hard to separate from the gender politics of the sport. Rhythmic gymnastics is women-only and unabashedly girly. (Men's rhythmic gymnastics does exist, but it is not recognised by the sport's governing body.) The rules stipulate that gymnasts "communicate feeling or a response to the music with facial expression" to convey "strength, beauty and elegance". In other words, rhythmic gymnasts must not only endure pain, but smile through it, too.

There is one version of this story that casts me as a victim of the patriarchy, obediently smiling through my suffering. Perhaps in a sense I was. But that's not the whole story. It is easy to see how rhythmic gymnastics is constricting. What is harder to see is how liberating it can feel. When I was on the floor, there was a deep pleasure in letting the audience, and myself, know that I could triumph over impossible demands. Under the scrutiny of judges, competitors and the crowd, I knew that I was here to conquer. My smile felt less sweet and obliging than a dark challenge: *go on, idiot, underestimate me.*

Gymnastics unlocked something sublime and powerful, opening up planes of existence normally closed off to girls: the feeling of bloodlust pumping through my body, the hunger for glory, and the all-consuming joy of losing

myself in something greater. Yes, these dark emotions were channelled through something extremely girly. But these hyper-feminine things – like gymnastics, like dance, like pageants – were, and remain, some of the few ways in which women can experience those feelings without censure.

At that first competition my performance caught the eye of coaches from a more competitive club across town. I had hit the big leagues. Now the drive took 45 minutes, juddering along a choked-up motorway before winding past the sprawling villas of Auckland's central suburbs.

As the months passed, my leaps got higher and higher, my turns got more complicated and my splits became hypersplits (in which you put one leg up on a bench for a deeper stretch). Six months after my bronze, I won gold in a competition in Auckland. The next month, I won another. Then another. Soon we were far beyond my mother's initial hope that I might find a hobby that would get me exercising. My coaches began teasing the prospect of international competitions – maybe even the Commonwealth Games, maybe even, whisper it, the Olympics. ("Maybe" being the key word: New Zealand rarely qualified.)



Gemma Frizelle of Wales in the team final at the Commonwealth Games in 2018. Photograph: David Gray/Reuters

When I wasn't training or competing, I was reading my way through rhythmic gymnastics websites and message boards. As I waited for the sites to load, I practised my splits.

While browsing one day when I was eight, I made a startling discovery. I read that by age 10 I would be past the golden period in life for flexibility training. At that moment, in my mind, the clock started ticking. I resolved to train harder so I would be prepared for the day my body would become a decrepit flesh cage – my 10th birthday.

Films about girls and sport usually share a common structure. There's the initial encounter, followed by the arduous journey to greatness, which culminates in a final, glorious contest. Accompanying the protagonist on her journey is a group of supportive friends, some mean girl rivals, and inevitably, a boy.

Over the next two years, my life adhered to the sporting side of that script, but not the social one. Today I barely remember the people I met, the coaches and other athletes. What I remember is how it felt to win. The flesh-and-blood world felt far less compelling than the prospect of sporting greatness.

The other gymnasts I competed with were nice white girls from middle-class families that did not resemble my own. They were friendly, but we were not friends. I absorbed, like many immigrant children, a latent awareness of my difference, and thus a thirst to gain what others did not appear to need to fight for – acceptance. I was the proverbial contestant in the reality television show who was not here to make friends. I was here to win.

And there was never a boy. Boys did not magically rearrange the world to make it look more beautiful and more true. Boys did not get you written about and photographed for the local paper. Medals did.

I was in a battle against time: my body was fast on its way to being too old. I was in a battle against myself: each gold medal was a challenge issued by myself to keep up this streak. To an outside observer, I was a little girl in a sparkly leotard throwing a hoop back and forth, but in reality, my life in rhythmic gymnastics felt less like a sleepover-friendly teen drama than one

of those hardboiled stories about a steely renegade on a single-minded quest – usually a man, hardened by middle-age, gripped by an obsession so pure and powerful that it alienates everyone around him. At nine years old, I was that man.

My peak, though I didn't know it then, came at the 2003 national championships, which brought together athletes from all gymnastics disciplines for the most important competition of the season. On the first day, the gigantic Auckland arena was teeming with activity. Artistic gymnastics and trampoline competitions were held simultaneously, and a bang of the vault or a thundering rush of applause would bleed over into the already humming rhythmic gymnastics zone. It felt like attending a mildly out-of-control party full of inordinately flexible people.

And there, on the rhythmic gymnastics mat, I soared. My scores broke national records. I came first in every equipment category in my age group. During the prize-giving ceremony, a disembodied voice from a microphone echoed round the arena, announcing the results for my age group. To me, it was something like the voice of God.



Rebecca Liu with her trophies, circa 2004. Photograph: Rebecca Liu

I climbed on to the top podium trembling with glee. Then came the icing on the cake: I was crowned New Zealand's 2003 gymnast of the year. My head was dizzy with excitement; I lost myself in the applause of the crowd. I knew even then that tomorrow the cycle would begin again – the hard-knuckled training, the battle against the ravages of time, the fear that any moment my winning streak might end. But those were tomorrow's fears. At the top of that podium, I felt loved, perfect and immortal.

The better I got, the longer the journey to training. After the 2003 national championship, I moved to a new club that would prepare me for international competition. On the new hour-long drive, we would pass my old club on the way to the Auckland harbour bridge. Every time we crossed the bridge, I would turn my head to look at the towering blocks of the city we were leaving behind, slowly disappearing across the glinting blue-green sea.

I was now the youngest in a group of teenage girls who were occasionally distracted by the teenage boys who trained in artistic gymnastics on the other side of the gymnasium. I would watch my teammates pass them notes and linger for a chat in the hallway. I did not take part; the other girls sweetly told me that at nine, I was “too young”. But as I stretched in my hypersplits, obnoxiously convinced that boys were for other people who did not have my iron discipline, I felt very old.

The prospect of ageing weighed heavy. At the club, there was a largely unspoken expectation that you'd watch your weight, but at nine, I knew I was still safe. The trouble would come later, when puberty threatened to slow down my metabolism and render my body unsuitable for uninhibited jumping and spinning and running. (This fear wasn't just a gymnastics thing – it was also how I heard teenage girls and women speak about their bodies in the world beyond.) The horrifying prospect of growing breasts hung over me like a dark, hideous cloud.

At this club across the harbour, the aura that surrounded gymnastics in my mind began to fade a little. Gossip and drama crept in, and I started to sense that lurking in the corners of this beautiful thing I loved lay hints of violence. In recent years, abuse in gymnastics has been well documented.

Last August, [New Zealand website Stuff](#) published an investigation into the allegations of psychological and physical abuse of former artistic and rhythmic gymnasts. Athletes told stories going back to the 90s about having their bags searched for food, their bodies criticised and injuries ignored. Many alleged that they had been psychologically abused by coaches. In 2018, the US gymnastics doctor Larry Nassar [was convicted](#) of abusing at least 265 gymnasts over several decades; in February this year, 17 British gymnasts [began a legal case](#) against British Gymnastics over alleged physical and psychological abuse.

I didn't experience anything like this, though I recognise the milieu that made these stories possible. Competitive sports lock you in a small world. For every jubilant victory, there are many heart-shattering lows: failing to catch your equipment, injuring yourself in training, trying your best but just not being good enough. In other settings, you might be encouraged to "see the bigger picture" – that there is a larger world out there full of other things you can do. But the buzz of competitive sports comes precisely because the sport, for those in it, *is* the whole picture. It is the source of your identity, the focus of your dreams. It is why, in far too many cases, abuse will be quietly tolerated or ignored. A lot of harm can be done by those in power when a world narrows like that. Add to that the fact that many of these athletes are young women who have likely, as I did, gone into the sport early on in their lives, and you get a setting ripe for cruelty.

My first, and last, international rhythmic gymnastics competition came in the summer of 2004, when I was 10. I boarded a flight with other gymnasts from my club and our parents, excited for what was to come. On the day of the event, athletes from all around the world piled into the stadium. I watched the two gymnasts from Russia nervously, and began to feel very small. Would my national champion trophy count for anything here?

I performed my routines the best I could. But halfway through one, a knot formed in my rope. I decided to smile through it. Afterwards, I discovered that the points I received for the movements I did after that were not fully counted, because I had done them with a misshapen rope. I got a terrible score.

I won a bronze for the ball, but did not place for my other routines. It was the same result as my first competition. Then, I had been delighted. Now, I felt heartbroken. Like a teenager experiencing their first breakup, I fell into an existential tailspin. What was all the point of this? What was the point of life? There's always next time, my coach told me on the plane home. All I could do was endlessly replay my split-second decision not to untie my rope, stewing in self-hating regret.



Rebecca Liu, circa 2003. Photograph: Rebecca Liu

The glow was gone. The world of rhythmic gymnastics, which had once shone to me in rainbow-bright hues of leotards and the glittering gold of trophies, faded to grey. Perhaps it was because of my defeat, or because I was growing older, but life felt more difficult after that. While I still loved being on the gymnastics mat, I was starting to realise how much was beyond my control. My mother, who had taken a full-time job, was finding it increasingly difficult to shuttle me to training and competitions. She also missed her friends and family at home, and needed time to rest. I took a break from the sport, and a year later, when I was 11, we moved to Hong Kong.

That was not quite the end. My family in China had long been proud of their western-raised gymnastics champion, and I was suffering with an identity

crisis of my own. Without gymnastics, I didn't know who I was any more. A few months after the move, we found the nearest rhythmic gymnastics club. It was in Shenzhen, a megacity in mainland China across the border, reachable by an hour-long subway ride.

After the coach – young, stern, sceptical – had evaluated my abilities, I was placed with a group she judged to be my Chinese-trained equivalents: five-year-olds. I hated this humiliating confrontation with my past-its-prime flesh, my useless body that could not bend in the way it was supposed to. I went to two sessions before deciding that this was not fun any more. I suppose that's one way in which I have surpassed my childhood Olympic heroes. While they took their leave from the sport at 22, I retired at 12.

Two decades later, my childhood visions of bodily decay have long since come true. Running for the bus leaves me breathless, and if you were to throw a ball at me, I would probably duck. After quitting rhythmic gymnastics, I stayed away from competitive sports. It wasn't until lockdown last year that I started to do regular exercise again, mainly out of boredom. This spring, after feeling a dull ache in my left foot, I called my GP. He gently told me that over the past year he had seen many injuries from people "not used to much exercise" who had suddenly dived into high-intensity routines. There didn't seem much use in telling him that as a nine-year-old I could place my foot on top of my head. And yet I still wanted to.

For many years, I thought of my life in rhythmic gymnastics as a weight to bear. It was a difficult thing to have been judged the best in a country at the age of nine. Where were you supposed to go after that? And all that training, all those competitions, all that glory: it felt meaningless, like a waste. I wanted it to have left me something lasting, some calling card that could be issued to everyone I met that said: "I was once a national champion."

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These days, it doesn't seem that way. The whole experience – the accelerated lifespan of my athletic self, compressed into half a dozen years –

seems more valuable, a hyper-condensed lesson in loss, humility and absurdity. The pointlessness of the sport feels strangely poignant.

On the rare occasions I've come across rhythmic gymnastics as an adult – getting sucked into a YouTube hole or watching it during the Olympics – it has been like meeting a childhood crush, only to realise they're weirder-looking than you remember, and a little awkward. And yet, if I continue watching, I feel it again. I close my eyes and remember all the moments when my younger self stood on that top podium, garlanded with medals, feeling as if she had unlocked a sphere of living that was sublime and free.

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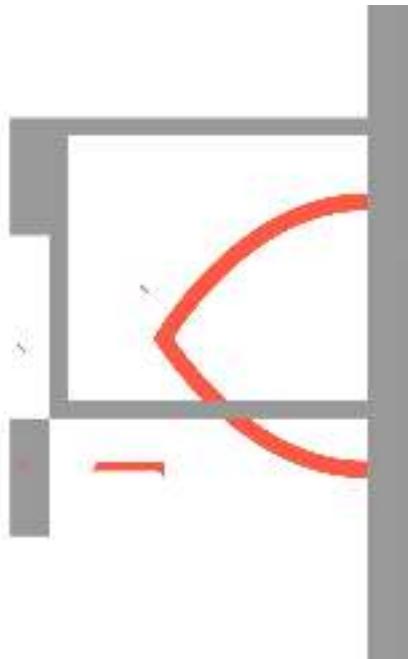
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This is no ordinary spying. Our most intimate selves are now exposed

[Arundhati Roy](#)

The Pegasus project shows we could all soon be ruled by states that know everything about us, while we know less and less about them



‘The technology cannot be rolled back.’ Edward Snowden and Narendra Modi. Composite: Guardian/EPA/Getty

‘The technology cannot be rolled back.’ Edward Snowden and Narendra Modi. Composite: Guardian/EPA/Getty

Mon 26 Jul 2021 19.01 EDT

Here in [India](#), the summer of dying is quickly morphing into what looks very much like a summer of spying.

The second wave of coronavirus has retreated, after leaving an estimated [4 million Indians dead](#). The official government figure for the number of deaths is a tenth of that – 400,000. In Narendra Modi’s dystopia, even as the smoke dwindled in crematoriums and the earth settled in graveyards, gigantic hoardings appeared on our streets saying “Thank you Modiji”. (An expression of the people’s gratitude-in-advance for the “free vaccine” that remains largely unavailable, and which 95% of the population is yet to receive.) As far as Modi’s government is concerned, any attempt to tabulate the true death toll is a conspiracy against India – as if the millions more who died were simply actors who lay down spitefully in the shallow, mass graves that you saw in aerial photos, or floated themselves into rivers disguised as corpses, or cremated themselves on city sidewalks, motivated solely by the desire to sully India’s international reputation.

This same charge has now been levelled by the Indian government and its embedded media against the international consortium of investigative journalists from 17 news organisations who worked with Forbidden Stories and Amnesty International to break [an extraordinary story](#) about global surveillance on a massive scale. India appears in these reports, alongside a group of countries whose governments appear to have bought Pegasus spyware developed by NSO Group, an Israeli surveillance firm. NSO, for its part, has said that it sells its technology only to governments that have been vetted for their human rights record and undertake to use it only for purposes of national security – to track terrorists and criminals.

The other countries that seem to have passed NSO's human rights test include Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the UAE and Mexico. So who, exactly, has agreed upon the definition of “terrorists” and “criminals”? Is this simply up to NSO and its clients?

Other than the exorbitant cost of the spyware, which runs into hundreds of thousands of dollars per phone, the NSO charges an annual [system maintenance fee of 17%](#) of the total cost of the program. There has to be something treasonous about a foreign corporation servicing and maintaining a spy network that is monitoring a country's private citizens on behalf of that country's government.

The investigating team examined a leaked list of 50,000 phone numbers. Analysis showed that more than [1,000 of these](#) were selected by a client of NSO in India. Whether or not a number has been successfully hacked, or subject to an attempt at hacking, can only be determined if the phones are submitted for forensic examination. In India, several of those that have been examined have been found to have been infected with the Pegasus spyware. The leaked list includes the phone numbers of opposition party politicians, dissident journalists, activists, lawyers, intellectuals, businessman, a non-compliant official of India's [election commission](#), a non-compliant senior intelligence officer, cabinet ministers and their families, foreign diplomats and even the prime minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan.

04:55

Pegasus: the spyware technology that threatens democracy – video

Indian government spokespeople have denounced the list as fake. Close watchers of Indian politics would know that even a skilled and knowledgeable fiction writer would not be able to construct such an apt, credible list of those whom the ruling party considers to be persons of interest or people inimical to its political project. It's full of delightful nuance, full of stories within stories. Some unexpected names are on it. Many expected ones are not.

Pegasus, we are told, can be installed in a targeted phone with just a missed call. Imagine that. A payload of invisible spyware delivered on the missile of a missed call. An ICBM like no other. One that is capable of dismantling democracies and atomising societies without the bother of red tape – no warrants, no weapons agreements, no oversight committees, nor any kind of regulation whatsoever. Technology is value-neutral of course. It isn't anybody's fault.

The friendly collaboration between NSO and India appears to have begun in Israel in 2017, during what the Indian media called the Modi-Netanyahu “bromance” – the time they rolled up their trousers and paddled together on Dor beach. They left more than just their own footprints in the sand. It was around then that phone numbers in India began to appear on the list.

That same year the budget for India's National Security Council increased ten-fold. Most of the increased amount was allocated to cybersecurity. In August 2019, soon after Modi won his second term as prime minister, India's draconian anti-terrorism law, the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), under which thousands have been imprisoned without bail, was expanded to include individuals, not just organisations. Organisations, after all, don't have smartphones – an important detail, even if only theoretical. But certainly one that expands the mandate. And the market.



India's home minister, Amit Shah. Composite: Guardian/NurPhoto/REX/Shutterstock

During the debate on the amendment in parliament, the home minister, [Amit Shah, said](#): “Sir, guns do not give rise to terrorism, the root of terrorism is the propaganda that is done to spread it … And if all such individuals are designated terrorists, I don’t think any member of parliament should have any objection.”

The [Pegasus](#) scandal has now created an uproar in the monsoon session of parliament. The opposition has demanded that the home minister step down. Modi’s ruling party, comfortable in its brute majority, fielded Ashwini Vaishnaw – newly sworn in as the minister for railways, for communications and for information technology – to defend the government in parliament. Humiliatingly for him, his number was on the leaked list as well.

If you set aside the bluster and obfuscating bureaucratese of the government’s many statements, you will find no outright denial of the purchase and use of Pegasus. NSO hasn’t denied the sale either. The government of Israel has opened an inquiry into the allegations of abuse of the spyware, as has the French government. In India, the money trail will, sooner or later, lead us to the smoking gun. But where will the smoking gun lead us?

Consider this: there are 16 activists, lawyers, trade unionists, professors and intellectuals, many of them Dalit, who have been jailed for years in what is known as the [Bhima-Koregaon \(BK\) case](#). They are accused, outlandishly, of conspiring to incite violence that took place between Dalits and privileged caste groups on 1 January 2018, when tens of thousands of Dalits gathered to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the battle of Bhima-Koregaon (in which Dalit soldiers fought with the British to defeat the Peshwas, a tyrannical Brahmin regime). The phone numbers of eight out of the 16 BK accused, and the numbers of some of their close family members, have appeared on the leaked list. Whether all or any of them were the subject of an attempted or actual hack cannot be ascertained because their phones are in police custody and not available for forensic examination.

Over the years some of us have become scholars of the sinister lengths to which Modi's government will go to entrap those it considers enemies – and it's more than simply surveillance. The [Washington Post](#) recently published the findings of a report by Arsenal Consulting, a digital forensics firm in Massachusetts, that examined electronic copies of the computers belonging to two of the BK accused, Rona Wilson and Surendra Gadling. Investigators found that both their computers had been infiltrated by an unidentified hacker, and incriminating documents had been placed in hidden folders on their hard drives. Among them, for some added frisson, was a ludicrous letter outlining a corny plot to kill Modi.

