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Russia buying millions of rockets and shells from North Korea, US intelligence says

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North Korean artillery units firing during a drill. Pyongyang has sought to strengthen relations with Russia. Photograph: KCNA via KNS/AFP/Getty

Justin McCurry in Tokyo and Isobel Koshiw in Kyiv

Tue 6 Sep 2022 05.24 EDTFirst published on Mon 5 Sep 2022 23.49 EDT

Russia is buying millions of rockets and artillery shells from [North Korea](#) to support its invasion of Ukraine, according to a newly declassified US

intelligence finding.

A US official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said on Monday that the fact Russia's defence ministry had turned to Pyongyang demonstrated that "the Russian military continues to suffer from severe supply shortages in [Ukraine](#), due in part to export controls and sanctions".

US intelligence officials believe the Russians could try to acquire additional North Korean military equipment in the future. The intelligence finding was first [reported by the New York Times](#).

The US official did not reveal exactly how much weaponry [Russia](#) intended to buy from North Korea.

The finding comes after the Biden administration confirmed the Russian military took delivery of [Iranian-manufactured drones](#) in August for use on the battlefield in Ukraine.

The White House said last week that Russia had faced technical problems with Mohajer-6 and Shahed-series drones, bought as part of what the Biden administration says is likely to be part of a Russian plan to acquire hundreds of Iranian unmanned aerial vehicles for use in the conflict.

On Monday, Yuriy Ignat, a spokesperson for Ukraine's air force, said the Iranian-made drones could carry three times more munitions than the Turkish-made Bayaktars used by Ukrainian forces. He said he believed Ukrainian air defence was capable of shooting them down.

"The only thing that needs to be (taken into account) is that this is a modern strike drone. But we do not know the quality of its production, because Iran (made it) from contraband parts, because the country is under sanctions," Ignat said in an appearance on Ukraine's Espresso TV.

"Let's hope that (the drones) are not too well made and our anti-aircraft guns will shoot them down like all other enemy (drones)."

Any arms sales to Russia by North Korea would be a violation of UN resolutions banning Pyongyang from exporting to, or importing weapons from, other countries.

North Korea has sought to strengthen relations with Russia as much of [Europe](#) and the west has pulled away. The regime has blamed the US for the Ukraine crisis and claimed the west's "hegemonic policy" justifies military action by Russia in Ukraine to protect itself.

The Russian president, Vladimir Putin, and the North Korean leader, Kim Jong-un, recently exchanged letters in which they called for "comprehensive" and "strategic and tactical" cooperation between the countries.

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Moscow has also joined North Korea in condemning the resumption last month of large-scale joint military exercises involving the US and South Korea, which Pyongyang views as a rehearsal for an invasion.

Russia, along with China, has called for the easing of UN sanctions imposed in response to North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile tests.

As members of the UN security council, they have approved 11 rounds of sanctions against North Korea since 2006. But in May, they vetoed a US-led attempts to impose fresh measures against the regime after a series of high-profile missile tests.

North Korea has also said it is ready to [send construction workers](#) to help rebuild Russian-occupied territories in Ukraine, in breach of a UN resolution that required member states to repatriate all North Korean workers from their soil by 2019.

North Korea's ambassador to Moscow recently [met envoys](#) from two Russia-backed separatist territories in the Donbas region of Ukraine and expressed optimism about cooperation in the “field of labour migration”, citing his country's easing pandemic border controls.

In July, North Korea became the only country aside from Russia and Syria to recognise the self-proclaimed republics in Luhansk and Donetsk, further aligning with Russia over the conflict in Ukraine.

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Saudi Arabia

Revealed: jailed Saudi woman was convicted of ‘spreading lies through tweets’

Exclusive: court document details charges against Noura al-Qahtani, who was sentenced to 45 years in prison



The court document states that Noura al-Qahtani used two anonymised Twitter accounts. Photograph: Dado Ruvic/Reuters

*[Stephanie Kirchgaessner](#) in Washington
@skirchy*

Tue 6 Sep 2022 05.55 EDT Last modified on Wed 7 Sep 2022 00.09 EDT

A Saudi woman recently sentenced to 45 years in prison was convicted of using the internet and social media accounts to “spread lies through tweets”, among other alleged crimes, according to a newly obtained Saudi court document.

Noura al-Qahtani, [whose case first emerged last week](#), is a mother of five daughters, including one with a disability, is nearly 50 years old and has health issues, according to the court records.

The document, which describes Qahtani's conviction and sentencing by a special criminal court, was shared with the Guardian by Abdullah Alaoudh, the Gulf director at Dawn, a pro-democracy group based in Washington founded by the [murdered Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi](#).

The court records reveal – for a second time in weeks – a draconian sentence against a seemingly ordinary woman who used social media to voice support for dissidents but was not personally engaged in political activity. It contradicts the public image the Saudi government and its supporters have sought to foster of women enjoying more personal freedom under the rule of the de facto Saudi leader, [Mohammed bin Salman](#).

Last month, a Saudi appeals court sentenced [Salma al-Shehab, a Leeds University PhD student and mother of two](#), to 34 years in prison for having a Twitter account and for following and retweeting dissidents and activists. Shehab was arrested and convicted after she had returned home to Saudi Arabia for a holiday. The sentence was widely condemned and the US state department said it had several discussions with Saudi counterparts to discuss the case.

In Qahtani's case, the court document states that she used two anonymised Twitter accounts. One of the accounts, [@Najma097](#), appears to have last been active on 4 July 2021 and follows 293 Twitter accounts. Some tweets appear to be critical of Prince Mohammed and support the rights of political detainees.

Qahtani was convicted of several charges, including that she sought to “besmirch” the crown prince and King Salman; that she “encouraged participation in activities that damage the security and stability of society and the state”; that she expressed “support” for the ideology of those who wish to “destabilise” the kingdom; for joining a group dedicated to these causes on Twitter and following them on YouTube. She was also convicted of “insulting” state symbols and officials, seeking the release of detainees,

and obstructing the investigation into her social media use by “destroying and hiding the mobile phone use in the crime”.

She was also convicted of being in possession of a banned book, which was written by Salman Alaoudh, a well-known reformist cleric – and father of Abdullah Alaoudh of Dawn – who is himself serving a life sentence in a Saudi prison. Salman Alaoudh has been in prison since 2017 after he called for peace on Twitter following the implementation of a Saudi-led blockade on Qatar.

The book Qahtani is alleged to have possessed was not one of Alaoudh’s political books. It was described by Abdullah – who is based in the US – as a book about self improvement and fighting selfishness within one’s self.

“It is a very apolitical book,” Abdullah Alaoudh said.

The court document also references a technical analysis by state officials but it does not contain any information about how Saudi authorities identified the Twitter handle as – allegedly – being used by Qahtani.

Twitter did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The US social media company was infiltrated by Saudi state officials in 2014 and 2015. US prosecutors have described how the infiltration by the officials, who were employed by Twitter but were secretly being paid by senior Saudi government officials, led Saudi authorities to gain access to information about anonymous dissidents who were using Twitter inside the kingdom.

[The company has allowed Bader al-Asaker](#), a senior aide to Prince Mohammed, who was described by US prosecutors as the mastermind behind the Saudi infiltration, to maintain his verified Twitter account.

The court document states that Qahtani was first sentenced to 13 years’ imprisonment in connection with her “crimes”. The sentence was lengthened to 45 years after a prosecutor complained during her appeal that the original sentence was too lenient.

The court document shows Qahtani presented a defence in court, including that she was not a terrorist or planning a terrorist attack or part of a terrorist organisation. She also stated that she was nearly 50, had no prior record, and regretted her tweets.

The appeals court, the document shows, not only increased her sentence to 45 years, but imposed a 45-year travel ban once she emerges from prison, at about the age of 100. Her disabled daughter is 10 and suffers from a genetic disorder that causes developmental disabilities.

The Saudi embassy in Washington was not immediately available for a comment. According to the date on the court document, the new sentence was handed down on 9 August 2022.

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‘There is nothing for us’: Pakistan’s flood homeless start to despair

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[UK news](#)

‘Her death cannot be in vain,’ says Olivia Pratt-Korbel’s father

Father of nine-year-old girl shot dead in Liverpool says ‘words can’t express the pain we are going through’

Family video shows Olivia Pratt-Korbel with father at Christmas market – video

*[Mark Brown](#) North of England correspondent
@markbrown14*

Tue 6 Sep 2022 06.31 EDTFirst published on Tue 6 Sep 2022 05.12 EDT

The father of nine-year-old Olivia Pratt-Korbel, who was shot dead in her Liverpool home, has spoken publicly for the first time, paying tribute to “a real bright spark … who loved to laugh and make people laugh”.

The death of Olivia “cannot be in vain”, John Francis Pratt said in a statement from him and the wider family released through Merseyside police on Tuesday.

Olivia was shot by a gunman who forced his way into her family home in the Dovecot area of Liverpool on 22 August.

The assailant was chasing a convicted burglar, Joseph Nee, who had burst into the house when Olivia’s mother, Cheryl, opened her front door to see what the commotion outside was.

Olivia’s father said words could not express the pain he and the family were going through.

“Those responsible need to know what they have done,” said Pratt.

“Olivia was a real bright spark who knew her own mind, had no problem making friends (she would talk to anyone) and loved to laugh and make people laugh. She could be a proper wind-up merchant and loved to wind her nieces up, particularly those who were older than her and when they didn’t like it she’d just laugh and say ‘don’t forget I’m your aunty’.

“Olivia’s future has been cruelly snatched away from her and we have been deprived of a real light in our lives.

“We know that there has been an exceptional response to police appeals and we would like to thank those who have come forward.

“At the same time we want to urge others who may have evidence to keep coming forward with information which could help put those responsible for our Olivia’s murder behind bars.”

Pratt said the family had been taken aback by the kindness and support from family, friends and neighbours in the past two weeks.

“We would like to thank them for being there for us. We know that most people on Merseyside are good-hearted and kind just like them and we all need to stand together.

“We don’t want another child to lose their life in such horrendous circumstances and we don’t want to see another family suffer like we are suffering now,” the statement added.