The grave implications of the Arsenal report have not stirred India's judiciary or its mainstream press to act in the cause of justice. Quite the contrary. While they worked hard to cover it up and contain the possible fallout of the report, one of the BK accused, an 84-year-old Jesuit priest, [Father Stan Swamy](#), a man who had spent decades of his life in the state of Jharkhand working among forest-dwelling tribespeople fighting against corporate takeover of their homelands, died an excruciating death after being infected with coronavirus in prison. At the time of his arrest he had Parkinson's disease as well as cancer.



Father Stan Swamy died in prison after being infected with coronavirus.
Composite: Guardian/Twitter

So, what are we to make of Pegasus? To cynically dismiss it as a new technological iteration of an age-old game in which rulers have always spied on the ruled would be a serious mistake. This is no ordinary spying. Our mobile phones are our most intimate selves. They have become an extension of our brains and bodies. Illegal surveillance through mobile phones isn't new in India. Every Kashmiri knows that. Most Indian activists do, too. However, for us to cede to governments and corporations the legal right to invade and take over our phones is to voluntarily submit ourselves to being violated.

The revelations of the Pegasus project show that the potential threat of this spyware is more invasive than any previous form of spying or surveillance. More invasive even than the algorithms of Google, Amazon and Facebook, inside whose warp and weft millions live their lives and play out their desires. It's more than having a spy in your pocket. It's like having the love of your life – or worse, having your own brain, including its inaccessible recesses – informing on you.

Spyware such as Pegasus puts not just the user of each infected phone but the entire social circle of their friends, families and colleagues at political,

social and economic risk.

The person who has probably thought longer and deeper about mass surveillance than anybody else in the world is the dissident and former US National Security Agency analyst Edward Snowden. In a recent interview with the Guardian, he warned: “If you don’t do anything to stop the sale of this technology, it’s not just going to be 50,000 targets. It’s going to be 50 million targets, and it’s going to happen much more quickly than any of us expect.” We should pay attention to him. He’s been on the inside track and has been watching it coming.

I met Snowden in Moscow almost seven years ago, in December 2014. It was about a year and a half since he had turned whistleblower, disgusted by his government’s indiscriminate mass surveillance of its own citizens. He had made his great escape in May 2013, and was slowly getting used to life as a fugitive. Daniel Ellsberg (of the Pentagon Papers), John Cusack (of John Cusack) and I [travelled to Moscow to meet him](#). For three days, we holed up in a hotel room with the icy Russian winter pressing against the windowpanes, speaking of surveillance and spying. How far would it go? Where would it take us? Who would we become?

When news of the Pegasus project broke, I went back and looked at the transcript of our recorded conversation. It ran into a few hundred pages. It made my hair stand on end. Snowden, barely into his thirties then, was grimly prophetic: “The technology cannot be rolled back, technology is not going anywhere … it is going to be cheaper, it is going to be more effective, it is going to be more available. If we do nothing, we sort of sleepwalk into a total surveillance state where we have both a super state that has unlimited capacity to apply force with an unlimited ability to know and [therefore be able to] target [that] force – and that’s a very dangerous combination … This is the direction of the future.”

In other words, we are headed towards being governed by states that know everything there is to know about people, and about which people know less and less. That asymmetry can only lead in one direction. Malignancy. And the end of democracy.

Snowden is right. The technology cannot be rolled back. But it needn't be allowed to function as an unregulated, legitimate industry, reeling in profits, blossoming and flowering on the pulsing transcontinental highways of the free market. It needs to be legislated against. Driven underground. The technology may exist, the industry needn't.

So, where does that leave us? Back in the world of good, old-fashioned politics, I'd say. Only political action can halt or mitigate this threat. Because that technology, when it is used, if not legally then illegally, will always exist within the complicated matrix that describes our times: nationalism, capitalism, imperialism, colonialism, racism, casteism, sexism. This will remain our battlefield – regardless of how technology develops.

We will have to migrate back to a world in which we are not controlled and dominated by our intimate enemy – our mobile phones. We have to try to rebuild our lives, struggles and social movements outside the asphyxiating realm of digital surveillance. We must dislodge the regimes that are deploying it against us. We must do everything we can to prise open their grip on the levers of power, everything we can to mend all that they have broken, and take back all they have stolen.

- Arundhati Roy is a novelist, writer and political activist. Her latest novel is [The Ministry of Utmost Happiness](#)
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Help! It's been so long since I've been away that I've forgotten how to pack a suitcase

[Zoe Williams](#)



Did I always wear the same trousers for four days in a row? Do our clothes have to match? And what are the chances our holiday will happen?



In the bag ... ‘What proportion of your holiday clothes should be non-elasticated?’ Photograph: AnnaStills/Getty Images/iStockphoto

In the bag ... ‘What proportion of your holiday clothes should be non-elasticated?’ Photograph: AnnaStills/Getty Images/iStockphoto

Tue 27 Jul 2021 01.00 EDT

I've lost a number of skills recently through under use. Turns out I can no longer read a map, due to prolonged not-going-anywhere, and nor can I make new friends, owing to systemic not-meeting-anyone. But the skill I miss most is packing. I can't even remember where to start.

Try to imagine a whole week, not in your own house; there are so many imponderables. What will the weather be like on a given Wednesday, if two Sundays before, it was a monsoon and the Friday before that, you were Googling “wet bulb temperature”? Did I always wear the same trousers four days in a row, or is that a pandemic thing? Is the whole family supposed to match? If only half of you own a cagoule, is it better to not pack any than to create a dryness inequality situation? How many books should you pack, and is there a moral imperative to take one that is difficult? Does everyone seriously need their own toothbrush? (Actually, I do know the answer to this: emphatically yes.) What proportion of your clothes should be not-elasticated? Is it normal to change in the evening, just to underline how

extremely special it is, to be not-at-home? Or was that last normal in the 1930s?

I realised, finally, after I'd drawn multiple inept diagrams of each family member, wearing outfits, that the real block is thinking about the future at all. Whether you get there via "Why don't we have any Airtex?", or "[Do people still use sunscreen?](#)", the real question is: "What are the chances that this will actually happen?"

[Who is to blame for the sweltering weather? My kids say it's boomers – and me | Zoe Williams](#)

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It all reminds me of being about to have a baby, and not wanting to buy it any clothes in case I jinxed the whole thing. It felt like an act of the most reckless audacity, to spend six quid on a babygrow ahead of the event, like daring the universe. "But even if you don't have a perfect water birth, the baby will need clothes," my sister pointed out, sort-of helpfully. This is the way to approach your suitcase; even if stuff doesn't go to plan, you'll still need clothes.

- Zoe Williams is a Guardian columnist
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England is sleepwalking towards a two-tier health system

[Richard Vize](#)



NHS waiting lists are at an all-time high, prompting increasing numbers of wealthy patients going private to jump the queue



‘Private healthcare firms have done massive business with the NHS during the pandemic, [worth](#) around £2bn.’ A protest against NHS privatisation in London in April 2021. Photograph: Mark Thomas/REX/Shutterstock

‘Private healthcare firms have done massive business with the NHS during the pandemic, [worth](#) around £2bn.’ A protest against NHS privatisation in London in April 2021. Photograph: Mark Thomas/REX/Shutterstock

Tue 27 Jul 2021 03.00 EDT

The pandemic has driven both the NHS and a growing number of its patients towards private healthcare. Heightened awareness of the health service’s frailties, fuelled by repeated warnings that it could be [overwhelmed](#), has prompted a surge in private medical insurance. As the UK drifts into a possible future of two-tier healthcare, with the wealthy given more chances to skip the queue, we need to ask whether the founding principle of the UK’s health service – free at the point of need – is being eroded in front of our eyes.

There are about 90 private healthcare providers in the UK, such as HCA, Circle, Ramsay, Bupa, Spire and Nuffield Health. The industry is [worth](#) about £9bn a year, [compared](#) with £177bn of government healthcare spending across the UK in 2019. It includes hospitals, clinics, diagnostics

and imaging and urgent care; typical work is general surgery, oncology, obstetrics, trauma and orthopaedics.

Its customers are medical tourists, [NHS](#) referrals, people with private medical insurance and self-pay individuals – so-called “out of pocket” payers. This last group includes people paying for one-off operations to avoid waiting for NHS treatment. Ramsay earns about 80% of its revenues from NHS referrals, Spire 30%.

The need to clear the operations backlog has made NHS trusts a lot less squeamish about working with the private sector

Alongside the private companies, many NHS hospitals – particularly specialist ones – provide private care. The Royal Marsden cancer centre’s income from private practice has been growing strongly, reaching £133m in the year to March 2020. This sort of activity is justified on the grounds it helps fund NHS care but is vehemently opposed by anti-privatisation campaigners who argue it is simply a mechanism for the wealthy to jump NHS queues in the same hospital.

Private healthcare firms have done massive business with the NHS during the pandemic, [worth](#) around £2bn. In May, the Independent Healthcare Provider Network [said](#) its members carried out 3.2m procedures in the previous year for NHS patients, including more than 160,000 for cancer and cardiology.

This was a lifeline for the private sector, which would have struggled to continue running with its NHS-based clinicians fully occupied in NHS hospitals tackling Covid. The company Totally has just reported [record results](#), with revenues up 7.4% to £114m, as the impact of the pandemic on revenue from private patients was mitigated by a substantial rise in NHS work.

[I work in an NHS Covid ward – and I feel so angry](#)

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Most private providers have now signed a four-year deal with NHS England worth up to £10bn to help clear the NHS backlog. The final cost will depend on how many procedures are carried out.

What has been noticeable in recent months is that cooperation during the pandemic, alongside the need to clear the operations backlog, has made NHS trusts a lot less squeamish about working with the private sector. Companies such as Spire are hoping for a new culture of collaboration, while Chris Hopson, the chief executive of NHS Providers, has talked about “an opportunity for new ways of doing things that could involve the private sector more”.

Meanwhile 5.1 million people are waiting for NHS operations in England, 385,000 of whom have been waiting more than a year. The pandemic didn’t cause the problem: waiting lists have been growing since around 2013, driven by funding shortfalls, chronic workforce shortages and serious underinvestment in equipment such as scanners. Patients enduring chronic and debilitating pain, such as those waiting for hip and knee surgery, can be left for months with low quality of life, so the incentive to go private is high.

The cost of a routine operation – perhaps £13,000 for hip surgery or £2,500 for cataract surgery on one eye – is within the reach of many older middle-class patients. The operation may be carried out by the same surgeon they would have had in the NHS; and they will often have a better experience, such as having a single room and seeing the same doctor.

In October, as the pandemic began to surge again, HCA Healthcare reported a jump of 25-35% in self-pay patients coming from the south and south-west to its London hospitals. According to the health intelligence company LaingBuisson, self-pay healthcare is showing significant growth and is predicted to expand by another 10-15% over the next three years.

Last autumn, Compare the Market said there had been an average 40% increase in year-on-year private health insurance sales over the previous seven months. About 4 million people in the UK have private medical insurance, mainly through their employer.

The impact of the pandemic on NHS waiting lists [worsened health inequalities](#), with a 31% fall in completed treatments in the most deprived areas of England compared with 26% in the least deprived. The flight to private healthcare means the poorest communities are hit three times: people are more likely to be chronically ill, more likely to be waiting for an operation and have no chance of buying their way out.

The growth of a more mixed healthcare economy, in terms of both NHS treatment carried out in private sector and self-payers, is starting to normalise the idea of private healthcare. The numbers are still relatively small, and even people with comprehensive insurance are likely to need the NHS, but a waiting list with more than 5 million people on it undermines the idea of being free at the point of need. There is not much virtue in being free if the need cannot be met.

If wealthier people start to buy their way out of trouble in significant numbers they will be less willing to pay taxes to improve the NHS. With public spending under intense pressure, and key figures such as Boris Johnson and Michael Gove having [strongly criticised](#) the NHS in the past, there is a danger that we will look back on the pandemic as the moment that the seeds of a two-tier healthcare system were really sown.

- Richard Vize is a public policy commentator and analyst.
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Boris Johnson

Martin Rowson on Boris Johnson's summer assault – cartoon

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US Capitol attack

‘This is how I’m going to die’: police tell panel of trauma of Capitol attack

Panel opened first hearing with focus on law enforcement officers who were attacked and beaten as rioters broke into US Capitol

- [US politics – live updates](#)



Chairman Bennie Thompson, center, presides over the House select committee hearing with Liz Cheney next to him. Photograph: Bill O’Leary/AP

Chairman Bennie Thompson, center, presides over the House select committee hearing with Liz Cheney next to him. Photograph: Bill O’Leary/AP

[Joan E Greve](#) in Washington and [Adam Gabbatt](#)

Tue 27 Jul 2021 15.28 EDT

Law enforcement officers have described fearing for their lives during the January attack on the US Capitol and living with “constant trauma” during the first hearing of the House investigation into the deadly assault, with prominent Republicans boycotting proceedings in an attempt to undermine any findings.

In harrowing testimony on Tuesday, the officers described being crushed by violent pro-Trump rioters, threatened with their own service weapons, and being target by racist abuse.

The special committee established by the Democratic House speaker, [Nancy Pelosi](#), convened to investigate the circumstances surrounding the 6 January insurrection in Washington DC, when hundreds of Donald Trump’s supporters stormed the Capitol in an attempt to interrupt the certification of Joe Biden as president.

[The 6 January special committee – everything you need to know](#)

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“We must know what happened here at the Capitol,” Congresswoman Liz Cheney, a Trump critic and one of just two [Republicans](#) on the select committee, said in opening remarks.

“We must also know what happened every minute of that day in the White House – every phone call, every conversation, every meeting leading up to, during and after the attack. Honorable men and women have an obligation to step forward.”

The panel opened its first hearing on Tuesday with a focus on law enforcement officers who were attacked as rioters broke into the Capitol building, putting a human face on the violence and discrediting claims by Republican lawmakers that have played down or outright denied the severity of the attack.



Sgt Aquilino Gonell of the US Capitol police, Michael Fanone of the Metropolitan police, Daniel Hodges of the Metropolitan police and Harry Dunn of the US Capitol police are sworn in. Photograph: Getty Images

Sgt Aquilino Gonell of the US Capitol police (USCP) described how he was “crushed” by pro-Trump insurrectionists as he and colleagues tried to stop them entering the building.

“I could feel myself losing oxygen and recall thinking to myself, ‘This is how I’m going to die,’ defending this entrance,” he told the committee.

“For most people, January 6 happened for a few hours,” Gonell said. “But for those of us who were in the thick of it, it has not ended. That day continues to be a constant trauma for us.”

Cheney asked Gonell about Trump’s claims that the crowd was full of “loving” people.

“I’m still recovering from those hugs and kisses,” Gonell replied. “All of them were telling us ‘Trump sent us’,” he added, dismissing Trump’s baseless claims that leftwing demonstrators or the FBI were behind the attack.

02:36

Capitol riot police officer: 'I was at risk of being killed with my own firearm' – video

[Michael Fanone](#), a Metropolitan police department officer who suffered a heart attack and a brain injury after being beaten by Trump supporters on 6 January, recounted how insurrectionists had threatened to use his gun against him.

"I was grabbed, beaten, Tased, all while being called a traitor to my country. I was at risk of being stripped of and killed with my own firearm, as I heard chants of 'Kill him with his own gun,'" Fanone said. "I can still hear those words in my head today."

Rebuking Republican lawmakers who have boycotted the hearings, Fanone said: "I feel like I went to hell and back to protect them and the people in this room."

Pounding his fist on the table in front of him, he said: "Too many are now telling me that hell doesn't exist or that hell actually wasn't that bad. The indifference shown to my colleagues is disgraceful."

US Capitol police officer Harry Dunn, who is Black, said he was repeatedly called the N-word as he sought to protect the Capitol.

"Nobody had ever, ever called me a [N-word] while wearing the uniform of a Capitol police officer," Dunn said, saying the racial slur.

Dunn closed his testimony by expressing pride in his fellow USCP officers and encouraging them to protect their mental health as they deal with the fallout of the insurrection.

The panel's chairman, the Democratic congressman Bennie Thompson of Mississippi, told the police officers: "History will remember your name," and warned there was "no place for politics and partisanship in this investigation".

Thompson said Tuesday's hearing would "set the tone" of the inquiry, which will examine Trump's role in the insurrection and the rightwing groups

involved in coordination before the attack, including the [white supremacists among them](#).

It will also look at the security failures that allowed hundreds of people to breach the Capitol and send lawmakers running for their lives. Some of those who broke in were calling for the deaths of Pelosi and then-Vice President Mike Pence, who was hiding just feet away from the mob.

The investigation into the 6 January attack has become a fiercely partisan issue in Washington. The House voted in May for an independent investigation that would have been evenly split between [Democrats](#) and Republicans, but the Senate blocked the move.

That left Pelosi to create a select committee to conduct the investigation. Kevin McCarthy, the Republican House minority leader, picked five Republicans to sit on the committee, but Pelosi rejected Jim Jordan and Jim Banks' nominations, prompting McCarthy to [withdraw all five nominees](#). Both Jordan and Banks are staunch Trump allies who deny his role in the attack and objected to the certification of Biden's win.

[Capitol attack committee chair vows to investigate Trump: ‘Nothing is off limits’](#)

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Cheney had already been named to the panel by Pelosi. The speaker went around McCarthy again to [appoint Republican congressman Adam Kinzinger](#), who is also a Trump critic, to the committee.

Pelosi said Kinzinger “and other Republicans have expressed an interest to serve on the select committee … The two that I would not appoint are people who would jeopardise the integrity of the investigation, and there’s no way I would tolerate their antics as we seek the truth.”

Kinzinger and Cheney were among the [10 House Republicans who voted for Trump’s second impeachment](#), and the pair were the only Republicans who voted to form the special committee. Both have cited Trump’s false claims of election fraud as a factor in the insurrection.

Before the hearing, McCarthy again called the process a “sham”.

Kinzinger told reporters on Tuesday that “for too long, we’ve been pretending that January 6 didn’t happen.” He said he never expected to be in this position, “but when you have these conspiracies that continue to thrive, when you have lies and misinformation that continue to thrive, it’s essential for us as members of Congress to get to the answers.”

Shortly after the insurrection, almost every Republican denounced the violent mob, and Trump himself, who had told his supporters to “fight like hell” to overturn his election defeat. But many have changed their tone in recent months. Some have gone further, with the Georgia congressman Andrew Clyde saying a video of the rioters looked like “a normal tourist visit”.

Last week, a Florida man became the first person to be sentenced to prison for his role in the attack. More than 570 people have been charged with taking part in the riot, during and after which seven people died.

Associated Press contributed to this report

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Indigenous women of the Misak community and others protest in Bogota, Colombia, in June. Photograph: Daniel Garzon Herazo/NurPhoto/Rex/Shutterstock

Indigenous Americans demand a reckoning with brutal colonial history

Indigenous women of the Misak community and others protest in Bogota, Colombia, in June. Photograph: Daniel Garzon Herazo/NurPhoto/Rex/Shutterstock

From Canada to Colombia, protests erupt against legacies of violence, exploitation and cultural erasure

by [John Bartlett](#) in Santiago, Natalie Alcoba in Buenos Aires, [Joe Parkin Daniels](#) in Bogotá and [Leyland Cecco](#) in Toronto

Tue 27 Jul 2021 05.30 EDT

As statues of [queens](#) and [conquistadors](#) are tumbled amid protests across North and South America, Indigenous people are pushing for a region-wide reckoning with colonialism's bitter legacy of massacre and cultural erasure.