“Olivia’s death cannot be in vain and we want people to feel safe and be safe, that can only happen if we all come together and make sure there is no place for guns, or those who use guns on our streets or in our communities.

“If you have information make sure you tell the police and if you don’t feel able to do that give the information to Crimestoppers anonymously so action can be taken. If you can’t do it for yourself, do it in Olivia’s name and for children across Merseyside who deserve to enjoy their lives to the full.”

The family also released a video of Olivia and her father enjoying a Christmas market in Liverpool city centre, together with new photographs

including one of Olivia larking about, wearing an adult's Jeff Banks designer spectacles.

Four men are being questioned after being arrested at different times on Sunday in connection with the killing.

They include a 34-year-old man from Liverpool, suspected of murder and attempted murder, and men aged 29 and 41, suspected of assisting an offender. Police on Monday night were granted a 36-hour extension to continue questioning.

Detectives also continue to question a man, 34, who was stopped on the M42 near Leamington Spa and arrested on suspicion of assisting an offender.

The funeral for Olivia, known as Liv, is due to take place at St Margaret Mary's, the church associated with her school, in Dovecot, on 15 September. The family have requested mourners to “wear a splash of pink”.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/sep/06/her-death-cannot-be-in-vain-says-olivia-pratt-korbel-father>

UK news

Police granted more time to question men over Olivia Pratt-Korbel's death

Officers have extra 36 hours to question trio arrested on Sunday in connection with nine-year-old's fatal shooting



Olivia Pratt-Korbel was fatally shot on 22 August at her home in Dovecot, Liverpool. A fourth man was arrested on Monday. Photograph: Family Handout/PA

PA Media

Mon 5 Sep 2022 19.12 EDT

Detectives have been granted a further extension to continue questioning three men being held in connection with the killing of nine-year-old Olivia Pratt-Korbel.

Merseyside police said a 34-year-old man, who was arrested on suspicion of murder and attempted murder, a 41-year-old man and a 29-year-old man, who have both been arrested on suspicion of assisting an offender, are being kept in custody for another 36 hours.

A spokesman for the force confirmed the extension in a statement shortly before 9.30pm on Monday. The three were arrested on Sunday.

Another 34-year-old man, who was the fourth person arrested in the space of 24 hours, is still being interviewed by detectives.

The man, from Liverpool, was arrested on suspicion of assisting an offender after he was stopped by officers on the M42 in the Midlands, the force said.

Olivia died after she was shot in her home in Dovecot, Liverpool on 22 August when a gunman chased a convicted burglar, Joseph Nee, into the property at about 10pm.

A postmortem examination found the medical cause of her death was a gunshot wound to the chest. Her mother, Cheryl, was also injured.

DCS Mark Kameen said: “I continue to urge anyone who has information that can help our investigation into Olivia’s tragic murder to please come forward so we can bring those responsible to justice.

“A number of people have been arrested in respect of this investigation.

“However, we still need the public’s help in ensuring that we can build a strong evidential picture so justice is served for Olivia and her family.

“With this, I appeal for those who may have information, no matter how small, that could continue to help our inquiries, to contact us directly or anonymously and we will do the rest.”

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[Photography](#)

David LaChapelle: ‘I’ve never seen what I do as objectification’



Tupac Shakur, Britney Spears and Eminem. ‘I’m really trying to touch people with the right pictures in the right combinations.’ Photograph: David LaChapelle

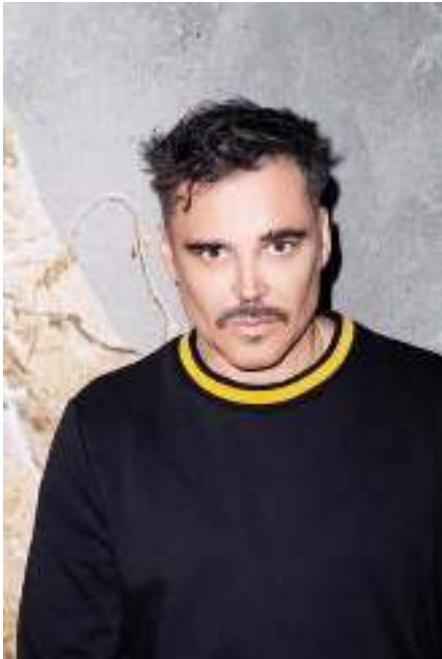
The world famous photographer, known for portraits of Britney Spears, Eminem, Tupac and Angelina Jolie, discusses his long career ahead of a new retrospective

[Veronica Esposito](#)

Tue 6 Sep 2022 02.14 EDT Last modified on Wed 7 Sep 2022 06.42 EDT

Photographer David LaChapelle – best known for his hyperreal, surrealistic portraits of pop stars – has come full circle. Running away from the bullying he received as a queer teenager in his native Connecticut, LaChapelle found an artistic path forward in 80s New York City, becoming an acolyte of Andy Warhol. Following in the footsteps of his mentor, he went on to build an artistic career obsessed with the mysterious juncture of consumerism and celebrity. In so doing, he's worked with seemingly everyone, from Tupac Shakur and Madonna to Kim and Kanye, Lizzo, and Travis Scott.

Just as LaChapelle made it to the pulsing heart of our frenzied celebrity culture, racking up a Rolling Stone cover, being feted by Jay-Z on the track All the Way Up, and even shooting Kim Kardashian's Christmas card, he experienced a kind of spiritual rebirth: he retreated from the limelight to settle in Hawaii, where he started over and created a life far away from the media industrial complex that had defined his career. But now he is making a grand return to the city that started it all, with a monumental solo show at Fotografiska New York's six-storey home, the first time this venue has been taken over by a single artist.



David LaChapelle: ‘It was a dream I didn’t allow myself to dream.’
Photograph: Linda Stulic

“I can’t really describe it. It was a dream I didn’t allow myself to dream,” said LaChapelle, referencing how his mentor Warhol died before getting to see his own career-defining retrospective, put on by the Museum of Modern Art. “It feels like I’m exhibiting in my home town ... even when I have dreams here now in Maui, I’m always back in New York, always back in my squat apartment.”

Spanning the entirety of LaChapelle’s career, from 1984 to 2022, David LaChapelle: Make Believe consists of over 150 works and runs from 9 September through 8 January. Among its holdings are the last portraits ever taken of Warhol, LaChapelle’s 2006 Rolling Stone cover of Kanye West as Jesus Christ, and the photographer’s documentation of the 1980s Aids crisis, portraying members of his queer community as saints, martyrs and angels. From David Bowie to Doja Cat, Make Believe demonstrates that LaChapelle has consistently helped craft the images of figures who define the glamour and fashion of the pop world. “I’m always interested in people who are making up our world, the celebrated figures of the time that we live in,” said LaChapelle. “They say a lot about the nature of the time that we’re in.”

LaChapelle's signature style employs explosions of colour, a level of detail that paradoxically feels too precise to be real, whimsical playfulness and most of all a strong sense of intimacy. His 2001 photo of Angelia Jolie, for example, seemingly captures the star completely naked and lost to a powerful orgasm while standing in a radiant field of flowers. His 1996 photos of Tupac catch the rapper in uncharacteristically vulnerable moments, standing in the corner of a shower, his eyes looking up into the camera with knowing peace, his body only dressed in soap bubbles. His 2001 photo of Eminem shows him in a posture of childlike glee – at odds with the renegade, outsider persona that he rode to superstardom – as he plays with a prop made to look like a lit stick of dynamite. “I really enjoy sensuality,” said LaChapelle. “I love the human body. I’ve never seen what I do as objectification.”



Naomi Campbell: Have You Seen Me (1999, New York). Photograph: David LaChapelle, courtesy of Fotografiska New York

Perhaps it is because LaChapelle's subjects always look like they are in on the joke, fully in control even as they give themselves up to the camera, that they come across as so vulnerable and personal in these photographs. LaChapelle shared that establishing a feeling of safety was key to getting his famous subjects to open up for his lens. “I always put myself in that position of, ‘How would I want to be photographed?’ It was always very

collaborative, and it was a very wholesome studio. The artists would walk in and they would feel that vibe – it was very light, creative, with great music. They were the star, they were the ones who looked amazing. We made people feel like stars.”

Another striking thing about LaChapelle’s images is how they tend to feel like an entire narrative is stuffed into them, the small details accumulating into a story’s worth of suggestion. His 2019 portrait of Lizzo has the singer holding a flute just beneath her mouth while her eyes look off behind the camera, giving the sense of having just been interrupted, while almost lost in the background is a screen showing a face with a plaintive expression. His photo of Michael Jackson, staged by an impersonator, has the pop legend pressing a foot down on to a vanquished devil, gigantic white wings sprouting from his back, the whole thing taking place on a moody rocky outcrop jutting into a cascading ocean, the feeling of an epic.



‘Gas: Shell’ (2012, Hawaii). Photograph: David LaChapelle, courtesy of Fotografiska New York

Although LaChapelle’s celebrity portraiture takes center stage in this show, the entirety of the exhibit spans themes of religion, the environment, gender identity, body image and celebrity. Make Believe features the cameraman’s surrealistic photos of gas stations in the Hawaiian jungle: the green, yellow

and purple lights of the stations glow in a creepy, ghostly way, juxtaposed with encroaching jungle expanses that look as though they are threatening to engulf the human constructs. In one of the photos, rays of light sweep in toward the gas pumps, injecting a sense of spirituality to the standoff between humanity and the natural world. “I traded one kind of jungle for another when I moved out [from New York City] to Hawaii,” said LaChapelle. “I’ve always found peace in the forest, always found direction there. I’ve found God in nature.”

The show also exhibits LaChapelle’s luxurious dreamscapes of bodies stacked and merged together in formations that seem to crib from the height of European Renaissance art. Images like the 2018 shot Staircase to Paradise harken to the very earliest photos LaChapelle ever made, playing on themes of halos and the angelic, offering a sense of striving upwards toward the spiritual. It’s fitting that Make Believe brings this theme full-circle, because even when shooting something as starkly consumerist as an album cover, LaChapelle’s camera is always pushing toward a feeling of godliness. “I’m really trying to touch people with the right pictures in the right combinations and create a journey that they go on.”