From the Arctic Circle to Tierra del Fuego, Indigenous Americans have taken aim at the Catholic Church, national governments and other powerful institutions.

[This Canada Day, let's remember: this country was built on genocide | Mumilaaq Qaqqaq](#)

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In Canada, the horrifying discovery of the [unmarked graves of Indigenous children](#) near former Catholic boarding schools has prompted widespread calls for [a reassessment of the country's colonial history](#) and the structural inequalities that persist today.

In Chile and Colombia, [uprisings over social inequity](#) have also been accompanied by demands for a reconsideration of national narratives and the lingering aftermath of conquest.

And while contexts and histories vary drastically across the region, a common experience of marginalization, poverty and low life expectancy has prompted many Indigenous people to draw parallels across colonial borders.

After her election last month as president of [Chile's new constituent assembly](#), Elisa Loncón, a member of Chile's largest Indigenous group, the Mapuche, [expressed solidarity with First Nations and decried Canada's residential schools](#), where thousands of children died over the course of a century. "It is disgraceful how colonialism has attacked the future of the original nations," she said.



Elisa Loncón, a professor at the University of Santiago and member of the Mapuche people, will direct the drafting of the country's new constitution. Photograph: Elvis Gonzalez/EPA

Loncón will preside over the drafting of a new Chilean constitution to replace the Pinochet-era document, which does not even recognise the existence of the country's Indigenous people, even though they make up around 12.8% of the population.

"It is possible, brothers, sisters, and friends, to found Chile anew," she said.

Across the Andes in the Bolivian capital of La Paz, feminist activists recently marched to the defaced statue of Christopher Columbus,

denouncing the genocide perpetrated on Indigenous communities.

It was something they had done many times before, said Adriana Guzmán, an Aymara member of the Communitarian Antipatriarchal Feminism of Bolivia group, but the discovery of the graves in Canada added fuel to their rage.

“One assumes, because of colonialism, that Canada is perfection,” she said. “But that’s colonial logic. It erases the memory of our communities [and] it erases its own crimes.”

Quick Guide

Canada's residential schools

Show



Canada's residential schools

Over the course of 100 years, more than 150,000 Indigenous children were taken from their families to attend state-funded Christian boarding schools in an effort to forcibly assimilate them into Canadian society.

They were given new names, forcibly converted to Christianity and prohibited from speaking their native languages. Thousands died of disease, neglect and suicide; many were never returned to their families.

The last residential school closed in 1996.

Nearly three-quarters of the 130 residential schools were run by Roman Catholic missionary congregations, with others operated by the Presbyterian, Anglican and the United Church of Canada, which is today the largest Protestant denomination in the country.

In 2015, a historic [Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#) which concluded that the residential school system [amounted to a policy of cultural genocide](#).

Survivor testimony made it clear that sexual, emotional and physical abuse were rife at the schools. And the trauma suffered by students was often passed down to younger generations – a reality magnified by systematic inequities that persist across the country.

Dozens of First Nations [do not have access to drinking water](#), and [racism against Indigenous people is rampant within the healthcare system](#). Indigenous people are overrepresented in federal prisons and [Indigenous women are killed at a rate far higher](#) than other groups.

The commissioners identified 20 unmarked gravesites at former residential schools, but they also warned that more unidentified gravesites were yet to be found across the country.

Photograph: Provincial Archives Of Saskatchewan/PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES OF SASKATCHE

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Canada's residential schools were part of a policy to forcibly assimilate Indigenous children into colonial society, under which at least 150,000 children were taken from their families over the course of a century.

“The point of residential schools was to disrupt Indigenous communities, to attack the very heart of our culture, and to assimilate our people into a settler body politic. That was necessary as part of the colonial project that is Canada. Canada had to establish itself by destabilizing Indigenous communities,” said Courtney Skye, research fellow at the First Nations-led Yellowhead Institute.

“Part of that was taking children from their families, displacing [Indigenous peoples](#) ... all of these policy tools that dispossessed Indigenous people of their land. From there, Canada was able to more easily exploit natural resources and build its economy.”

The recent discovery of more than 1,300 unmarked graves at the sites of former schools sparked an outpouring of revulsion in which protesters threw paint at churches and [pulled down statues of Queen Victoria and Queen Elizabeth II](#).



A statue of Egerton Ryerson, one of the architects of Canada's indigenous boarding school system, was felled in June following a protest on the campus of the university that bears his name in downtown Toronto. Photograph: Olivier Monnier/AFP/Getty Images

Such incidents mirrored protests across the Americas, where Indigenous people have increasingly [pushed back against the routine veneration of colonisers](#).

When Chile erupted in protest in 2019, [statues of Spanish conquistadores were torn down](#) and, in some cases, replaced with representations of Indigenous heroes.

Similarly, as [Colombia](#) was convulsed by anti-poverty demonstrations this year, statues of colonisers were again targeted by protesters, who said the statues represent an invading class of warmongers and tyrants.

“These [are] symbols that represent slavery and oppression,” said Tata Pedro Velasco, a leader of the Misak people from the Cauca province. On the first day of a nationwide strike Misak protesters in Cali pulled down a statue of Sebastián de Belalcázar, a Spaniard who founded the city (as well as the Ecuadorian capital of Quito) but has long been despised by many Andean Indigenous communities.

In late June, a monument to explorer Christopher Columbus was toppled in Barranquilla, a major city on Colombia’s Caribbean coast. Authorities also removed a statue of the South American independence hero Simón Bolívar, worried that it could also come tumbling down.



Protestors topple a statue of Christopher Columbus during a demonstration against government in Barranquilla, Colombia, on 28 June 2021. Photograph: Mery Grandos Herrera/AFP/Getty Images

“As Indigenous people, it’s important to start to re-evaluate ‘official history’ – and to understand that the colonisation of Indigenous peoples continues five centuries later across the [Americas](#),” said Velasco.

Lourdes Albornoz, a social worker and member of the Diaguita community in Argentina’s Tucumán province, said events in Canada made her recall her own people’s experience.

Just a generation ago, wealthy landowners in Tucumán would routinely take young Indigenous women to work in their homes, she said. “They would take half the cows, half the harvest – and the young women,” she said.

The girls were given religious names, new birthdays to correspond with those of Catholic saints, and were signed up as members of their abductors’ preferred political parties. “They lost their identity, worked for free, were exploited, sexually abused,” said Albornoz. Even today, such experiences are largely denied or ignored, she said.

“We are embracing our brothers and sisters in Canada, because it must be a very tough moment for those communities,” she said. “They are not alone. We are embracing them and suffering with them. But from that pain, and those tears, we will be reborn.”

Canada’s government has asked for forgiveness from Indigenous peoples for its actions, but Albornoz said that its colonial practices continue across Latin America, this time in the form of mining projects – often in territories claimed by Indigenous people and which have contributed to environmental degradation, forced displacement and [human rights abuses](#).

Across the Americas, Indigenous people fare significantly worse in the vast majority of indicators, from multidimensional poverty to life expectancy and employment prospects.

Beyond symbolic measures and feeble declarations of solidarity, many are now demanding concrete, tangible improvements to their lives after centuries of seeing their demands marginalised or dismissed.

“Despite the various phases of colonisation Latin America has endured, the cultural fabric of the founding nations has not been destroyed,” said Fernando Pairicán, a Mapuche historian at the University of Santiago.

“For every act of genocide, there needs to be economic, political and social reparation. Only then can we move towards self-determination, equality and the restitution of lands to Indigenous peoples across the Americas.”

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Exhibition tells story of Spanish children used as vaccine ‘fridges’ in 1803

Francisco Javier de Balmis used children to keep smallpox vaccine fresh on journey to Spain’s colonies



Francisco Javier de Balmis led an expedition to vaccinate against smallpox in Latin America and the Philippines. Photograph: Prisma Archivo/Alamy

Francisco Javier de Balmis led an expedition to vaccinate against smallpox in Latin America and the Philippines. Photograph: Prisma Archivo/Alamy

[Stephen Burgen](#) in Barcelona

Tue 27 Jul 2021 05.10 EDT

When Francisco Javier de Balmis set off from [Spain](#) in 1803 to vaccinate the people in Spain's colonies against smallpox he had no means of keeping the vaccine fresh, so he used children as his "refrigerators".

An exhibition of documents relating to Balmis's voyage has opened at the *Archivo General de Indias* in Seville and will be on display until 15 September.

From the documents, we now know for the first time the names and ages of the children who made what was perhaps the first international humanitarian mission possible.

Manuel Álvarez, who curated the exhibition, described it as "a homage to all the health workers who have struggled against Covid-19".

Smallpox was killing millions in 18th century Europe but in 1796 the English physician Edward Jenner discovered that a bovine version of the disease worked as a vaccine.



Spanish military doctor Francisco Javier Balmis (1753-1819). Photograph: Spanish Military

Balmis, who was a military and court doctor, persuaded Spain's King Carlos IV, whose daughter had died of smallpox, to fund the royal philanthropic

vaccine expedition to Spain's colonies.

The objective, visionary in its day, was not only to vaccinate the population but to set up vaccination centres in order to control any future outbreaks of the disease.

The expedition set off from A Coruña in north-west Spain with 22 orphans on board. The nine-year-old son of Isabel Zendal, who ran the local orphanage, was among them. Zendal served as nurse and carer on the trip.

The vaccine survived for only 12 days in vitro so Balmis's technique was to infect two children every 10 days with the bovine version of smallpox and then take the serum from their pustules to infect two more children, and so on until they arrived at their destination with fresh serum with which to vaccinate people.

The children got sick but didn't die and, although it seems barbaric, at the time it was considered quite normal. Jenner himself first tested his vaccine on an eight-year-old boy.

The original 22 children stayed in Mexico, where Balmis recruited a further 26 for the trip from Acapulco to the Philippines. The documents show that the children, all Mexican boys aged from four to 14, were handed over by their parents in exchange for payment. Some are described as "Spanish" and others as *mestizos* (mixed blood).

Three are listed as of unknown parentage and in the case of five others only their mother's name appears in the documentation.

By the end of the campaign, about 300,000 people in the Canaries, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, Mexico, the Philippines and China had received the vaccine for free.

"The strategy adopted by Balmis was a cheap, ingenious and pioneering solution to ensure that the vaccine arrived in the Americas in good condition," said Alberto García-Basteiro, an epidemiologist and associate professor at the University of Barcelona.

“It’s likely that nowadays the strategy of using children to transport the vaccine would be criticised on ethical grounds, but the impact and benefits of the expedition cannot be denied.”

The Madrid hospital named after Isabel Zendal has played a key role during the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2020, when the Madrid government dispatched 2,500 soldiers to disinfect the region’s care homes, they dubbed it Operation Balmis.

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Chevron

Lawyer Steven Donziger found guilty of withholding evidence in Chevron case

Lawyer now faces six months in jail following a decades-long battle against the oil company



Steven Donziger, a lawyer who won a multi-billion dollar judgment against Chevron on behalf of Ecuadorian villagers, has been found guilty of six contempt charges. Photograph: Brendan McDermid/Reuters

Steven Donziger, a lawyer who won a multi-billion dollar judgment against Chevron on behalf of Ecuadorian villagers, has been found guilty of six contempt charges. Photograph: Brendan McDermid/Reuters

[Oliver Milman](#)

[@olliemilman](#)

Mon 26 Jul 2021 21.55 EDT

Steven Donziger, the lawyer who has spearheaded a lengthy fight against Chevron over pollution in the Amazon rainforest, has been found guilty of

criminal contempt by a US federal judge in the latest twist in his decades-long legal battle with the oil company.

On Monday, US district judge Loretta Preska ruled that Donziger was guilty of six contempt charges brought against him for refusing to hand over evidence in a complex legal wrangle that has pitted the lawyer directly against Chevron.

[The lawyer who took on Chevron – and now marks his 600th day under house arrest](#)

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In [a 245-page judgment](#), Preska said that Donziger had “repeatedly and willfully” defied court orders and that “at stake here is the fundamental principle that a party to a legal action must abide by court orders or risk criminal sanctions”. Preska added that “it’s time to pay the piper”, with Donziger now facing six months in jail. The lawyer called the ruling a “sad day for the rule of law, for our democracy, and for our planet” and that he will appeal.

Donziger has already [spent nearly two years](#) confined to his New York City apartment by court order, a monitoring bracelet that he calls “the black claw” fitted to his ankle at all times, and his detention has gained him the support of environmental activists and celebrities such as Alec Baldwin and the Pink Floyd singer Roger Waters, who insist he has been persecuted.

“I expected this and I think we’ve got a very strong chance on appeal. I expect to be vindicated,” Donziger told the Guardian after the verdict. “The whole thing was rigged, it was a sham. I’m frankly embarrassed for my country that this has happened.”

The sprawling legal saga stems from a 2011 judgment in Ecuador where Chevron was ordered to pay \$9.5bn in damages to people, represented by Donziger, blighted by decades of polluted air and water allegedly caused by the company’s oil drilling operations. Chevron has never paid this, claiming “shocking levels of misconduct” by Donziger and the Ecuadorian judiciary.

Chevron has accused Donziger of bribing the judge in Ecuador and ghostwriting the final verdict, an accusation he strenuously denies. However, in 2016 a US judge, Lewis Kaplan, found that Donziger was involved in racketeering activity and granted Chevron seizure of the lawyer's laptop and phone. When Donziger appealed against this, he was hit with the contempt charges and placed under house arrest.

In an unusual move, a private law firm that has previously done work for Chevron was hired to prosecute Donziger after federal government prosecutors declined to take up the case.

"I wasn't prosecuted in a fair process, I didn't have a jury and I think Chevron is behind all of this," Donziger said.

Preska's judgment explicitly denies the lawyer has been the victim of a conspiracy, however. "Contrary to Mr Donziger's assertion that his conviction was 'pre-ordained', the court finds him guilty on each count for one reason and one reason only: Mr Donziger did that with which he is charged. Period," she wrote.

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[Tokyo Olympic Games 2020](#)

Tom Daley and Matty Lee pip China to win Olympic diving gold at last

- British pair triumph in synchronised 10-metre platform
- Britain's Daley adds gold to bronzes won in Rio and London

01:16

'I am gay and an Olympic champion': Tom Daley wants to inspire LGBT community – video

[Barney Ronay at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre](#)

[@barneyronay](#)

Mon 26 Jul 2021 03.14 EDT

This was a sublime Olympic performance from [Tom Daley](#) and Matty Lee. On a day of vertiginous pressure at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre the British

pair took gold in the men's synchronised 10m platform dive by 1.23 points from China's world champions Cao Yuan and Chen Asien.

It was a victory sealed only as the last drop of spray from the final dive hit the water, prelude to a tortuous wait for confirmation that the Chinese pair's final dive had been insufficiently brilliant to bridge the gap to Daley and Lee. As the scores flashed up there were shouts and leaps at the side of the pool, followed by a few moments, for Daley, of sitting there to let it all sink in.

['I was blubbering': Daley overwhelmed after winning Olympic gold with Lee](#)

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Lee is diving in his first Games. A gold medal is a stunning achievement. For Daley the result means that 14 years, four Games and all manner of twists, turns and pikes on from his emergence as dive-boy curiosity, a prodigy of the UK Sport machine, he finally has gold to go with two bronzes.

There were damp eyes above Daley's mask as he stood with Lee on the podium to listen to the national anthem, both men looking drained but uncontainably happy.

All it took was one moment of weakness in a relentless surge of six back-to-back high-wire dives, as the Chinese pair blinked at the midpoint. Daley and Lee were ruthless in response, retaining top spot despite a furious counterattack.

They had applied pressure from their opening dive, turning their midway spot in the rota – China dived last – to their advantage. The first thing to note about the 10-metre platform is that 10 metres is very high. It may not sound it, but the board looked like a lonely ledge as Daley and Lee paused before the opening round, alone in all that air, ready for the first leap into a version of the future they had planned together for the past three years.



Tom Daley and Matty Lee with their gold medals after a day of high drama at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre. Photograph: Jean Catuffe/Getty Images

There were yelps and cheers as they hit the water, the men disappearing with the familiar thunk of a successful entry. The plan had been to start solidly, to prevent China opening a commanding lead. Cao and Chen were always the favourites here, the alpha dogs of this pool, with a sense of swagger and flash even in their walk to the board.

They produced a stunning opening dive. Daley and Lee were second in the first round. After which the dives just kept coming, an unceasing carousel without time to breathe or think. It is dive roulette, a moment simply to perform, to dive like nobody's watching – except millions of people are, and every session, every break, every hand along the away is suddenly narrowing to this point.

Daley's and Lee's second dive was a back one-and-a-half somersault with a half twist. They nailed it again. The numbers were good. The Chinese numbers, moments later, were sensational.

At which point Daley and Lee experienced their one tremor of doubt. Their third dive was their weakest, the entry off. The Chinese pair seized the moment. Lee and Daley were 15 points off the lead.

It was here where things began to stir at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre, with its stands empty apart from a single shrill section of officials and support staff.

Diving is a strange sport in this regard. It is both loud and silent, an emotional chiaroscuro, the spikes of boisterous excitement emerging from moments of total concentration. Its brilliance as a spectacle lies in the sight of those perfect human shapes being executed in a space humans really are not supposed to occupy at all, with no resistance other than gravity and that approaching blue.

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Lee and Daley nailed their fourth dive, a back three-and-a-half somersault. And then, from nowhere, China cracked. The execution was off, the timing gone, the pool drenched in spray. The numbers were crushingly low.

With that Britain were six points in the lead and two dives from gold.

The British coach, Jane Figueiredo, said this had been the plan, to apply pressure and see how their main rivals dealt with it.

Daley and Lee's last dive was nervelessly executed. Then came a terrible two minutes as the arena waited for the final act. China needed an improbable 102. They managed 101.52. That was it: gold for Daley and Lee. Aleksandr Bondar and Viktor Minibaev took bronze for ROC.

There will be talk that Daley has now erased some lingering stain on his record. This is to misunderstand the life of an athlete, and indeed to misunderstand the sport and Daley's place in it. Diving is an impossibly high-stakes discipline, one that China has dominated through his lifetime.

[Tom Daley medals](#)

[Daley's individual bronze at London 2012](#) was a stunning performance after a poor first round and under crushing levels of pressure. The night of that early wobble he walked through the mixed zone and faced a sceptical press, curious for a sniff of collapse from the poster boy. He smiled and said: "Don't worry, this will be fine. I can do it."

Daley is a proper competitor. But that bronze took a piece out of him, as has his own public existence, the online taunts, the bereavement, the demands of living his personal life in public.

Daley now has the chance for individual gold in the 10m platform that starts on Friday. He will dive free of the pressure that has lingered over him since he was a very young boy, with the benefits and burden of resources funnelled his way, required to go on trips away from home that he hated, presented as a kind of medal-boy, glory in the bank, another product of the machine.

That demand has now been satisfied. Whatever happens from here, for one morning in Tokyo Daley and Lee were untouchable.

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[Tokyo Olympic Games 2020](#)

Tom Daley ‘incredibly proud to say I am gay and an Olympic champion’

- Daley and Matty Lee pip China to synchronised diving gold
- ‘I hope any LGBT person can see ... you can achieve anything’

01:16

'I am gay and an Olympic champion': Tom Daley wants to inspire LGBT community – video

[Barney Ronay at Tokyo Aquatics Centre](#)

[@barneyronay](#)

Mon 26 Jul 2021 06.30 EDT

“I feel incredibly proud to say that I am a gay man and also an Olympic champion. When I was younger I didn’t think I’d ever achieve anything

because of who I was. To be an Olympic champion now just shows that you can achieve anything.”

Still damp from the pool, still wide-eyed [at winning Olympic gold with his diving partner, Matty Lee](#), 13 years on from his first Games, Tom Daley still had time to bring the house down again.

[Tom Daley and Matty Lee pip China and ROC to win Olympic diving gold at last](#)

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Daley and Lee had produced a stunning performance in the synchronised 10m platform to take the gold medal by one point ahead of the supercharged Chinese pair Cao Yuan and Chen Aisen.

For Daley this was also a very public moment of fulfilment after bronze medals in London and Rio, a period that has coincided with marriage to the film producer Dustin Lance Black and the birth of their son, Robbie.

In the glow of victory, Daley spoke with startling clarity about the pressures he has faced in the course of a life lived in a uniquely pitched public glare.

“In terms of out athletes, there are more openly out athletes at these [Olympic Games](#) than any Olympic Games previously. I came out in 2013 and when I was younger I always felt like the one that was alone and different and didn’t fit. There was something about me that was never going to be as good as what society wanted me to be. I hope that any young LGBT person out there can see that no matter how alone you feel right now, you are not alone. You can achieve anything.”

[Team GB diving medals](#)

If Daley was confirming a message he has been happy to share with the world for some time, there was added significance in delivering it at a table between Chinese athletes and Russian bronze medallists, with the media of both nations broadcasting his words. Same-sex marriage is not legal in either country.

A Chinese journalist asked Daley about his son; he replied with a long, happy paternal answer. “It’s been the most amazing, life-changing journey for me and I can’t wait to go and see them, my husband and my son, to give them a big hug and be able to celebrate on this incredible journey that it has been.”

For all its flaws, its phoney platitudes about peace, love and understanding, the Olympic Games is unique in providing such moments of unscripted cultural exchange – and doing so in the course of an ad hoc exchange about winning a gold medal.

Daley can now return home having fulfilled that Olympic obsession, but denied that retirement was looming. “You want to win an Olympic gold medal but never think you actually will. I will carry on, but I will definitely take a break. There are some beverages with my name on it to celebrate with my husband and family.

[Tom Daley diving interactive](#)

“This means an incredible amount. All athletes put in such hard work and dedication into our performances. To be an Olympic champion after four attempts at it feels extremely special.”

For Lee, a gold medal at his first Olympics is a stunning achievement. To win gold with Daley, the godfather of modern British diving, is an added gloss. “I was a massive fan of Tom’s. I remember running up to him and asking for photos and signatures. I think I was about nine.

“There’s a photo of me and Tom around the year of Beijing and it’s funny because I’m just a kid with a big head. We put them together with another photo that’s more recent. It’s funny how things change. All those years I was a fan, a little kid looking up to him. Now we’re best mates and Olympic gold medallists.”

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Daley was also asked about his father, who died when he was 17, and who was a major support in those early years. “When he passed away in 2011 it was extremely difficult for me because he never saw me win an Olympic medal, get married, have a child. He never got to teach me to drive, have a pint down the pub.

“None of that was ever a thing so to finally become an Olympic champion, especially after Rio 2016 where I was extremely disappointed with my individual performance. After that, my husband said to me that my story doesn’t end here and that our child was meant to watch me become an Olympic champion.”

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[Tokyo Olympic Games 2020](#)

Pidcock wins cross-country bike gold despite recovering from collarbone break

- Yorkshireman broke his collarbone in May after being hit by car
- ‘I haven’t done a good race since’ crash, says Olympic champion



Tom Pidcock of Great Britain on his way to winning gold in the men's Olympics cross-country mountain bike race. Photograph: Christian Hartmann/Reuters

Tom Pidcock of Great Britain on his way to winning gold in the men's Olympics cross-country mountain bike race. Photograph: Christian Hartmann/Reuters

[Martin Belam](#)

Mon 26 Jul 2021 08.32 EDT

Tom Pidcock could have been forgiven for thinking his Tokyo dream was over in May when he sustained a broken collarbone from being hit by a car while out on a training ride. However, on Monday he joined the gold rush, winning Great Britain's third gold medal with a dominant ride in the men's cross-country mountain bike race in Izu.

[Adam Peaty urges UK after Tokyo gold: 'Now we've got to switch our mindset'](#)

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The 21-year-old Yorkshireman started on the fourth row but quickly got himself into the leading group and powered past the Swiss pair of Mathias

Flückiger and Nino Schurter to take control on the fourth of seven laps.

Flückiger was the only man left in touch but Pidcock kept the power down to win by 20 seconds, even having time to snatch a union flag, which he held aloft as he crossed the line, from the small crowd of spectators allowed into the course.

“I’m always better when I take control. I take my own lines, my own speed. Once we started I was fine, all the nerves kind of went and I concentrated on the race,” he said.

“It’s nothing like any other race. The Olympics just transcends any sport. You compete and represent your country and everyone in your country is behind you, no matter what sports they like. It’s just national pride, it’s unbelievable.”

In May, Pidcock had been riding downhill in Andorra when his bike was hit from the side by a driver. His Ineos Grenadiers coach, Kurt Bogaerts, said Pidcock had been catapulted over the car and pictures emerged of his bike snapped into two pieces by the impact. The crash caused him to withdraw from the Tour de Suisse.



Britain's Thomas Pidcock crosses the finish line to win the gold medal in the cycling mountain bike men's cross-country event. Photograph: Greg

Baker/AFP/Getty Images

Covid restrictions were already limiting his training and race opportunities, but the Leeds-born rider prepared for the conditions in Tokyo by training in a super-heated tent in the spare room of his house.

“I haven’t done a good race since. I’ve trained really hard, I knew I was in great shape, but there’s always doubt when I haven’t performed in a race.

“Once the race started, I knew I was in a good place. The heat, I mean, I didn’t feel good but everyone told me no one will feel good.”

Pidcock adds the Olympic mountain bike title, Britain’s first, to his already extensive list of honours, having won world titles in cyclocross, road and mountain bike events at under-23 level. He is a road racer with the Ineos Grenadiers team and has been tipped as a potential future Grand Tour champion.



Mathieu van der Poel of the Netherlands (left) crashes during the men’s mountain cross-country bike race. Photograph: Thibault Camus/AP

When asked how it felt to win gold, Pidcock told Eurosport: “Not real. It’s pretty crazy that I became an Olympian and I was trying to tell myself at the start of the race it’s special just to be here.”

David Valero of Spain won the battle for bronze, 34sec down, the distance to the chasing pack underlining Pidcock's dominance.

Mathieu van der Poel, another of the pre-race favourites, pulled out after the fifth lap having crashed heavily early on. “He went in super slow and I backed off because I knew that wasn’t going to end well,” Pidcock said.

Hero. □

21 year old [@Tompid](#) claims the first ever mountain bike cross-country Olympic medal for [#TeamGB](#) and it's a gold one! [#Tokyo2020](#)
pic.twitter.com/PhJ8i5PFPC

— Team GB (@TeamGB) [July 26, 2021](#)

Ondrej Cink was another casualty, showing obvious disappointment when a puncture ended his race while he was in a promising position.

“I have high expectations on myself but I delivered,” Pidcock said. “I’ve got time on my side. I’m in no rush. I’m Olympic champion so I’m clearly not doing much wrong. I will enjoy this first.”

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Education

Poor mental health leaves pupils three times less likely to pass five GCSEs

Study warns of ‘double hit’ to prospects after Covid crisis disrupted learning and affected wellbeing



The National Centre for Social Research study found an independent association between mental difficulties in adolescence and educational attainment at age 16. Photograph: David Davies/PA

The National Centre for Social Research study found an independent association between mental difficulties in adolescence and educational attainment at age 16. Photograph: David Davies/PA

Helen Pidd

Sun 25 Jul 2021 19.01 EDT

Children experiencing poor mental health are three times less likely than their peers to pass five GCSEs including maths and English, according to a study.

[Schools in England to eschew summer ‘catch-up’ and put health first](#)

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Researchers warned that pupils are facing a “double hit” to their educational prospects as the Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted their learning and affected their mental health.

The National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) study found an independent association between mental difficulties in adolescence and educational attainment at age 16. It also discovered that mental health problems adversely affected boys’ educational attainment more than girls’. Hyperactivity disorder strongly predicted lower grades for both sexes.

Even when background factors known to affect mental health and grades were controlled for – such as poverty, child-parent relationships and parental engagement with schoolwork – children who experienced mental health difficulties were still twice as likely to not reach the benchmark of five GCSE grades A*-C (or 9-4) including maths and English.

The study, published in the BMJ Open journal, argues that improving young people’s mental health can narrow the attainment gap at GCSE level by boosting the performance of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, who are more likely to experience mental health difficulties.

Researchers analysed responses from 1,100 children aged 11-14 from the Understanding Society study and subsequently used the National Pupil Database for England to link this information to their exam results at age 16.

Dr Neil Smith, who led the study at NatCen, said: “As the school year comes to an end, young people are facing a double hit to their educational prospects. First, disruption to schooling caused by the pandemic has directly impacted on learning.

[Giving kids a break is the best way for them to 'catch up' after a year of disruption | John McMullen](#)

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“Second, the pandemic has adversely affected many [young people’s mental health](#), and it’s likely those whose mental health was affected the most by the pandemic will face greater difficulties in making up for learning time that’s been lost.”

A government spokesperson said: “We are prioritising support for children’s mental health and wellbeing alongside academic recovery, and have announced £3bn to boost learning, including almost £950m in additional funding for schools, which they can use with some flexibility to support pupils needs, such as mental health and wellbeing.

“We are also investing millions specifically for more mental health teams working with schools and colleges, including funding to train a senior mental health staff lead in up to 7,800 settings and training from mental health experts to improve how staff, pupils and parents cope with additional pressures, bereavement, anxiety, stress or other emotional responses to the pandemic.”

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Coronavirus

Virtual contact worse than no contact for over-60s in lockdown, says study

Staying in touch with friends and family via technology made many older people feel more lonely, research finds

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Many people used video calls to stay in contact with friends and family during lockdown. Photograph: Pollyana Ventura/Getty Images

Many people used video calls to stay in contact with friends and family during lockdown. Photograph: Pollyana Ventura/Getty Images

[*Amelia Hill*](#)

[@byameliahill](#)

Mon 26 Jul 2021 00.00 EDT

Virtual contact during the pandemic made many over-60s feel lonelier and more depressed than no contact at all, new research has found.

Many older people stayed in touch with family and friends during lockdown using the phone, video calls, and other forms of virtual contact. [Zoom](#) choirs, online book clubs and virtual bedtime stories with grandchildren helped many stave off isolation.

But the study, among the first to comparatively assess social interactions across households and mental wellbeing during the pandemic, found many older people experienced a greater increase in loneliness and long-term mental health disorders as a result of the switch to online socialising than those who spent the pandemic on their own.

“We were surprised by the finding that an older person who had only virtual contact during lockdown experienced greater loneliness and negative mental health impacts than an older person who had no contact with other people at all,” said [Dr Yang Hu of Lancaster University](#), who co-wrote the report, published on Monday in [Frontiers in Sociology](#).

“We were expecting that a virtual contact was better than total isolation but that doesn’t seem to have been the case for older people,” he added.

The problem, said Hu, was that older people unfamiliar with technology found it stressful to learn how to use it. But even those who were familiar with technology often found the extensive use of the medium over lockdown so stressful that it was more damaging to their mental health than simply coping with isolation and loneliness.

“Extensive exposure to digital means of communication can also cause burnout. The results are very consistent,” said Hu, who collected data from 5,148 people aged 60 or over in the UK and 1,391 in the US – both before and during the pandemic.

“It’s not only loneliness that was made worse by virtual contact, but general mental health: these people were more depressed, more isolated and felt more unhappy as a direct result of their use of virtual contact,” he said.

The report, Covid-19, Inter-household Contact and Mental Wellbeing Among Older Adults in the US and the UK, analysed national data from the [UK’s Economic and Social Research Council-funded Understanding Society Covid-19 survey](#) and the [US Health and Retirement Study](#).

Hu said more emphasis needed to be placed on safe ways to have face-to-face contact in future emergencies. There must also, he added, be a drive to bolster the digital capacity of the older age groups.

“We need to have disaster preparedness,” he said. “We need to equip older people with the digital capacity to be able to use technology for the next time a disaster like this comes around.”

The findings outlined the limitations of a digital-only future and the promise of a digitally enhanced future in response to population ageing in the longer term, added Hu.

“Policymakers and practitioners need to take measures to pre-empt and mitigate the potential unintended implications of household-centred pandemic responses for mental wellbeing,” he said.

Caroline Abrahams, charity director at [Age UK](#), welcomed the report. “We know the virtual environment can exacerbate those feelings of not actually being there with loved ones in person,” she said.

“It’s essential therefore that government makes preventing and tackling loneliness a top policy priority, backed up with adequate funding.

“It’s not over the top to point out that in the worst cases, loneliness can kill in the sense that it undermines resilience to health threats of many kinds, as well as leading to older people in the twilight of their lives losing all hope, so they lack a reason to carry on.”

Patrick Vernon, associate director at the [Centre for Ageing Better](#), said he saw many examples of older people using technology to stay connected in

“really positive ways”.

But he was also doubtful: “We know that even for those who are online, lack of skills and confidence can prevent people from using the internet in the ways that they’d like to.”

Previous research by the Centre for Ageing Better found that since the pandemic, there had been significant increases in the use of digital technology among those aged 50-70 years who were already online.

But there are still 3 million people across the UK who are offline, with a significant digital divide affecting low-income households. Twenty-seven per cent of people aged 50-70 with an annual household income under £25,000 were offline before the pandemic.

Vernon said: “Our research has found that some people who were offline found it difficult to connect with family, friends and neighbours during the pandemic – and even those who were online said technology didn’t compensate for missing out on physical social interactions.”

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Indonesia loosens Covid restrictions despite record deaths

World Health Organization has called on government to impose tighter virus curbs



A man wearing a face mask pushes a cart past a mural in Jakarta encouraging mask-wearing, as Indonesia relaxes its coronavirus curbs. Photograph: Willy Kurniawan/Reuters

A man wearing a face mask pushes a cart past a mural in Jakarta encouraging mask-wearing, as Indonesia relaxes its coronavirus curbs. Photograph: Willy Kurniawan/Reuters

Agence France-Presse
Sun 25 Jul 2021 19.36 EDT

Indonesia's government has said small businesses and some shopping malls can reopen despite warnings that loosening curbs could spark another Covid wave.

President Joko Widodo said measures imposed in early July would continue until 2 August as the Delta variant spreads across the country, which has been overtaking India and Brazil as the world's virus epicentre.

Official case rates are down from more than 50,000 a day. But testing rates have also declined, while the number of positive results remains high – suggesting that the virus is still spreading quickly.

But he added that “adjustments” would be made to a shutdown that closed malls, restaurants, parks and offices including in the capital Jakarta, island of Java and on holiday island Bali.

[Fears for Indonesia provinces as Delta variant spreads out of Java](#)
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Traditional markets, roadside vendors and ubiquitous open-air restaurants known as warungs would be among businesses allowed to reopen on Monday with restrictions, even in the worst-affected areas.

Shopping malls and mosques in less hard-hit areas would also get the green light to swing open their doors to limited crowds and hours. Offices would remain subject to shutdown orders, the government said.



A funeral worker wearing personal protective equipment places an offering on the coffin of a Covid-19 victim at Bebalang Crematorium in Bangli Regency, Bali, Indonesia on 25 July 2021. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

There have, however, been widespread reports of employers forcing non-essential employees to work even under the current lockdown.

Widodo, pointing to falling daily infection and hospital occupancy rates, said any loosening would be done “gradually and carefully”. The announcement came after Indonesia saw its 24-hour death toll hit a record 1,566 on Friday.

The World Health Organization has called on Indonesia to impose tighter virus curbs. Widodo’s government has been widely criticised over its handling of the pandemic and policies that appeared to prioritise the economy over public health.

“The government faces a dilemma because it has seen countries that focused on the economy risked their public health, while others that prioritised public health had their economies battered,” said Arya Fernandes, a political analyst at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies.

“So they’re trying to find a win-win solution by imposing restrictions but still keeping the economy open.”

Indonesia’s vaccination levels remain far below the government’s million-a-day target for July and only about 6% of its nearly 270 million people have been fully inoculated.

“Lifting restrictions will bring more infections and deaths,” Dicky Budiman, an Indonesia epidemiologist at Australia’s Griffith University, told AFP before Sunday’s announcement.

“Restrictions must be in place for a minimum of four weeks and [the government] needs to increase testing, tracing and treatment to have maximum results. Otherwise, it’s just the same as having no restrictions.”

Indonesia has reported more than 3.1m cases and 83,279 deaths since the pandemic began, but those official figures are widely believed to be a severe undercount.

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Blue ticked off: the controversy over the MSC fish ‘ecolabel’



A North Atlantic right whale severely entangled in ropes and buoys. Fishing gear is a leading cause of death among whales. Only 356 of the species remain. Photograph: Nature Picture Library/Alamy

A North Atlantic right whale severely entangled in ropes and buoys. Fishing gear is a leading cause of death among whales. Only 356 of the species remain. Photograph: Nature Picture Library/Alamy

The MSC’s coveted blue tick is the world’s biggest, and some say best, fishery ecolabel. So why is it in the headlines – and does it really do what it says on the tin?

Seascape: the state of our oceans is supported by



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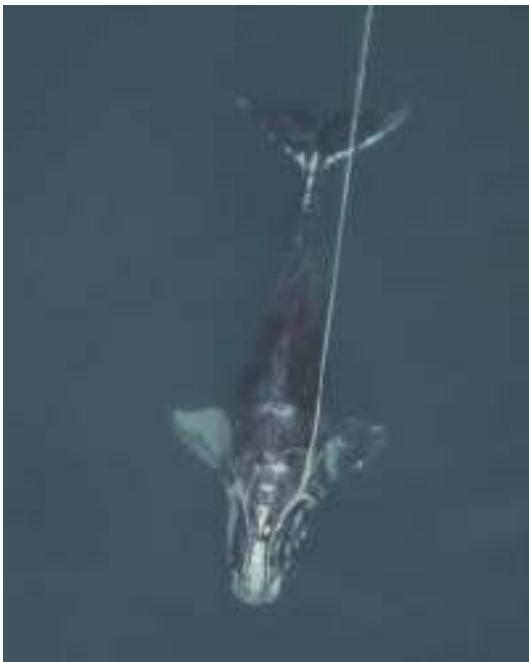
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Mon 26 Jul 2021 01.00 EDT

This month, two right whales in the Gulf of St Lawrence were found entangled in fishing gear. One, a female, was first spotted entangled off Cape Cod last year, but rescuers were not able to fully free her; the other, a male, is believed to have become [entangled in the Gulf](#).