David LaChapelle: Make Believe is showing at Fotografiska in New York from 9 September through 8 January 2023

This article was amended on 6 September 2022 to clarify that David LaChapelle’s photograph of Michael Jackson pressing a foot down on a vanquished devil was staged by an impersonator after the singer’s death in 2009.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2022/sep/06/david-lachapelle-photographer-fotografiska-new-york>

‘Parents are frightened for themselves and for their children’: an inspirational school in impossible times

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Power move: UK ministers eye big energy profits for tax raid



The Drax power station in North Yorkshire is among companies that have benefited from historic green energy subsidies. Photograph: Lee Smith/Reuters

Drax in eye of storm as options considered including windfall tax to bring down household bills



[Alex Lawson](#) Energy correspondent

Tue 6 Sep 2022 04.51 EDTFirst published on Tue 6 Sep 2022 01.00 EDT

Dressed in overalls with “leave it in the ground” scrawled on their backs, climate protesters shovelled coal over the side of a goods train bound for the Drax power station in 2008.

It is now 14 years on from the train “hijack” and government officials are considering their own raid on the North Yorkshire power station – this time on the company’s finances.

The power giant, Britain’s single-biggest source of carbon emissions – thanks to the biomass and coal it burns – has benefited handsomely from the link between electricity prices and soaring gas prices, along with a group of nuclear plants and older solar and windfarm projects.

This windfall – evident in a quadrupling of profits – has thrust Drax and its fellow generators, which are propped up by historic subsidies, into the eye of a gathering storm.

With households and small businesses crushed by soaring bills, the government is considering options to break the link between gas and electricity prices as well as a windfall tax on electricity generators.

The plan could be one of Kwasi Kwarteng's first acts as chancellor if, as expected, he is promoted from business secretary by the UK's new prime minister, Liz Truss.

[Germany's decision to impose a windfall tax on electricity generators](#) may embolden ministers to follow suit. Earlier this year, as the government imposed the Energy Profits Levy (EPL) on North Sea oil and gas operators, a similar measure was mooted for electricity generators – but was dismissed as too complex.

A further leaked Treasury analysis claimed gas producers and electricity generators could make £170bn in excess profits over two years. For most companies, precise figures on windfall profits are hard to come by.

The shape of any potential raid on electricity generators' profits could prove crucial for Drax and its peers

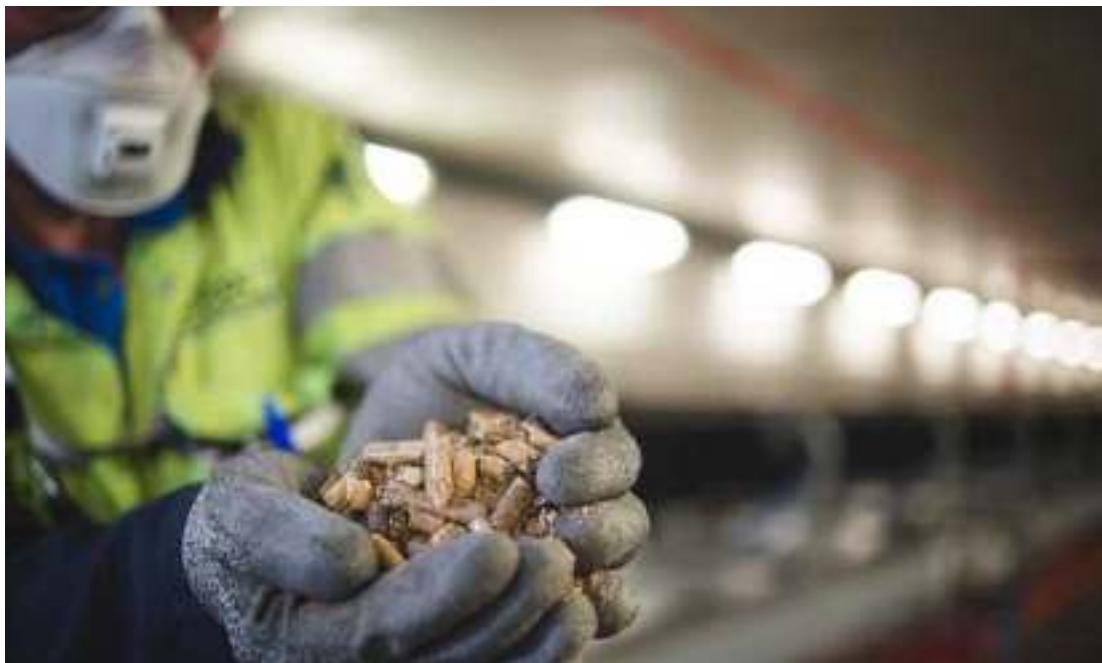
But for Drax it is clear that the good times roll. In July, the company said profit before tax had risen to £200m in the first half of the year, up from £52m in the same period a year earlier, bolstered by high electricity prices. It upgraded annual profit forecasts, while [landing a deal with National Grid](#) to keep its coal-fired operations open through the winter.