Hunted to near extinction before a [partial whaling ban](#) in 1935, [North Atlantic right whales](#) are once more critically endangered, with only 356 left. The main threat remains human contact: entanglement in fishing gear, and ship strikes. Fatal encounters, caused in part by the whales' migratory shift into Canada's snow crab grounds, have soared: more than a tenth of the population died or were seriously injured between 2017 and 2021, mostly in Canada and New England.

One of the threats they face is from the growing crab and lobster fisheries. The whales migrate from their calving grounds in Florida to feed in [Canada](#) – putting them on a collision course with the pots and traps.



A female North Atlantic right whale entangled in fishing gear in 2010. Months later, unable to swim or feed properly, she was dead. Photograph: AP

“We’re talking millions of lines, placed in the water every year,” says Kate O’Connell, a marine wildlife consultant for the Animal Welfare Institute. “These animals are running the gauntlet – and it’s getting harder and harder for them to survive.”

When a whale gets entangled, ropes from buoys on the surface to the seabed traps can become embedded in its skin, weighing it down and leaving it unable to swim or feed properly, leading to a “really traumatising death”, O’Connell says.

But what makes it even more concerning to conservationists is that some of the fisheries they say threaten the right whale were certified as “sustainable” by the world’s largest fisheries certification programme: the [Marine Stewardship Council](#).

The MSC, which grants the right to use its well-known “blue tick” label on products, has grown from 315 certified fisheries in 2017 to 421, representing 14% of all global fish landings. In the last year its labelled products were worth \$12bn (£9.5bn). In the absence of governments looking after our

oceans, “the MSC is definitely the best we’ve got” in terms of consumer labels, according to Ruth Westcott of the environmental alliance Sustain.

The MSC hit the headlines in March, however, when the controversial Netflix documentary [Seaspiracy](#) accused it of certifying fisheries with a high level of “bycatch” – whereby species such as dolphins and turtles are caught in fishing nets – and said its certification was too easily achieved.

[North Atlantic whales shrinking due to fishing gear entanglements](#)

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The MSC denied the allegations and, alongside several other organisations, accused the film-makers of making [“misleading” claims](#). The producers deny this.

But the plight of right whales shows how fine a line the MSC has to walk, between conservationists and the fishing industry, and has reignited a fierce debate over what it means when you see a blue MSC label on a fish package in the supermarket.

Certainly, the presence of MSC-certified fisheries along the migration route of one of the world’s most endangered mammals has become emblematic of the contradictions the organisation has to confront. Even one dead whale a year brings the species closer to extinction.

[migration route of the North Atlantic right whale](#)

Another ecolabel, from the conservation group WWF, takes a different tack. This month, WWF Hong Kong [revised its seafood guide](#) to downgrade “Boston lobster”, the generic Chinese term for all two-clawed American lobster species, to “red/avoid” because its harvesting grounds overlap with the habitat of North Atlantic right whales.

Why then, conservationists say, would MSC give any fishery in the right whales’ range the green light to fish there?

Q&A

Seafood labels

Show



Marine Stewardship Council's blue tick

Seafood with a [blue tick](#) from the MSC can be traced back to a fishery that is certified as sustainable, based on whether the stock is healthy and well managed and whether the fishery is minimising its impact on other species and the wider ecosystem. To be certified fisheries must submit to and pay for an independent audit.

Marine Conservation Society's good fish guide

The UK-based MCS runs a regularly updated “good fish guide” to advise consumers on which seafood is most sustainable. The best scientific advice available is used to create a [traffic-light system](#) of ratings from 1-5, in which one is “best choice” and five is “fish to avoid”, based on the health of the population, how fishing is controlled and the effects on the wider environment. An existing certification with MSC can improve the scores.

Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch

A US-based advisory list, along the same traffic-light system as the MCS's good fish guide. It defines sustainable seafood as that which comes from sources that can maintain or increase production without jeopardising the structure and function of affected ecosystems.

WWF

WWF, like MCS and the MBA, draws from the best available scientific data to provide seafood guides of the most sustainable fish to choose in several countries, based on species type.

Photograph: Graeme Robertson/GRAEME ROBERTSON

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Thank you for your feedback.

Critics also argue that the very nature of the MSC's model, with fisheries paying to be certified, poses a conflict of interest.

Is the MSC, the world's biggest fisheries certification scheme, still fit for purpose?

The heart of the matter may come down to the fact that the MSC exists not just to protect the environment but also to ensure thriving fisheries.

Rupert Howes, MSC chief executive, says it is about "resource management", not pure conservation.



The Marine Stewardship Council logo on a tin of tuna certified as sustainable seafood. 'Nothing carries the label without traceability,' says the

MSC. Photograph: Steven May/Alamy

“We’re passionate about oceans and marine ecosystems and ocean resilience,” he says, “but we’re also deeply concerned about global food insecurity and indeed the [500m livelihoods](#) the FAO [UN Food and Agriculture Organization] estimate depend on the global seafood industry.”

He admits that the organisation is “not perfect”, and says the level of criticism is “difficult”.

“There’s a tendency for everybody to want us to resolve their particular issues,” Howes says. “And there’s a limit. We’re already complex and costly compared with other assurances.” He is at pains to point out what the MSC does well: “Nothing carries the label without traceability. Nothing carries the label without a recertification every five years, and the audit every year.”

He argues that the MSC system is vastly superior to the industry self-certifying; he also notes that, while some organisations are promoting improvement projects, many have no traceability, action plan or outcome. Unlike some other ecolabels, with “desk-based research”, Howe says, the MSC works with fisheries to “drive improvements”.

“Stakeholders sometimes feel because we’re working with the markets that it’s compromised, but it isn’t,” he says.

To be certified by MSC takes up to 18 months. First, a fishery is assessed by independent “conformity assessment bodies” (CABs). They visit the fishery, consult experts and consider all available data to decide whether it meets MSC criteria. There are several checks and balances, including third-party monitoring of the CABs and an independent evaluation of the assessment. In addition, environmental organisations can object to certification, which often results in additional conditions placed on fisheries.

The MSC is just trying to empower consumers to do their part to reward the ones that are doing the right thing

Rupert Howes, MSC chief executive

Sixteen of its 421 fisheries are currently suspended, including the Gulf of Maine lobster fishery and the Gulf of St Lawrence snow crab fishery, which has now withdrawn from the MSC altogether. In the past five years, a quarter of all new assessments ended without certification. But since 2001, MSC said it had received 51 objections before certification, which resulted in three fisheries not being certified.

Howes believes the market model is driving a more sustainable ocean. “The MSC is just trying to empower consumers to do their part to reward, in our mind, the ones that are doing the right thing.”

But the right thing means different things to different people. Scores of organisations have expressed concern that the MSC’s certification process does not properly account for bycatch, particularly of sharks and cetaceans. In 2018, a group of 66 conservation groups and academics accused the MSC of not paying enough attention to the protection of species not specifically targeted by fisheries.



Atlantic snow crabs caught in Canada. The Gulf of St Lawrence snow crab fishery, which was suspended by the MSC, has now withdrawn from the scheme altogether. Photograph: Charline Xia Newfoundland Collection/Alamy

Conservationists argue the MSC lacks a “gut check” on endangered species – and right whales are a good example. In 2017, due to threats to endangered species, O’Connell and 53 international organisations urged the MSC to reassess a number of fisheries, including the Gulf of Maine lobster fishery. The same year, the [MSC suspended a “sustainable” snow crab fishery](#), the Gulf of St Lawrence, after right whales were found dead in its fishing gear. But it did not suspend the lobster fishery until 2020, after the federal judge had ruled that US fishing authorities had overlooked the impact of lobster fisheries on right whales.

The MSC argues that certification is “part of the solution” to right whale entanglement because it drives good practice, such as monitoring and taking steps to avoid interactions. In the case of the right whales, the CABs that certified the fisheries in question have said there is “no evidence” of them causing a threat, and that it imposed conditions on some to “monitor and reduce the risk”.

Since the Gulf of St Lawrence deaths and suspension in 2017, “there have been no reports of right whale deaths within an MSC certified fishery”, according to the MSC. Its fisheries used colour-coded gear, it said, to identify which fishery was responsible for any entanglements that occur, and if issues arose it could audit and investigate quickly.

Last month, however, a paper co-authored by Amy Knowlton, a senior scientist at the Anderson Cabot Center for Ocean Life at the New England Aquarium, reported an [alarming reduction in the size of right whales](#), suggesting their stunted growth could be the result of hauling around fishing gear. It is estimated that 85% of right whales have suffered at least one entanglement.

“A lot of fisheries are in denial they are part of the problem,” says Knowlton. One of her biggest concerns, she says, is the “need to get this firm evidence before a fishery will do anything. We don’t know where the majority of these entanglements occur but we do know they occur throughout the range.”

A lot of fisheries are in denial they are part of the problem

Amy Knowlton, marine scientist

Today, six lobster and snow crab trap and pot fisheries within the right whales' range remain MSC-certified as "sustainable". But none of them should be, in O'Connell's opinion, given the cumulative risk from multiple fishing lines. The MSC's guidelines "remain weak", she says, and are in desperate need of a thorough review.

The MSC says it is doing just that: undertaking a review of the fishery standard on which it bases its certification.

As part of the review, it has proposed a "more precautionary approach" to endangered, threatened and protected (ETP) species, says Rohan Currey, the MSC's chief science and standards officer. Every marine mammal, reptile, amphibian and seabird would now all be regarded as ETP species, "irrespective of how abundant it is".

This would, says Currey, trigger a condition for certified fisheries to reduce its bycatch, or unintentional catch, of these animals.

He says the review will examine the possibility of including sharks and other species, and also look at requirements for independent data collection – for instance, using observers or electronic monitoring – as well as potentially broadening the criteria for cumulative risks to a fishery.

The review will end in 2022. However, because of the FAO's rules allowing fisheries three years to comply, any changes would not be likely to take effect until at least 2023 for new fisheries – and 2025 for those already in the scheme.

In the meantime, the MSC's own advisory council is growing concerned. Rory Crawford, of BirdLife International, one of the advisory council stakeholders, conducted a study of 23 fisheries in 2019 and found that only three were actively working to monitor and minimise bycatch.



Officials from Fisheries and Oceans Canada collect tissue from a dead North Atlantic Right Whale in the Gulf of St Lawrence. ‘These animals are running the gauntlet,’ says one conservationist. Photograph: Reuters

“Consumers cannot be fully confident that certified fish comes without impacts on non-target species, from sharks to seabirds to whales,” he concluded.

Given that standards have not changed since 2019, he says, there are still MSC-certified fisheries that are not doing their best to minimise seabird bycatch, such as bird scaring or weighted lines.

“As a consumer purchasing a blue-tick product, I’d want to know that every effort was being made to minimise or even eliminate non-target bycatch, irrespective of whether it’s a ‘critically endangered’ Tristan albatross or ‘least concern’ common guillemot,” he says.

Ruth Westcott, campaign coordinator at the environmental alliance Sustain, says that in the absence of governments looking after our oceans, “the MSC is definitely the best we’ve got” in terms of labels. While the system has failed, it was “not all doom and gloom” for the consumer, she said. “As a consumer, you can buy from fishmongers or direct from a fishery – as close to the source as possible. Then look at the MSC or MCS rating scheme.”

Crawford notes that MSC certification has resulted in improvements for some fisheries, such as the Namibian hake, where [seabird bycatch fell by 90%](#). He wants the MSC to require independent data, as well as explicit requirements that fisheries minimise bycatch of species of “least concern”, such as eider ducks and northern Fulmars, which fisheries catch in their thousands.

WWF, which co-created the MSC scheme two decades ago, is perhaps the highest-profile organisation calling for it to reform.

WWF has already lodged objections to several proposed certified fisheries, and says the MSC should be “more rigorous” in its standards, and needs to apply the “precautionary principle” as a matter of course. Last year, WWF and the Pew Charitable Trusts objected to the MSC’s certification of its first bluefin tuna fishery, saying it was [too early to declare the stock fully recovered](#). An audit of the assessment of the fishery identified “minor nonconformity” issues, including around the impartiality of the CAB, which MSC said had since been addressed.

[Ropeless fishing tech could help save rare whale, say scientists](#)
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“I would not trust all of the fisheries to be sustainable,” says Giuseppe Di Carlo, WWF’s director of the WWF Mediterranean marine initiative. “WWF expects MSC to make reforms in the standard, and also in the assurance process, the implementation of standards.”

He says there is a conflict of interest at the heart of the scheme because the fisheries pay the CABs fees of \$20,000 to \$500,000 for the assessment. The MSC also [charges retailers royalties of up to 0.5%](#) of the net wholesale value of seafood sold, for using its label.

The MSC says any risk is mitigated by numerous reviews and consultations to ensure all the evidence is fairly and correctly interpreted. A formal objection process is also available for further scrutiny, it says.

In the meantime, it is likely to be four years before most fisheries will be pressed to make any improvements at all – assuming the MSC review even

recommends they do so.

“Drastic changes are going on: increasing biodiversity loss, climate change, overfishing,” says O’Connell. “Right whales don’t have time for all this to be figured out. They’re coming to the point where they will hit a tipping point, and it will be too late.”

However, MSC insisted action was already being taken and said: “It is not a case of waiting for the outcome of the fisheries standards review to help right whales.”

As for the bigger picture, says Michelle Cho, a specialist in bycatch at the Anderson Cabot Center, the MSC needs to take a hard look at itself.

“There’s a lot of criteria they need to follow, there are the assessment bodies, and they have their guidance on how to score things,” says Cho. “But a lot of us feel that ‘gut check’ is not there.

“If things are cumulatively contributing to a species going extinct, is that really sustainable?”

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Art

Interview

‘It can’t be ignored’: Osman Yousefzada on his gigantic artwork

[Kate Finnigan](#)



Startling, cheering, unmissable ... Infinity Pattern 1 covering Selfridges Birmingham. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

Startling, cheering, unmissable ... Infinity Pattern 1 covering Selfridges Birmingham. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

He has dressed Beyoncé and Lady Gaga – and now he’s dressed Birmingham. As his ‘infinity pattern’ is unveiled, the artist talks poverty, class – and why he’s not interested in being a ‘good immigrant’

Mon 26 Jul 2021 04.49 EDT

Approaching Birmingham New Street station on the train, you'll normally spot the scaly curves of [Selfridges' landmark Future Systems-designed building](#) nestling in the cityscape. But right now, rising into the summer sky in its place, is a bright pink and black structure. Startling, cheering and entirely unmissable, Infinity Pattern 1 is a giant installation by the multidisciplinary artist Osman Yousefzada. He was formerly best known as a fashion designer, whose beautifully tailored and elegantly architectural pieces have been worn by Beyoncé, Lady Gaga and Taylor Swift. Now the 44-year-old has tailored a distinctive look for the Selfridges store, said to be the height of three jumbo jets, surrounding the building during a year of restoration.

Infinity Pattern 1 is Yousefzada's first piece of public art, selected by Birmingham's Ikon Gallery from an international shortlist. "You can read it clearly from a long way away and that was something we considered when we were selecting," says Jonathan Watkins, Ikon's director. "We wanted it to ring out from afar. The fact that Osman comes from [Birmingham](#), but is so cosmopolitan and such a Renaissance man, it's wonderful that he was the one who won."

For Yousefzada it is an opportunity to make a meaningful statement in the centre of his home town. The star-like tessellating patterns that cover the building represent for him ideas of connectivity and new possibility. "The infinity pattern is a space without borders. You have that idea in mosques, in Islamic tiles, in churches where the arches feel like they're never ending. It's hopeful."



‘It’s not a middle class idea about creativity’ ... Osman Yousefzada.
Photograph: Suki Dhanda/The Observer

Its bright colour represents the idea of “the colourful east” – he puts this phrase in air quotes. “Or the ‘colourful’ Asians or Africans who come to fortress Europe. For me, it is associated predominantly with the migrants who bring that narrative right into the middle of the city. It’s a way for me to put them at the centre, in one of the most diverse cities in the UK.”

Although he lives in London now, Yousefzada returns to Birmingham often, helping to take care of his elderly mother. He was born and raised two miles away from Selfridges in Balsall Heath, in a strict Muslim household and close-knit, working-class Pashtun community. He was well into his teens by the time he travelled the short distance to the city centre.

I wanted to bring that idea of agitators – our tongues are weapons, we sleep with snakes, we’ve got claws!

His Afghan-Pakistani parents, a carpenter and a dressmaker, both unable to read or write, immigrated to Birmingham in the 60s and 70s (his mother followed his father seven years after he arrived, when they could afford for her to travel). One of five children, his sisters were prevented from going to school once they hit puberty and Yousefzada was forbidden to draw. He was

able to read non-religious books in his bedroom only because his parents didn't know what they were.

His is a pretty mind-blowing personal story about the reality of immigration, race and poverty in Britain over the last few decades – one whose importance has been spotted by Canongate, which will publish his memoir, *The Go-Between: A Portrait of Growing Up Between Different Worlds*, next year. It's a beautifully observed and funny book about life in an almost segregated community, albeit one that was situated in the middle of a red-light district.

His work as an artist is his attempt to understand and relay the trauma of global immigration. “It’s by sheer will that you transplant yourself to the other side of the world with no skills, no education,” he says. “Like most migrant communities, you have an identity and a sense of belonging and you go somewhere and you have to navigate what that sense of belonging is. If you’ve got enough people around you can do that as a community and get through that phase. But you’re taking a massive gamble. It’s pioneering, especially if you can’t read or write.”

The installation isn’t quite complete as we walk around its exterior. It towers above the steeple and Victorian edifice of St Martin’s church. We take a brief diversion into the busy covered market where Yousefzada used to buy fabric from the stalls for his mum, who taught him how to tailor. Then we take the No 50 bus, five minutes up the road to Balsall Heath, so he can show me the neighbourhood.



‘It stems from my lived experience’ ... Osman’s ‘artsy film’ installation at Being Somewhere Else. Photograph: Courtesy of the artist/ Ikon Gallery

“Not many people living in Balsall Heath go on to dress Beyoncé,” Watkins says. “A lot of people who live there never leave. Osman’s is an extraordinary story of creative ambition.” The neglected Victorian terraces are surrounded by the former workshops and small factories that originally brought immigrants to this part of the country.

“It’s about 90% Muslim here. You don’t see a lot of white faces,” says Yousefzada, as we walk towards the chai houses and restaurants on Ladypool Road. “It’s a real closed world. It’s got more violent [since he was growing up there] because there are no opportunities. There are a lot of drugs. It used to be more mixed, but all of the African-Caribbean community has left now. With regard to poverty in this country, if you look at the statistics, the Bangladeshi and the Pakistani communities are the worst off.”

We have lunch in Chaiwala, about two minutes’ walk from his family home. Between bites of chilli paneer and masala chips, he says, “For me, class is a big thing. If you come from a peasant background you have this idea of knowing your place. That trauma or that idea of wanting to assimilate is passed on to the next generation.”

The usual pattern with families of illiterate immigrants, he says, is that their children will get better jobs than their parents. “Then their children might go to university and become bankers or accountants or lawyers or doctors and then the next generation might have the option to be creative, because their parents might allow that luxury to happen.” Yousefzada skipped two generations – studying anthropology at Soas in London in the 1990s, fashion at Central Saint Martins and an MPhil at Cambridge University, before setting up his own label in 2008. “I don’t want to make out I’m exceptional by that, but if I do have a platform I want to be able to have a wider conversation.”

He finds it easier to have that conversation through art now, rather than fashion. “My work is ethnographic but it’s not a middle-class idea about creativity, or an indulgence,” he says. “It stems from my lived experience.” His first solo show *Being Somewhere Else* at Ikon in 2018 explored the links between fashion and migration. His presentation at London fashion week in 2020 was a film about Bangladeshi garment makers (“Osman opts for artsy film instead of fashion collection” announced Women’s Wear Daily rather sneerily). He hasn’t rejected the industry entirely and is still designing clothes, but he calls himself a garment-maker now. “It’s more democratic as you’re on the same level as the rest of the team.”



Skipped generations ... a work from his solo show *Being Somewhere Else*.
Photograph: Courtesy of the artist/ Ikon Gallery

As a brown face in a predominantly white fashion industry, it wasn't easy running his own label for more than a decade. He has spoken out about racism in the industry and has observed the change since the Black Lives Matter movement. "Individual stories have started coming to the forefront, but that wasn't the case when I was around. Fashion doesn't have a conscience in a sense," he says. "If you're brown or black as a newcomer you're currently getting a lot of support, but if you were breaking ceilings before, the industry has to face its demons and deal with guilt over that and it's not interested."

Next month, as Yousefzada's work looms large outside the store, inside Selfridges will hold an exhibition, Migrant Festival, also curated by Ikon gallery and featuring, alongside other artists, some of Yousefzada's smaller-scale pieces: silk screen prints superimposed with allegorical figures that he refers to as "non-compliant brown bodies", resisting the idea of "the good immigrant". Inspired by Indian or Persian miniatures and religious iconography, they are insubordinate figures, sticking out tongues or holding a phallus. "The south Asian narrative is so often that we're not seen as agitators, but wealth accumulators – the model minority." he says. "I wanted to bring that idea of power to the work – our tongues are weapons, we sleep with snakes, we've got claws."

For the moment, it's his giant installation attracting all the attention. "The idea of the large scale is very appealing at the moment. I don't know if it's about ego," – he laughs – "but it's about making something that can't be ignored. Whether people like it or not, it's there."

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Sleep

My deep sleep quest: I tried 11 popular insomnia cures. Do any of them actually work?



Emma Beddington, in bed, awake. Photograph: Richard Saker/The Guardian

Emma Beddington, in bed, awake. Photograph: Richard Saker/The Guardian

In lockdown, insomnia has soared. Our tired, intrepid writer tried a range of remedies – including CBD, deep breathing and lettuce water



[Emma Beddington](#)

Mon 26 Jul 2021 05.00 EDT

How did you sleep last night? Insomnia rates have [soared during successive lockdowns](#): anyone would think facing a constant existential threat isn't the ideal preparation for a refreshing eight hours. Suggested remedies abound – behavioural, pharmaceutical, nonsensical and bleeding obvious – and I have tried most of them.

Insomnia can be a competitive sport and I am not podium material; I'm a common or garden poor sleeper, rarely getting more than five hours a night (luxury, I hear the real insomniacs hissing in red-eyed fury), often less and sometimes, thankfully rarely, none. That is not exceptional. It's not the stuff of [insomnia memoirs](#), which do exist, but I refuse to read any in case they give my brain and body ideas. But it is wearing. On nights when sleep just isn't happening, I'm filled with despair at the realisation that I will not get even a short break from being in my own head.

I have never consulted a doctor about insomnia: I don't know why, other than it doesn't seem the kind of thing a harassed GP would be able to do much about. My region isn't covered by the NHS CBT-based app, [Sleepio](#) either, of which I hear good things. In desperate times, I use the Valium I

was prescribed for migraines – effective, but not a long-term solution. So I turn mostly to DIY insomnia remedies – and as someone who has given them all a whirl, here is my wholly subjective opinion on what to try and what not to waste your many waking hours on.

Sprays and roll-ons

The insomniac is essentially a primitive, credulous creature; one whose cognitive functions are probably operating at about 3% of optimum capacity. This is how I, an otherwise rational person, have ended up using a Balance Me Beauty [Sleep](#) Hyaluronic Mist and a Balance Me Beauty Sleep CBD Concentrate rollerball nightly: each “worked” once (yes, time for me to retake correlation/causation 101), so I can never stop, despite them not appearing to have made any appreciable difference to my sleep since. These potions smell delightful, but the use of the word “beauty” is hilariously wrongheaded: I look like a sentient bowl of porridge because I never sleep. I also heard great things about Elemis’s pretentiously named Quiet Mind Temple Balm but was disappointed: it just smells and feels like expensive tiger balm to me. My unquiet mind does not recommend.

Pillow sprays

In my experience, a pillow spray is the weakest insomnia Hail Mary out there. Conceivably, if the stuff were 99% Calvados and I soaked my pillow with it then sucked it, it might work. As it is, while my This Works: Deep Sleep Pillow Spray with its “superblend of lavender, camomile and vetivert” is pleasant, I am sorry to say This Does Not Work: On Me.

The 4-7-8 breathing technique

Plenty of research suggests [breathing exercises are effective for relaxation](#). This one is simple: breathe in for four seconds, hold your breath for seven seconds, then breathe out for eight. For me, however, any attempt to focus on breathing leaves me unable to breathe normally at all. Can I trust my lungs, which are just eerie flesh crumpets, to send me to sleep? Wouldn’t it be horribly easy just to stop breathing? You can imagine how relaxing yoga classes are for me.

Weighted blankets

I love the idea of a weighted blanket, a sort of heavy fabric hug, albeit one with [scarcely researched relaxation and sleep benefits](#). I acquired a 14kg one secondhand, but was sad to discover (not) sleeping under it feels like being implacably crushed to death by boiling lava. It took all my strength to drag it into a cupboard, so it won't be coming out again any time soon.

CBD drops



CBD drops ... 'I don't think it's doing anything to aid my sleep.'
Photograph: towfiqu Barbhuiya/Alamy

The [wonder compound CBD](#) is in everything now: crisps, lipstick, toothpaste (all of these actually exist). CBD puts me in mind of a family anecdote in which [redacted relative] gave my mother [redacted controlled substance] one Christmas morning. "It hasn't done anything!" she complained, some time that evening. "Of course it has, you haven't cried once," replied [redacted relative]. This informs my relationship with CBD: I don't *think* it's doing anything to aid my sleep, but perhaps I'd be even worse without it.



Melatonin ... a miracle cure? Photograph: bildagentur-online.com/th-foto/Alamy

Melatonin

The hormone melatonin is [produced by the pineal gland](#) in the brain to prepare the body for sleep. The mysteries of international regulation mean you can buy a truckload of it in the US in your local Whole Foods (along with a \$28 watermelon or some “deliciously dippable kale shapes”), but here it is prescription only, so I am forced to procure it from a friend in the US who sends it to me in exchange for Marigold bouillon powder, which, puzzlingly, is unavailable in US Whole Foods branches. The melatonin itself – chewable and mildly peppermint flavoured – has not rocked my sleep world noticeably. If you wish to take something similarly underwhelming, you can get 5-HTP at health food shops here in the UK. It’s an amino acid that indirectly stimulates your production of melatonin, through a mechanism too complex for my insomnia brain to understand.

Counting backwards from 1000 in 7s

Sure, 2am maths is definitely the best maths. No.

Over the counter pharmacy remedies



Emma Beddington ... still awake. Photograph: Richard Saker/The Guardian

I swear if anyone else tells me how “powerful” Night Nurse is, I’ll be making a blood sacrifice to Morpheus. It’s not that I don’t believe them – susceptibility levels do vary enormously. My stepfather gets stoned and delirious if he takes any over-the-counter pain relief. But for me, Night Nurse, Nytol and similar are basically useless. Many of these over-the-counter remedies are antihistamine-based. For me, any antihistamine strong enough to make a difference to my sleep leaves me a dry-mouthed walking corpse the next day, incapable of coherent thought and forced to sit down to shower (much like my stepfather after a baby aspirin, actually).

The US army technique

This “hack” is [all over the internet](#), along with the claim that it works for 96% of people within two minutes after six weeks. Impressive numbers. The basics: you tense then relax your face, make your body go limp, try to think of nothing, then visualise a canoe in a calm lake, or lying in a black velvet hammock. If these visualisations don’t work, you’re supposed to say “don’t think don’t think don’t think” to yourself until your mind empties, then voilà, sleep. I get very angry when I think about it because I spent several

long, farcical wasted nights muttering “black velvet hammock, black velvet hammock, black velvet hammock” to myself for hours, like some kind of deranged 1980s magician because I got confused and am bad at following instructions. Obviously, I have never made it to six weeks so cannot vouch for the technique properly, but I have developed a visceral aversion to hammocks.



Can lettuce water help you sleep? Photograph: EyeEm/Alamy

Lettuce water

I only tried the daft [TikTok tip](#) to drink lettuce-infused water before bed because it seemed completely ridiculous. I wish I could surprise you with the revelation that it gave me my best night in a decade – lettuce seed oil is traditionally used as a sleep aid, so it’s not utterly outlandish – but I drank an unpleasant lukewarm cup of lettuce juice last week then slept very poorly: I don’t think there’s a viral TikTok in that.

Cognitive shuffling

The concept behind [“cognitive shuffling”](#) is that focusing on a series of random, unconnected words replicates the visual images and “micro-dreams” that immediately precede sleep. I tried it twice recently, but thought

you were simply supposed to think about unrelated innocuous nouns (sausage, paperclip, lamp-post, say). My exhausted brain was defeated by around the eighth noun: success.

But reading more carefully, I now see you are supposed to choose a letter, think of a noun starting with that letter, then visualise the noun before moving on to the next one. Are you kidding me? I don't come to bed to follow a complex and exacting set of instructions. I come to bed to heat to the temperature of the Earth's core and wipe underboob sweat on my pillow, feel murderous at the sound of my husband's peaceful breathing, then contemplate the time I overheard my neighbours discussing how filthy my house was in 2009 for three hours, as is right and proper. Conclusion: sometimes the remedy is worse than the cure.

So, what's left? I suppose I could still try a [cooling mattress topper](#), white noise machine or dog's earwax, which was apparently the Beauty Sleep Hyaluronic Mist [of the 16th century](#). For now, my most restful nights are the ones when I convince myself that it doesn't really matter. The best medicine, I fear, may be acceptance.

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Revealed: the secrets of Seville cathedral's banquet set in stone

Painstaking research deciphers carvings of religious bounty dating back almost five centuries



The arch that connects Seville cathedral with its Renaissance sacristy is decorated with 68 carvings of plates of food. Photograph: Juan Clemente Rodríguez Estévez

The arch that connects Seville cathedral with its Renaissance sacristy is decorated with 68 carvings of plates of food. Photograph: Juan Clemente Rodríguez Estévez

[Sam Jones](#) in Madrid

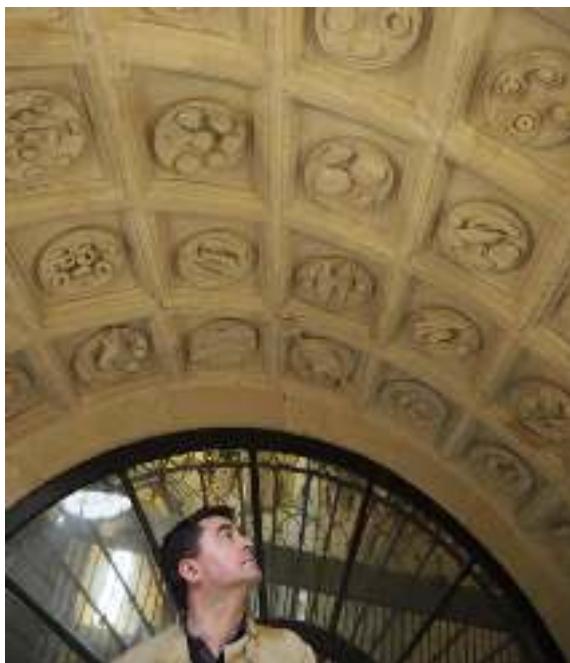
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Mon 26 Jul 2021 01.00 EDT

For almost 500 years, the arch that connects the largest Gothic cathedral in the world with its Renaissance sacristy has offered visitors a sumptuous, if little glimpsed – and even less studied – vision of religious bounty.

The 68 beautifully carved plates of food that adorn the archway in [Seville's cathedral](#) offer rather more than bread and wine.

There are pigs' trotters and wild strawberries, aubergines, clams and oysters. There are peaches, radishes, a skinned hare with a knife by its side, a squirrel served on a bed of hazelnuts and a plate of lemons across which a small snake slithers. There are also cakes and biscuits and, more exotically, a dish of peppers newly imported from Mexico, which had [fallen to Hernán Cortés and his men](#) just over a decade before the carvers set to work.



Researcher Juan Clemente Rodríguez Estévez, pictured here in 2017, spent 11 years studying the arch. Photograph: Antonio Luis Ampliato

The plates, which are all too often obscured when the huge wooden doors of the sacristy are open, are the subject of a new book by a Spanish art historian who has spent the past 11 years trying to unpick the secrets and meanings of the cathedral's stone buffet.

“People don’t really see the carvings because of the doors and because they’re too busy looking at the sacristy dome,” said [Juan Clemente Rodríguez Estévez](#). “But the carvings have been there for 500 years and have never been properly studied. They’ve gone unnoticed apart from being seen as a bit of a novelty.”

The arch, which was carved between 1533 and 1535, provides what Rodríguez calls a “snapshot of a seminal moment”. Its still-life carvings, he suggests, are chapters in the social, religious, economic and cultural history of both Seville and [Spain](#) as a whole.

The Americas were a fresh and lucrative discovery, the end of the [seven-century reconquista](#), which culminated in the [expulsion of the Jews](#), was a mere four decades distant, and the Reformation was sweeping Europe.

Contemporary theologians and mystics focused on the importance of the eucharist, and sought to portray communion as “a great feast to which everyone was invited”, said Rodríguez, who teaches at the University of Seville.

His book, *The Universal Banquet: Art and Food in Renaissance Seville*, examines how food was used to strengthen Catholic identity, employed as an image of the abundant joys of the afterlife, and even deployed as a bridge between [Europe](#) and the Americas.



One of the 68 carvings, this one depicting a duck with a lemon. Photograph: Antonio Luis Ampliato

Pork, unsurprisingly, features three times among the 68 plates, but olive oil – a staple of Andalucía since Roman times – is curiously absent. Rodríguez's theory is that it may have been left out on the orders of Baltasar del Río, a bishop who was instrumental in the arch's creation. Despite making a name for himself in the church in both Rome and Seville, Del Río was from a family of *conversos* – Jewish converts to [Catholicism](#) – and his father was judged by the Inquisition at the end of the 15th century.

Mindful of his roots, the bishop may have chosen to exclude oil because it was used by Jews who, like Muslims – but unlike Catholics – did not fry their food in pig fat.

“Being a *converso*, Del Río would have had to be very careful about the foods that were represented in the arch. They all needed to be really Catholic,” said Rodríguez.



Another carving depicts biscuits and almonds. Photograph: Juan Clemente Rodríguez Estévez

“But there are some foods that have a Jewish influence, such as the aubergines. Aubergines came to Europe through Islam, and came to be prized by Muslims and Jews alike. I think the presence of aubergines shows how normalised they had become by then.”

The bread at the centre of the arch could also be a reference to Del Río’s decision to found a brotherhood to help feed Seville’s poor.

“There was a terrible famine in 1521 and he ordered cheap wheat to be bought so that the poor would be provided with bread when wheat prices rose. If you look at the middle of the arch, you can see the loaves of bread.”

The peppers, which Rodríguez had taken for strawberries until one of the botanists he consulted set him straight, are the only crop from the Americas.



A plate of clams. Photograph: Antonio Luis Ampliato

“There aren’t more foods from there because it was still early days,” he said. “At that time, corn was mainly used as animal feed, and the potato hadn’t arrived in Spain because the conquest of Peru took place in the 1530s, so the ships from Peru were only beginning to arrive.”

The traffic, however, was not all one way. As Rodríguez points out, the Augustinian friars who followed the Dominicans and the Franciscans to the Americas built three churches in Mexico in the 1560s whose doorways were decorated with plates of food. The aim was to celebrate the eucharist and to help explain the importance of communion to a conquered people who were not familiar with bread and wine.

Rodríguez is delighted with the fruit of more than a decade’s research, and keen to stress that he owes a huge debt to the botanists, zoologists and other experts he consulted on his physical and intellectual travels.

“I couldn’t have written the book if it wasn’t for the decades of work by researchers who have helped us understand food in a cultural context,” he said.

“All I would have seen was a load of plates. When I started looking at the arch, I saw a window on to the 16th century, but I wasn’t quite sure what

was on the other side.”

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To mask or not to mask? That shouldn't be the question

[John Harris](#)



In shifting Covid risk to individuals in an already battered society, the British state has set the scene for countless futile conflicts



‘Wearing a mask now feels a bit like putting on a badge.’ Illustration: Matt Kenyon

‘Wearing a mask now feels a bit like putting on a badge.’ Illustration: Matt Kenyon

Mon 26 Jul 2021 02.00 EDT

England has now entered the strangest phase to date of its Covid experience. Though [the health secretary insisted](#), in a tweet he eventually deleted, that we must not “cower from” the virus, the contradiction between the lifting of restrictions and most [epidemiological wisdom](#) sits in the midst of our national life like a dull headache. The same prime minister who promised his ideological soulmates a new dawn of liberty is now embracing vaccine passports, and reportedly [facing the prospect of defeat](#) in the House of Commons. Meanwhile, references to “personal responsibility” have brought a new unease to everyday life, as the government reverts to type and does what Tory administrations usually do, transferring risk from the state to individuals.

Wearing a mask now feels a bit like putting on a badge. On what the rightwing press rather laughably called “[freedom day](#)”, I did some shopping at my local Asda, observed a masked-to-unmasked ratio of about 70:30, and sensed – or thought I sensed – the crackle of judgment and mistrust, passing

between those who were sticking with face coverings and those who had decided to go without. Two days later, I was in Stoke-on-Trent, where the ratio in a huge Tesco was more like 60:40 in favour of masking up. Despite announcements over the PA advising people to behave as if restrictions were still in place, the fact that some were sticking to the old rules while others were not felt like a matter of dull normality.