The group's chief executive, Will Gardiner, saw his total pay package swell more than 30% to £2.7m. In the past 12 months, its stock has risen 56% to 660p, valuing the company at £2.65bn, after peaking at 831p in April.

But the threat of a windfall tax has twice punctured the share rally and it may now face pressure to rip up the contracts for its units which burn wood pellets. Thinktank Ember calculates that from 2012 until 2027, Drax will have collected more than £11bn in government subsidies.

The shape of any potential raid on electricity generators' profits could prove crucial for Drax and its peers. A simple extension to corporation tax – as

applied to the oil giants – could prove most damaging to profits and, critics argue, investor sentiment in green energy.



Drax may now face pressure to rip up the contracts for its units which burn wood pellets. Photograph: Handout

Instead, the business department is reportedly scrutinising a plan which would see older Renewables Obligation Certificates (ROCs) voluntarily ripped up in favour of Contracts for Difference (CFDs).

ROCs are an anachronism from the early days of green power generation. They were first introduced in 2002, paying renewable energy producers the wholesale market rate plus a subsidy.

The scheme was closed to new entrants in 2017 and replaced with less generous CfDs, which offer electricity plants a flat rate for what they produce over 15 years. That rate is the difference between the “strike price” – an agreed price which reflects the investment in green technology – and the “reference price”, which is a reflection of the wholesale market price for electricity.

If the market price is higher than the strike price, a government entity called the Low Carbon Contracts Company ensures these savings are passed on to consumers. If the market price is lower, the LCCC makes up the shortfall.

LCCC data shows that with UK power prices more than tripling in the past year, windfarms have paid back more than £360m.

Under the proposals, those with ROCs would be encouraged to switch to CfDs. The benefit to consumers could be lower bills, and for the company a guaranteed long-term income which could reassure investors.

However, the voluntary scheme could be undermined if companies decide instead to take their chances that gas prices will remain high for years. For those on ROCs with only a few years remaining, it could prove attractive, less so for those with a decade to go. Denmark's Ørsted held the most ROCs in 2020/21, ahead of Drax, SSE and Germany's RWE.

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Although the energy market as a whole is dominated by a clutch of large players, nearly 60% of the UK onshore wind ROCs market consists of smaller developers, Bernstein analysts estimate.

[chart](#)

The ROCs register is public: it shows everything from the Achanalt power station, a small 20 megawatt hydroelectric site in the Scottish Highlands owned by SSE, to the Four Burrows windfarm, owned by renewable specialist RES, near Truro, Cornwall.

However, the nature of each site's contracts remain undisclosed. Many will be tied into long-term electricity supply deals typically agreed between power producers and electricity traders or suppliers. ROCs are also tradable.

For larger companies, their power is predominately hedged ahead in the futures markets (sold in advance) – meaning some are yet to see the full benefit from this year's surge in gas prices.

RBC analyst John Musk said: “We previously saw a lot of rhetoric around extending the windfall tax to generators when the energy profits levy was originally announced. It was seen as too difficult then – and I do not see how that changes.”



Centrica owns a 20% stake in Britain's nuclear fleet, which is operated by EDF. Photograph: Chris Radburn/PA

However, industry watchers are confident that nuclear power stations have recorded hefty gains.

British Gas owner Centrica owns a 20% stake in Britain's nuclear fleet, which is operated by EDF. Centrica [reported operating profits of £1.3bn](#), and noted an 11% gain in volumes of nuclear power generated, in the first half of 2022.

It said the price achieved for nuclear power had risen from £46.5 per megawatt hour in 2021 to £110.4/mwh. Centrica had flirted with selling off its nuclear stake, but that plan was ditched last year.

EDF is also likely to have seen a fillip, however the gains may be overshadowed by the debt-laden company's woes in France where it is being nationalised.

UK Energy Research Centre (UKERC) estimates that if 100% of eligible UK wind and solar power projects were to participate in the contracts' revamp the saving would be £12.8bn and £180 off bills.

UKERC estimates that if its proposals were extended to units 2 and 3 of Drax, which burn biomass and receive RO payments, the collective savings would be £14.8bn a year. If all of Britain's nuclear power stations participated, overall savings would reach £22.4bn.

Dan Monzani, managing director for the UK and Ireland at consultancy Aurora, said UKERC's proposal could lower the price over the next two to three winters in exchange for a fixed price extending for the remainder of the stations' technical life. "This would spread the impact of the war on Ukraine over more years," he said.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/sep/06/uk-energy-generators-face-tax-raid-on-soaring-profits>

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‘Is it seaweed – or something more sinister?’ The sewage blighting Cornwall’s beaches



‘We realise there’s very little we can do’ ... Gail Muller, left, with Lyn Pollard at Swanpool beach in Falmouth, Cornwall. Photograph: Jonny Weeks/The Guardian

Beachgoers were warned to stay out of the water this summer after sewage was discharged into the sea. Locals at Falmouth Bay in Cornwall tell of their rage at the water companies – and the rising tide of filth



[Steven Morris](#)

[@stevenmorris20](#)

Tue 6 Sep 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 6 Sep 2022 12.22 EDT

It has become a grim but necessary part of the routine for sea swimmers who splash out into Falmouth Bay from [Gellyngvase](#) and [Swanpool](#) beaches, two sandy stretches of Cornish coast separated by a brambly headland at high tide and sparkling rock pools at low. They pack costumes, goggles, towels, perhaps a flask of tea – and then pause to check the [Surfers Against Sewage \(SAS\) app](#), to establish whether it is clear to swim or whether they might find something nasty in the water.