Only when I spoke to people did something more uneasy reveal itself: an apparent belief that things were now so messed up that whether individuals were taking precautions or not was really not that significant. One woman I met worked in a care home, and said that she was going to carry on wearing a mask in enclosed spaces. But she had no faith that her behaviour, in tandem with vaccinations, was going to play a part in returning us to our pre-Covid state of innocence: “I don’t think we’re ever going to go back to normal,” she said, with a shrug.

Meanwhile, the versions of reality presented by the old and new media continue to explode with polarised fury. [On the right](#), a loathing of the state has fused with hostility to vaccines, and everything is tied together by the belief that those who want restrictions to endure are not just killjoys but enemies of freedom. Some on the left, by contrast, have seemed to want restrictions to go on for as long as possible: not just, perhaps, to keep the virus under control but also because life in such conditions has ticked so many of their political and philosophical boxes: a huge expansion of the state, the primacy of “the science”, clear [benefits for the environment](#), and an insistence on collective sacrifice. With all this has come often [swingeing judgment](#) of “Covidiots”, and the assumption that going maskless or being sceptical about getting jabbed puts you in the same category as irate callers to talk radio stations and the dreaded Laurence Fox.

Somewhere in between these two ideological camps are millions who are too easily forgotten: those for whom lockdowns and stringent restrictions have not been the subject of a gleeful ideological war but a byword for misery and strife. Many of these people have had to leave home every day to work in dangerous circumstances. Some live in overcrowded conditions, and as part of dysfunctional and abusive families. Small business owners have either had their livelihoods shredded or live with the fear they are about to go under; for millions of young people, some of the most basic necessities of

life have been put in hold for unbearably long stretches of time, with no sign of concern from the people at the top. In that context, even if some people are simply being irresponsible, I understand why others have quietly delighted in binning their masks, and greeted the end of most restrictions in England with a sigh of relief.

A couple of months ago, [I was in the Alum Rock area](#) of Birmingham, where I met a twentysomething British-Asian man who talked about his life and the shared experiences of his community before and during the pandemic. He emphasised the state's neglect of local needs, and his awful experiences at the hands of the police – and went from there to his antipathy to getting jabbed, even though the local Covid death toll had been grim.

He was, it seemed, a perfect example of another overlooked part of the population: those who have been [sceptical](#) about both restrictions and vaccination, not out of ideological zeal, but because they have an understandably cynical and fearful view of the state and its edicts, and making oneself known to the authorities. Thinking of government as essentially benign and well-intentioned is, perhaps, the preserve of a certain section of the middle class. If you have had any experience of the nastier aspects of policing, the benefits system or this country's immigration regime, you too might balk at the idea of downloading the official Covid app, dutifully turning up for your injection or registering Covid tests.

In large part, this country's dire experience of Covid-19 is a result of awful government incompetence. But the past 16 months have also shown that societies ridden with inequality and institutional prejudice cannot cope with any convulsive crisis. The basic point is almost banal, but it seems to elude far too many people: if too many are insecure and isolated, and successive governments have made a point of kicking them around, they will either not be able to do what they are told, or treat edicts from the top and disapproval from those living more privileged lives with the utmost cynicism. Given that the worst effects of Covid have been visited on our most marginalised communities, such behaviour may look irrational, but that tension is hardly surprising.

There is a very persuasive school of thought that claims Covid will turn out to have been a dress rehearsal for the [imminent worsening](#) of the climate

emergency. Both crises, after all, require us to follow instructions from the top, move in lockstep and engage in difficult acts of self-sacrifice. As things stand, some people can do those things, but others cannot. The danger is that, as one crisis follows another, amid the individualistic noise generated by social media and politicians happy to speak the language of blame, the noise of swinging personal judgment will be much louder than any voices pointing out that our social model is now broken beyond repair. Dysfunctional societies usually produce deeply dysfunctional outcomes: until we start to address that basic modern truth, sneering and finger-pointing will only make things immeasurably worse.

- John Harris is a Guardian columnist
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OpinionHealth

If a doctor barely knows who a patient is, the consequences can be profound

AK Benjamin

Innate biases and failure to consider what it is like to be the person in front of you can result in incorrect diagnosis

- AK Benjamin is the pseudonym of a clinical neuropsychologist



‘Imagination may help correct certain biases, changing our patients’ lives for the better.’ A waiting room at a surgery in Derbyshire. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

‘Imagination may help correct certain biases, changing our patients’ lives for the better.’ A waiting room at a surgery in Derbyshire. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

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As a clinical neuropsychologist I make mistakes, and I am not alone. Researchers interested in clinical decision-making estimate that across all medical fields diagnosis is wrong [10–15% of the time](#).

In many instances clinical errors are underpinned by one of a number of cognitive biases. For example, the “availability bias” favours more recent, readily available answers, irrespective of their accuracy; the “confirmation bias” fits information to a preconceived diagnosis rather than the converse. In the time-restricted milieu of emergency medicine, where I work on occasion, particular biases compound: “the commission bias”, a proclivity for action over inaction, increases the likelihood of “search satisfying” – ceasing to look for further information when the first plausible solution is found, which itself might be propelled by “diagnostic momentum” where clinicians blindly continue existing courses of action instigated by (more “powerful”) others.

I can identify such failures in my own work, which may, counterintuitively, guarantee its relative quality: research on the “[blind spot bias](#)” indicates that doctors who describe themselves as excellent decision-makers perform relatively poorly on tests of diagnostic accuracy.

Intellectually, I understand that biases are part-and-parcel, built into the brain’s learning preferences to short-circuit complexity in the face of rapid, evolutionarily advantageous decision-making. Equally, they can be caused by different types of contextual imperfections; the lack of statistics and mathematical reasoning in medical epistemology; the absence of heuristics to identify how sociocultural norms – ethnicity, gender, wealth, mental health – are integrated or excluded from decision-making. But that intellectual knowledge does not translate to understanding what it’s like to be on the receiving end of error. And that lack of understanding might be the most profound bias of all.

When my daughter was a toddler she keeled over face first into her Rice Krispies one morning. A terrible dash to the nearest hospital followed, only for her to revive – wondering what had happened to her breakfast – in the triage queue at A&E. Having checked her over the paediatrician decided she had probably experienced a one-off seizure caused by a lingering cold. It wasn’t unusual in his experience.

I went to my work on a neurosurgical ward at a national children's hospital. That afternoon when I described the morning's events to a surgical colleague, he insisted I have my daughter reassessed, fearing the possibility that the seizure had been caused by an undiagnosed tumour. It wasn't unusual in his experience. I rushed my daughter back to the original hospital where the paediatrician refused to scan for a tumour.

We were caught between two radically different diagnoses. Both doctors spoke with utter conviction about what was commonplace for them. Perhaps the difference had been caused by "a framing effect": that the different emphasis I placed while retelling the story had helped to create the discrepant diagnoses. More likely, it was caused by "base rate neglect" – where the underlying incident rates in the relevant population are ignored: the surgeon moved in the rarefied waters of a national hospital where tumours were run-of-the-mill; he never saw febrile seizures, which were relatively common in a local setting. Thankfully, the paediatrician turned out to be right – it was a one-off event, an unforgettably frightening day for our family but nothing more.

Specific cognitive biases can be more or less corrected for by retraining and environmental support, or in more wholesale fashion by replacement with AI systems that use machine learning to improve diagnostic accuracy. But the bias that neglects or foreshortens the experience of the patient is part of what Wittgenstein would call the background "picture" of medicine itself. The picture paints expert, highly specialist clinicians capable of making disengaged, illusion-free decisions about something, even when aspects of it may be fundamentally mysterious to them. In other words, the picture creates perspectival distortions of its own, which can have catastrophic consequences.

Some years ago, a 75-year-old lady, who had lost her husband nine months before, came to my clinic reporting minor episodes of forgetfulness. After my formal memory assessment, the findings were inconclusive. But considering my report alongside her MRI – which showed hyperperfusion (subtle reductions in the blood supply) of the frontal poles of her brain – her neurologist decided she had the early stages of Alzheimer's.

At our next consultation six months later, the episodes she reported were no longer minor: she'd flooded the kitchen three times in a fortnight; she got lost in a neighbourhood she'd lived in for 30 years; when her phone rang she tried to answer the television remote. But the profile of her memory showed no signs of deterioration, and this time the MRI indicated that the hyperperfusion had disappeared altogether, leaving her with a typical-looking brain for someone halfway through their eighth decade. There was no indication of Alzheimer's.

The neurologist's original diagnosis was clearly wrong: transient changes in blood flow – probably relating to grief at the loss of her husband – had been mistaken for a neurodegenerative process. The neurologist admitted the error and corrected the diagnosis that same afternoon. But the woman's condition continued to deteriorate over the coming months despite a clean bill of neurological health. She was passed on to psychiatry with no sign of a solution. Something about not being "seen" properly in the first instance, compounded by a gross diagnostic error, had intractable consequences for her mental health.

Neurological trauma can change everything for a patient in a moment. And yet as acute clinicians we never see patients either side of a small window of care, neglecting who they might have been prior to it, and only giving short shrift to who they would become afterwards. Years after the fact, I found myself profoundly disturbed by how little I knew about some of my patients.

The framing effect of the medical picture, a failure to consider what it is like to be the person in front of us, means that clinical encounters are doomed to remain between strangers. Cognitive biases inevitably give way to emotional ones, restricting the possibility of empathy. The whole thing is somewhat preordained: clinicians are selected for their knowledge, their problem-solving skills, not for their loving kindness. This is the starting point for my book [The Case for Love](#), a series of case studies whose starting points are failures of imagination.

Imagination, a skill considered the province of storytelling, can broaden the perspective, enhance the picture, by deepening our humanity. Properly applied by clinicians, it may help correct certain biases, changing our patients' lives for the better.

- AK Benjamin is the pseudonym of the clinical neuropsychologist author of *The Case for Love: My Adventures In Other Minds*
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OpinionGreat Barrier Reef

The Great Barrier Reef is a victim of climate change – but it could be part of the solution

Peter Thomson and Ove Hoegh-Guldberg

A healthy ocean is vital for a healthy planet, and healthy coral reefs lie at the heart of ocean biodiversity



‘The Great Barrier Reef, one of our planet’s largest living structures, has been severely damaged by unprecedented marine heatwaves.’ Photograph: Jumbo Aerial Photography/AP

‘The Great Barrier Reef, one of our planet’s largest living structures, has been severely damaged by unprecedented marine heatwaves.’ Photograph: Jumbo Aerial Photography/AP

Sun 25 Jul 2021 23.41 EDT

We are fast approaching unstoppable climate change. If we don’t take drastic action to cut our global greenhouse gas emissions at the [United Nations](#)

Climate Change Conference in Glasgow this November, our children and grandchildren will pay dearly for this failure.

Already, average surface temperatures globally have risen 1.1C above the preindustrial levels of the late 1800s and limiting global warming to 1.5C is becoming increasingly challenging.

[The Great Barrier Reef is not on the ‘in danger’ list. Why, and what happens next?](#)

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A recent report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) stated that 70 to 90% of warm water coral reefs that exist today will have disappeared by the time we reach 1.5C. At 2C, coral reefs will be vanishingly rare.

The sobering reality reported by the World Meteorological Organization is that on our current path, we are heading to global warming of over 3C before the end of this century.

This would cause irreversible damage to marine ecosystems and the ocean as a whole. Science and recent experience tell us the consequences would be catastrophic globally – this is clearly something we must avoid at all costs.

Australia’s vast oceans, covering around 10 million square kilometres, are a case in point. Conditions here are changing rapidly. Marine species are turning up in places they have never been before and others are simply dying out.

Even the [Great Barrier Reef](#), one of our planet’s largest living structures, has been severely damaged by unprecedented marine heatwaves, triggering three mass coral bleaching events that reduced shallow water coral reefs by as much as 50% over just the last five years.

At this juncture in human history, there is no sense in watering down these concerns. We must act, and act urgently

A healthy ocean is vital for a healthy planet, and healthy coral reefs lie at the heart of ocean biodiversity. Home to a quarter of all ocean life, coral reefs provide services for humanity such as food and livelihoods, as well as protection from storms, erosion and flooding. These and other services have been estimated to provide at least \$29.8bn each year to local economies.

But these services are in serious jeopardy as we continue to emit greenhouse gases by burning fossil fuels, cutting down the world's forests and destroying coastal habitats. The window to act is rapidly closing. This may sound shocking, but it is the unequivocal message science is giving us. At this juncture in human history, there is no sense in watering down these concerns. We must act, and act urgently.

This is why the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development is so important for us all. By linking specific actions to relevant sustainable development goals, this global initiative provides the horizon that we must move towards if we are to save the ocean and, in turn, our planet. It also illustrates how relevant the ocean is to the solutions and actions we must take.

The ocean doesn't have to be a victim of climate change. It can be a major solution to solving the climate crisis – some would say our strongest ally. To assist our ally, we should be investing in the sustainable blue economy, converting shipping to non-fossil fuel energy sources and financing renewable offshore energy infrastructure.

We should stop polluting and over-fishing the ocean and we must protect and restore blue carbon stocks associated with mangroves, wetlands and seagrasses. Known as “carbon sinks”, these diverse coastal habitats act like enormous sponges, continually cleaning our air by absorbing carbon and storing it out of the atmosphere.

As well as reducing emissions to net zero as rapidly as possible, we must build the resilience of coral reefs so they can thrive in what will be a warmer climate. The challenge confronting us all is immense, but there is hope if we combine our ideas, efforts and resources.

The UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development provides a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for countries to work together to give us the science we need for the ocean we want. And of course, the ocean we want relies on healthy coral reefs.

Organisations like the Great Barrier Reef Foundation have joined this global effort to chart the best way forward. The Foundation's Reef Recovery 2030 plan, which has been endorsed as a Decade of Ocean Science flagship action, will boost the resilience of reef ecosystems and the wellbeing of the people who rely on them.

This decade-long collective effort aims to turn the tide on the decline of tropical coral reefs and urgently needs support from around the world.

[World Heritage Committee agrees not to place Great Barrier Reef on 'in danger' list](#)

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One thing is sure – science must be our chief guide in these endeavours. We need the best science to develop bold, innovative ideas to protect coral reefs and slow the impacts of climate damage.

We must think at our creative best, test new ideas and strategies and learn from our failures. The latter is most important if we are to successfully develop the necessary solutions in the urgent timeframe needed.

It is imperative that we give the ocean the level of respect it commands as the source of life on this planet and devote our efforts and resources towards impactful action to save coral reefs and the ocean for future generations.

Ambassador Peter Thomson is the United Nations Secretary General's Special Envoy for the Ocean

Professor Ove Hoegh-Guldberg, University of Queensland, is chief scientist at the Great Barrier Reef Foundation, and a fellow of the Australian Academy of Science

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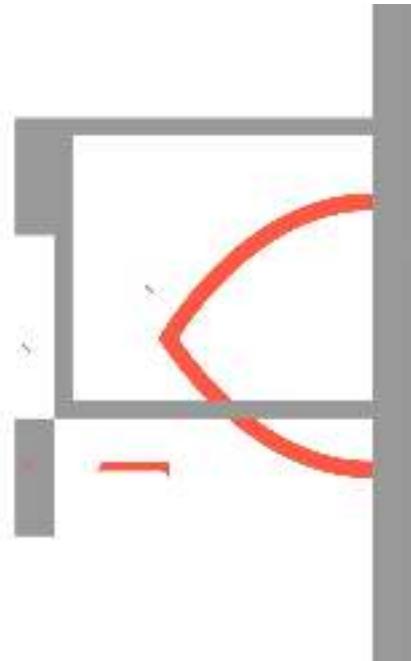
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[The Pegasus projectFrance](#)

Emmanuel Macron ‘pushes for Israeli inquiry’ into NSO spyware concerns

French president reportedly spoke to Naftali Bennett to ensure ‘proper investigation’ after Pegasus project



NSO has said Macron was not a ‘target’ of any of its customers, meaning the company denies he was selected for surveillance using Pegasus. Composite: Guardian Design/Romain Gaillard/Sipa/Rex/Shutterstock

NSO has said Macron was not a ‘target’ of any of its customers, meaning the company denies he was selected for surveillance using Pegasus. Composite: Guardian Design/Romain Gaillard/Sipa/Rex/Shutterstock

Bethan McKernan Middle East correspondent

Sun 25 Jul 2021 10.26 EDT

[Emmanuel Macron](#) has reportedly spoken to the Israeli prime minister, [Naftali Bennett](#), to ensure that the Israeli government is “properly investigating” allegations that the French president could have been targeted with Israeli-made spyware by Morocco’s security services.

In a phone call, Macron expressed concern that his phone and those of most of his cabinet could have been infected with [Pegasus](#), hacking software developed by the Israeli surveillance firm NSO Group, which enables operators of the tool to extract messages, photos and emails, record calls and secretly activate microphones from infected devices.

The leaked database at the heart of the Pegasus project [includes Macron's mobile phone number](#).

NSO has said Macron was not a “target” of any of its customers, meaning the company denies he was selected for surveillance using Pegasus. The company says that the fact that a number appeared on the list was in no way indicative of whether that number was selected for surveillance using Pegasus.

The Pegasus project could not examine the mobile phones of the leaders and diplomats, and could therefore not confirm whether there had been any attempt to install malware on their phones.

Quick Guide

What is in the Pegasus project data?

Show

What is in the data leak?

The data leak is a list of more than 50,000 phone numbers that, since 2016, are believed to have been selected as those of people of interest by government clients of NSO Group, which sells surveillance software. The data also contains the time and date that numbers were selected, or entered on to a system. Forbidden Stories, a Paris-based nonprofit journalism organisation, and Amnesty International initially had access to the list and shared access with 16 media organisations including the Guardian. More than 80 journalists have worked together over several months as part of the Pegasus project. Amnesty’s Security Lab, a technical partner on the project, did the forensic analyses.

What does the leak indicate?

The consortium believes the data indicates the potential targets NSO’s government clients identified in advance of possible surveillance. While the data is an indication of intent, the presence of a number in the data does not reveal whether there was an attempt to infect the phone with spyware such as Pegasus, the company’s signature surveillance tool, or whether any

attempt succeeded. The presence in the data of a very small number of landlines and US numbers, which NSO says are “technically impossible” to access with its tools, reveals some targets were selected by NSO clients even though they could not be infected with Pegasus. However, forensic examinations of a small sample of mobile phones with numbers on the list found tight correlations between the time and date of a number in the data and the start of Pegasus activity – in some cases as little as a few seconds.

What did forensic analysis reveal?

Amnesty examined 67 smartphones where attacks were suspected. Of those, 23 were successfully infected and 14 showed signs of attempted penetration. For the remaining 30, the tests were inconclusive, in several cases because the handsets had been replaced. Fifteen of the phones were Android devices, none of which showed evidence of successful infection. However, unlike iPhones, phones that use Android do not log the kinds of information required for Amnesty’s detective work. Three Android phones showed signs of targeting, such as Pegasus-linked SMS messages.

Amnesty shared “backup copies” of four iPhones with Citizen Lab, a research group at the University of Toronto that specialises in studying Pegasus, which confirmed that they showed signs of Pegasus infection. Citizen Lab also conducted a peer review of Amnesty’s forensic methods, and found them to be sound.

Which NSO clients were selecting numbers?

While the data is organised into clusters, indicative of individual NSO clients, it does not say which NSO client was responsible for selecting any given number. NSO claims to sell its tools to 60 clients in 40 countries, but refuses to identify them. By closely examining the pattern of targeting by individual clients in the leaked data, media partners were able to identify 10 governments believed to be responsible for selecting the targets: Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Morocco, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Hungary, India, and the United Arab Emirates. Citizen Lab has also found evidence of all 10 being clients of NSO.

What does NSO Group say?

You can read NSO Group's [full statement here](#). The company has always said it does not have access to the data of its customers' targets. Through its lawyers, NSO said the consortium had made "incorrect assumptions" about which clients use the company's technology. It said the 50,000 number was "exaggerated" and that the list could not be a list of numbers "targeted by governments using Pegasus". The lawyers said NSO had reason to believe the list accessed by the consortium "is not a list of numbers targeted by governments using Pegasus, but instead, may be part of a larger list of numbers that might have been used by NSO Group customers for other purposes". They said it was a list of numbers that anyone could search on an open source system. After further questions, the lawyers said the consortium was basing its findings "on misleading interpretation of leaked data from accessible and overt basic information, such as HLR Lookup services, which have no bearing on the list of the customers' targets of Pegasus or any other NSO products ... we still do not see any correlation of these lists to anything related to use of NSO Group technologies". Following publication, they explained that they considered a "target" to be a phone that was the subject of a successful or attempted (but failed) infection by Pegasus, and reiterated that the list of 50,000 phones was too large for it to represent "targets" of Pegasus. They said that the fact that a number appeared on the list was in no way indicative of whether it had been selected for surveillance using Pegasus.

What is HLR lookup data?

The term HLR, or home location register, refers to a database that is essential to operating mobile phone networks. Such registers keep records on the networks of phone users and their general locations, along with other identifying information that is used routinely in routing calls and texts. Telecoms and surveillance experts say HLR data can sometimes be used in the early phase of a surveillance attempt, when identifying whether it is possible to connect to a phone. The consortium understands NSO clients have the capability through an interface on the Pegasus system to conduct HLR lookup inquiries. It is unclear whether Pegasus operators are required to conduct HRL lookup inquiries via its interface to use its software; an NSO source stressed its clients may have different reasons – unrelated to Pegasus – for conducting HLR lookups via an NSO system.

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.

The Macron-Bennett phone call reportedly took place on Thursday, but was first reported by Israel's Channel 12 News on Saturday evening after the end of Shabbat, the Jewish day of rest.

The prime minister's office has declined to comment on the phone call or the two leaders' conversation. According to Channel 12, an unnamed source said Bennett had stressed that the alleged events occurred before he took office in May, and that a commission was examining whether rules on Israel's export of cyberweapons such as Pegasus should be tightened.

Clients

The Pegasus project – a consortium of 17 media outlets, including the Guardian – revealed last week that government clients around the world have used the hacking software sold by NSO to target human rights activists, journalists and lawyers.

The investigation has been based on forensic analysis of phones and analysis of a leaked database of 50,000 numbers, including that of Macron and those of heads of state and senior government, diplomatic and military officials, in 34 countries.

In multiple statements, NSO said the fact a number appeared on the leaked list was in no way indicative of whether it was selected for surveillance using Pegasus. "The list is not a list of Pegasus targets or potential targets," the company said. "The numbers in the list are not related to NSO Group in any way."

But the list is believed to provide insights into those identified as persons of interest by NSO's clients. It includes people whose phones showed traces of NSO's signature phone-hacking spyware, Pegasus, according to forensic analysis of their devices. The analysis was conducted by Amnesty International's security lab, which discovered traces of Pegasus-related activity on 37 out of 67 phones that it analysed.

Q&A

What is the Pegasus project?

Show

The Pegasus project is a collaborative journalistic investigation into the NSO Group and its clients. The company sells surveillance technology to governments worldwide. Its flagship product is Pegasus, spying software – or spyware – that targets iPhones and Android devices. Once a phone is infected, a Pegasus operator can secretly extract chats, photos, emails and location data, or activate microphones and cameras without a user knowing.

Forbidden Stories, a Paris-based nonprofit journalism organisation, and Amnesty International had access to a leak of more than 50,000 phone numbers selected as targets by clients of NSO since 2016. Access to the data was then shared with the Guardian and 16 other news organisations, including the Washington Post, Le Monde, Die Zeit and Süddeutsche Zeitung. More than 80 journalists have worked collaboratively over several months on the investigation, which was coordinated by Forbidden Stories.

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.

While the rest of the world grapples with the seismic consequences of the revelations, in Israel reaction has been muted. Meretz, a leftwing party long in opposition but now part of the new government coalition, has asked the defence ministry for “clarification” on the issue, but no party is seeking a freeze of export licences or an inquiry into NSO’s [close links to the Israeli state](#) under the tenure of the former prime minister [Benjamin Netanyahu](#).

Explainer

The defence minister, Benny Gantz, has defended export licences for the hacking tools, claiming that “countries that purchase these systems must meet the terms of use”, which are solely for criminal and terrorism investigations.

But as the mammoth impact of the disclosures has become clearer, the diplomatic pressure on Israel is mounting. On Thursday, the senior Israeli MP Ram Ben-Barak – a former deputy head of the Mossad spy agency – confirmed that the Israeli defence establishment had “appointed a [review commission](#) made up of a number of groups” to examine whether policy changes were needed regarding sensitive cyber exports.

US defence officials have also asked their Israeli counterparts for more details on the “disturbing” disclosures stemming from the Pegasus project, the Israeli newspaper Haaretz reported on Saturday.

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At least eight killed in 20-car pileup in Utah sandstorm

Several more were in hospital with critical injuries after high winds blew up dust and impaired visibility

00:57

Utah sandstorm causes 20-car pile-up, killing several motorists – video

Guardian staff with agencies

Tue 27 Jul 2021 01.11 EDT

At least eight people have been killed in a 20-vehicle pileup during a sandstorm in [Utah](#), the highway patrol said.

The crashes happened on Interstate 15 near the town of Kanosh on Sunday, the agency said in a news release. Several people were reportedly taken to hospitals in critical condition. Ground and air ambulances were used to transport crash victims.



An aerial view of the multi-car pileup in Utah, in which at least eight people were killed
Photograph: Utah Highway Patrol

The pileup occurred during a period of high winds that caused a dust or sandstorm which reduced visibility, the highway patrol said.

Five of the eight people killed were in one vehicle, while two others were in another vehicle, according to a news release. Another fatality was in a third vehicle.



The 20-car pileup in Utah in which at least eight people were killed.
Photograph: Utah Highway Patrol

The highway remained partially shut down late on Sunday. Traffic was redirected around the crash site.

Kanosh is located about 160 miles (258 kilometres) south of Salt Lake City.

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[Ryanair](#)

Ryanair forecasts 100m passengers in financial year as bookings soar

Airline reports €273m loss for three months to end of June, with Covid-19 continuing to ‘wreak havoc’

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Ryanair flew 8.1 million people from April to June this year, up from 500,000 in 2020. Photograph: Christian Hartmann/Reuters

Ryanair flew 8.1 million people from April to June this year, up from 500,000 in 2020. Photograph: Christian Hartmann/Reuters

[Joanna Partridge](#)

Mon 26 Jul 2021 03.48 EDT

Ryanair is expecting to fly 100 million passengers during this financial year after a surge in summer bookings in recent weeks, although it warned that it does not expect to make a profit this year.

The Irish airline increased its passenger forecast to 90-100 million for the 12 months to the end of March 2022, thanks to the coronavirus vaccination programme and the easing of some travel restrictions.

It expects to carry larger numbers of passengers over the summer, almost doubling from 5 million in June to almost 9 million in July, and reaching 10 million in August, provided there are no further setbacks as a result of Covid-19.

However, the company cautioned that it expected to make a small loss or to just break even during the year to March, as it reported that it remained in the red in first quarter of the financial year.

Ryanair reported a loss of €273m (£234m) for three months to the end of June and said that Covid had continued to “wreak havoc” on its business during the period, when most Easter flights were cancelled and there was a slower than expected easing of travel restrictions from EU governments.

The low-cost carrier flew 8.1 million people from April to June this year, up from only 500,000 in 2020, although its losses increased by almost half, up from the €185m loss reported a year earlier.

Ryanair’s chief executive, Michael O’Leary, said: “Significant uncertainty around travel green lists (particularly in the UK) and extreme government caution in [Ireland](#) meant that Q1 bookings were close-in and at low fares.

“The 1 July rollout of EU digital Covid certificates (DCC) and the scrapping of quarantine for vaccinated arrivals to the UK from mid-July has seen a surge in bookings over recent weeks.”

The airline said ticket prices remained lower than pre-Covid levels and it is focusing on the recovery of traffic and tourism across its European network

during the summer.

The announcement came only days after Ryanair said it was aiming to [recruit 2,000 pilots](#) over the next three years as it tries to rebuild its passenger numbers after the pandemic.

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The airline has also started to take [delivery of its first Boeing 737 Max](#) aircraft and has ordered more than 200 of the planes.

Ryanair has labelled the Boeing aircraft a “gamechanger” because of its better fuel efficiency and seat capacity, compared with its existing fleet.

While Ryanair and the aviation sector have been hit hard during the pandemic, the airline believes it is well positioned to benefit from the difficulties of its rivals during the crisis, which has resulted in the [collapse of European competitors](#).

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Nine Fiji opposition MPs arrested over criticism of land bill

Detentions, including two former PMs, prompt fears government is using police as a ‘political weapon’



The Fiji prime minister, Frank Bainimarama, said those arrested were ‘super-spreaders of lies’. Photograph: Stephanie Keith/Getty Images

The Fiji prime minister, Frank Bainimarama, said those arrested were ‘super-spreaders of lies’. Photograph: Stephanie Keith/Getty Images

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Mon 26 Jul 2021 05.29 EDT

Nine prominent opposition politicians – including two former prime ministers – have been arrested in [Fiji](#) for voicing concerns about a contentious land bill, leading to fears the Fijian government is using the police as a “political weapon” to intimidate and crack down on dissent.

Six members of parliament and three other high-profile politicians were taken into custody by the criminal investigations department on Sunday and Monday in relation to comments they had made regarding proposed amendments to a land bill, which is expected to be debated in parliament this week.

The nine were Viliame Gavoka, the leader of the opposition Social Democratic Liberal party (Sodelpa) party; the opposition whip Lynda Tabuya; the MPs Adi Litia Qionibaravi and Ro Filipe Tuisawau; Biman Prasad, the leader of the National Federation party; the NFP president, Pio Tikoduadua; the former prime ministers Sitiveni Rabuka and Mahendra Chaudhry; and the Unity Fiji leader, Savenaca Narube.

Eight were arrested on Sunday, while Chaudhry was taken in on Monday and is still in custody.

[Fiji reports record Covid deaths, including two pregnant women](#)

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Prasad said arrests of opposition MPs were a common occurrence under the prime minister, Frank Bainimarama.

“Now the police are being used as a political weapon by the FijiFirst party to intimidate opposition,” he said. “But we will not be intimidated by their thuggish behaviour.”

However, Bainimarama said in parliament the political figures were “super-spreaders of lies” who were using an administrative amendment to a land bill to mislead and incite indigenous people.

The government has introduced a bill to amend legislation concerning the governing of native land, an amendment the opposition have said will remove power from landowners. The government maintains the changes are administrative and for the purpose of removing bureaucracy.

An assistant commissioner of police, Rusiate Tudravu, confirmed in a statement on Monday that the opposition members were [questioned and released](#) under the Public Order Act.

But investigations are continuing and more people are expected to be taken into custody for expressing their concerns regarding the iTaukei land trust (budget amendment) bill.

“Not for the purpose of intimidation as claimed by some,” said Tudravu, “but as a proactive means to find the truth and not everyone who is brought in for questioning will be charged.”

There were also concerns that local journalists were also rounded up and detained. Tudravu said those claims were untrue.

A local journalist who has spoken to the Guardian said he was concerned that “journalists too will end up being questioned by the police for writing

stories about the amendments to the land bill”.

There are fears that tensions over the bill could lead to political protests and civil disobedience. Police have increased their presence in major towns and cities across Fiji, and the acting commissioner has warned they “will come down hard on any person or group that tries to cause instability and civil unrest”.

Gavoka, who was one of those arrested on Sunday, implored people to remain peaceful. “The party is pleading that any scheme to cause disruption or instability throughout the country must cease immediately,” he said in a statement.

“It will bring us nothing but more suffering in an already dire situation due to Covid-19 and the failure of the government of the day in handling this pandemic. We do not want repetitions of past political turmoil; we have had enough of that.”

The political tensions come as Fiji [struggles to control a Covid outbreak](#) across its main island, Viti Levu.

More than 270 people have died in Covid-related deaths since the second wave began in April and almost 17,000 active cases are in isolation. Health authorities have warned infections and deaths will continue to rise.

Prasad said the government was using the arrests as a distraction in dealing with the Covid situation. “At a time when people are dying, not able to put food on the table or get medical care, this government arrests opposition leaders for doing their job,” he said.

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Mozambique

Mozambique: fears of escalating conflict as foreign troops clash with Islamists

Fighting between Rwandan forces and insurgents linked to Islamic State breaks out in Cabo Delgado



Mozambique soldiers on patrol in Palma, Cabo Delgado. Photograph: João Relvas/EPA

Mozambique soldiers on patrol in Palma, Cabo Delgado. Photograph: João Relvas/EPA

Mon 26 Jul 2021 00.00 EDT

Foreign troops sent to reinforce local security forces in [Mozambique](#) have clashed with Islamist militants for the first time, as the conflict in the east

African country moves into a new and potentially dangerous phase.

Rwandan soldiers who recently arrived in Mozambique fought a series of engagements against the extremists last week. Few reliable details of the fighting, which took place near Mozambique's border with Tanzania, have emerged, but officials claim the insurgents suffered dozens of casualties.

The Rwandan troops are the first significant foreign deployment in a direct combat role in the conflict. Russian and South African military contractors have previously fought insurgents alongside local security forces, and there have been unconfirmed reports of one possible clash involving western special forces earlier this year.

The [recent successes of the insurgents](#), who have links to Islamic State, in northern Cabo Delgado province have prompted international fears of a new extremist enclave in southern Africa and led to a new regional resolve to defeat them.

Factions affiliated to Isis and to al-Qaida [have grown in strength in west, central and south-eastern Africa in recent years](#), one of the few regions of the world where both groups have expanded.

In a [report](#) published last week, the UN committee charged with monitoring threats from al-Qaida and Isis across the world described parts of west and east Africa as especially worrying.



Rwandan troops at Kigali international airport prepare to depart for Mozambique. Photograph: Jean Bizimana/Reuters

“Affiliates of both groups can boast gains in supporters and territory, as well as growing capabilities in fundraising and weapons, for example, in the use of drones ,” the committee, which bases its assessments on intelligence supplied by member states, said.

There are plans for thousands of foreign troops to be deployed in Mozambique over coming months from at least seven different countries.

Experts have said the influx of foreign soldiers may lead to reprisal attacks across southern [Africa](#) and possibly beyond, which weak local security services will struggle to prevent. There are also concerns that the deployment of significant forces with limited knowledge of the local environment, languages and culture could be counterproductive unless balanced by a broad range of social, political and economic initiatives.

Jasmine Opperman, a respected expert on the conflict based in neighbouring South Africa, said it was clear that something needed to be done to stem the advance of the insurgents.

“Mozambique needs help and that is a definite,” she said. “But will the presence [of the international troops] translate into an overall defeat for the

insurgency ... I don't think I can be optimistic. If there is an over-reliance on an unaccountable military, the causes will remain."

map

Advanced elements from the South African army have also arrived in Cabo Delgado, where the insurgents have [taken over](#) or contested control of vast swaths of land, displacing 800,000 people and threatening lucrative international natural gas projects.

The South Africans are part of a multinational force put together by the regional Southern Africa Development Committee. It is unclear exactly how many of its 3,000 planned troops will actually deploy because recent unrest in [South Africa](#) means Pretoria will be unable to fulfil its commitments to the force. Angola, Tanzania and Botswana are also contributing soldiers, and elite units of Zimbabwe's army [have reportedly been told](#) to prepare for deployment.

The new effort to reinforce local security forces comes after an offensive by extremists earlier this year exposed the weaknesses of local forces and forced the conflict on to the agenda of leaders overseas.

In March, they launched [an attack on Palma](#), a port adjacent to a \$20bn gas project led by oil company Total. The plight of dozens of western and other consultants besieged in a hotel in the town received widespread coverage, but the ordeal of many tens of thousands of local people [caught up in the fighting](#) received less attention. Rwandan forces launched a series of aggressive patrols around the town earlier this month in an attempt to re-establish government control of its immediate hinterland.

Most of the civilians in the area have left their villages to flee the insurgents or been told to leave by authorities.



A man displaced by the conflict in Cabo Delgado arrives at Paquitequete beach in Pemba. Photograph: John Wessels/AFP/Getty Images

The insurgents call themselves Ansar-al-Sunna but are known as al-Shabaab to locals. The US state department have designated them as part of Islamic State's Central African Province, but analysts hotly contest the extent of their links to the group's leadership in the Middle East.

Dino Mahtani, an expert on Mozambique at the International Crisis Group, said military assistance could be useful if “done in a measured way”.

“Authorities need to reckon with what needs to be done to incentivise the militants to reconsider violence as the best means to resolve grievances. If they simply think they can defeat and dismantle the group then they may get themselves involved in an unwinnable war,” he said.

Small detachments from several European nations, especially Portugal, the former colonial power, have been also sent to help train Mozambique's weak armed forces and police. Around a dozen US special forces [spent two months with local counterparts](#) earlier this year.

Private military contractors are understood to be training several new local units of special forces which will be sent to the combat zones in the north.

Major groups such as Isis have a long history of seeking to punish allies of local governments by launching spectacular attacks against their citizens and interests. Though there is limited evidence of extremist activity in southern Africa, local intelligence services are weak and targets plentiful.

“We are already caught up in a war on terrorism in Cabo Delgado and that will have a ripple effect across the region. I can’t say there will be an attack, but it will make us more vulnerable to acts of terrorism that we won’t see coming,” said Opperman.

Foreign troops have a limited record of success against Islamist militants on the continent. The expensive and dangerous deployment of French and other international forces in Mali has had only limited success, and military gains have been undermined by continual political instability and poor governance in the region. A regional east African force in Somalia has been unable to win back much of the country from al-Qaida affiliates over more than a decade of operations.

The multitude of different nation’s troops deploying in Mozambique also brings significant command and control issues, experts say.

Col Omar Saranga, a spokesperson for Mozambique’s defence ministry, said detachments would be “led by their respective commands but the chief coordinator is the Republic of Mozambique”.

Analysts also point to the shortcomings of interventions in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan and elsewhere in recent years.

“Military pressure can degrade and erode [the insurgency in Mozambique] but ultimately this is a conflict that needs resolution dialogue,” said Mahtani.

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