“Sad that we have to do that, isn’t it?” says [Gail Muller](#), 44, a writer, teacher and adventurer who loves to swim in the ocean all year round, as she sits with her puppy, Bill, gearing up for a dip.

“We’re in one of the most beautiful parts of the country. The beaches are glorious, the water – usually – is glorious. Ninety per cent of everyone

makes an effort to keep it pristine and protect people and the wildlife. Then you realise the water companies and the government are not treating it with the same respect while charging us lots of money. It rankles.”

She tries not to feel bitter. “We are small people in a small town. Being angry would only cause pain and frustration. We realise there’s very little we can do, so I think the mood turns to sadness and disappointment.”

Muller is Cornish through and through and grew up not having to worry too much before plunging into the sea. “You had to think, is the wind safe, is the tide safe? You’d know your area, get in, swim, then go home to get on with your busy life.

“Now, you add in the complexity of having to analyse apps and work out: are we going to get sick? Am I going to miss a couple of days’ work because I tried to help my mental and physical health by swimming? Well, that is frustrating. You’re out there and see some scum on the water and don’t know if it’s something like seaweed innocently decomposing, or whether it’s something more sinister.”



A pipe at Swanpool beach ... some storm overflow pipes containing a mixture of sewage, rain and surface water were discharged into the sea this summer. Photograph: Jonny Weeks/The Guardian

The issue of sewage being discharged into bathing waters made headlines late this summer, just as holidaymakers and fair-weather swimmers tried to get in their last salt-water fix before the autumn chills arrived.

Beachgoers across England and Wales were warned to stay out of the water after storm overflow pipes containing a mixture of sewage, rain and surface water were discharged into the sea. The Guardian revealed that the incoming prime minister, Liz Truss, was responsible for cutting millions of pounds of funding earmarked for tackling water pollution during her time as environment secretary.

SAS says that, so far this bathing season, it has received 654 combined sewer overflow (CSO) notifications from 171 different locations. The worst-hit spots were Longrock in Cornwall and Scarborough in North Yorkshire (19 each), Cowes on the Isle of Wight (16), and Spittal in Northumberland and Biggar Bank on Walney Island, Cumbria (both 14). The week of 15 August saw the most CSO alerts (100).



‘You know that after rain there’s going to be an alert ...’ Jem Wallis and Glyn Winchester at Swanpool beach. Photograph: Jonny Weeks/The Guardian

“We track thousands of sewage spills at official bathing waters and Blue Flag beaches every summer,” says [Hugo Tagholm, the CEO of SAS](#). “The water industry seems to consider even our most prized beaches as a place they can dump their sewage pollution. We alerted the great British beach-loving public to almost 3,500 separate sewage pollution incidents at popular beaches last summer. People should be able to swim between the red and yellow flags without the spectre of sewage pollution hanging over them.

“The privatised water industry sees the public as a cash cow to line the pockets of their shareholders while abusing our coastline and rivers with effluent they should have treated. It’s high time water industry profits were severely restricted until the necessary investment has been rolled out at pace. Not in 2035, not 2050.”

The privatised water industry sees the public as a cash cow for shareholders

Hugh Tagholm, Surfers Against Sewage

Despite the blue flag currently fluttering over Gellyngvase (signalling the beach is [clean, safe and well managed](#)), it has had its fair share of problems this year – as has Swanpool. According to the SAS app, there have been nine “sewage pollution alerts” at Gellyngvase in 2022 – known to most as Gelly – and three at Swanpool. On Monday, there were 10 SAS pollution alerts in force, at beaches including Gelly, Sennen Cove near Land’s End and two beaches in the UK’s surfing capital, Newquay.

I visit Gelly and Swanpool at the end of August and find Glyn Winchester, 60, a charity worker, sipping on ginger tea from her flask after an early-morning swim. She moved to Cornwall from south Texas in 1990 and was appalled when she found sewage was routinely released into the waters here. “That put me off swimming for years,” she says. “Then it seemed to get better and I started to get out there.”

Winchester is a member of a group called the Swanny Swimmers, who meet at the beaches. Like many, she has experienced a dodgy tummy after swimming. “I had a sickness bug. I can’t prove it came from here but

nobody else I was close to had it. It just doesn't seem anyone in power is doing anything about it."



'They said it would take time. But we've had time and where are the results?' ... Lib Dem councillor Colin Martin at Gelly beach. Photograph: Jonny Weeks/The Guardian

A second Swanny Swimmer, Lyn Pollard, 64, says she loves being out in the elements. "I'm a bit of a nature girl. I try not to worry too much about the state of the water, but I have noticed, in the last month, that my hair and skin are much more greasy when I get out. I used to love the feel of the salt in my hair, the way it made it wavy; now I dash home to wash it."

Hero Selwood, 62, another of the Swanny gang, who works for a recumbent tricycle company, says she felt SAS was winning the fight five or six years ago. "But I'm not so sure now. It's really sad. When you go on litter picks on the beach, you find cotton buds, which is a sign of sewage. When you walk down to the beach close to the stream, you sometimes smell sewage."

I used to love the feel of salt in my hair – now I dash home to wash it

Lyn Pollard

Joining the Swannies for their morning swim is [Jem Wallis](#), 49, a Cornish open-water coach who runs a wild swimming company. People who struggle with their mental health are prescribed sessions with him. But he says his phone is pinging all too often with SAS alerts. “You know that after rain there’s going to be an alert somewhere. It’s happening again and again. I’ve surfed for years and years; I can’t think of any of my friends who have not had some sort of ear infection or sickness bug.

“There’s a massive boom in sea swimming. God knows, with all the bad news we have, we need this sort of release more than ever. The water companies are making huge profits but there seems to be no comeback. Where’s the infrastructure to deal with this? What are they up to?”

The answer is hard to come by. South West [Water](#) (SWW) said it did not have anyone available to be interviewed about Gelly and Swanpool, but insisted the number of discharges here is decreasing, stating: “We are delivering our largest environmental investment programme in 15 years. This will dramatically reduce our use of storm overflows, maintain our region’s excellent bathing water quality standards all year round, and remove our impact on river water quality by 2030.”



‘With climate change and sudden storms, it’s going to get worse’ ... Labour councillor Zoe Young at Gelly beach. Photograph: Jonny Weeks/The

Guardian

Storm overflows are a feature of old combined sewer systems, when sewage, rain and surface water are all collected in the same pipe. During periods of heavy rain, the overflows play what SWW calls “a necessary and very important job”, acting as “legal safety valves” to prevent sewers from becoming overloaded and to avoid sewage backing up and flooding into homes, roads and businesses.

Zoe Young, a Labour town councillor, points out the position of the pipe that spews sewage out into the sea near Gelly and Swanpool. It lies equidistant between the two beaches. “With climate change and sudden storms, it’s going to get worse,” she says. “Another problem is the amount of development going on here and elsewhere in Cornwall. New places are being built – many of them aimed at second-homeowners – and that puts more pressure on the creaking system.” Someone with an aerosol and stencil has spotted the connection and sprayed: “No more second homes” on the concrete near the pipe.



‘There are private pools, but not everyone can afford them. It increases inequality’ ... Labour councillor Laurie Magowan at Gelly beach.
Photograph: Jonny Weeks/The Guardian

Local politicians see that sewage will be a vote winner or loser in the coming years. “It’s really high on the political agenda,” says Laurie Magowan, another Labour councillor for Falmouth. “The community is disappointed in the lack of action being taken.”

The Tory-controlled Cornwall council also shut Falmouth’s only public swimming pool earlier this year. “So people have no pool to swim in and are worried about going in the sea,” said Magowan. “There are plenty of private pools but not everyone can afford them. It increases inequality.”

The Lib Dem councillor Colin Martin complains that, under the Tories, housebuilding has become easier at a time when the sewers are clearly struggling to cope. “Huge amounts of money have been spent by housebuilders lobbying the Tories. A result is we end up with more sewage on our beaches.”

He criticised water companies for scare stories about the multibillion-pound cost of replacing the old system. “There are other ways to reduce the amount of water getting into the system, by managing our fields, gardens and parks differently.”

Martin said people had been told to be patient after [water privatisation in 1989](#). “They said it would take time. Things would improve. But we’ve had time and where are the results? The companies make multimillion-pound profits, their shareholders get their dividends, the managers get their bonuses.” And, still, the apps ping.

Cherilyn Mackrory, the Conservative MP for Truro and Falmouth, was unavailable for interview, but issued a statement saying: “The issue of water quality has been a top priority for me since my election, and I share the passion and drive of the people of Cornwall regarding the stopping of dumping sewage into our waterways.”



A community hub, a space to exercise ... Swanpool beach. Photograph: Jonny Weeks/The Guardian

She also highlighted the [government's announcement](#) in the wake of the bleak headlines that water companies would have to invest £56bn over 25 years in a long-term programme to tackle storm sewage discharges by 2050. [Critics say these payments will end up on customers' bills and are frustrated at the timescale.](#)

There is little comfort in all this for parents watching their children splashing on Gelly and Swanpool beaches. Two mums, both called Sarah, say they worry about their little ones. “We brought bucket and spades as a back-up plan in case the water looked too murky,” says the first Sarah. “But it’s the sea! It’s hard to keep them out.”

As the tide goes out, there are three distinct layers of colour – brown close to the beach, then turquoise and, finally, deep blue. The brown is probably not due to discharges but rather the seabed being churned up by a strong easterly wind. Still, it makes people think.

Many complain about the lack of detail over the alerts from SWW. After a Gelly alert on 22 August, the Cornish actor Stacey Guthrie drew attention to the discharge with [a tweet asking SWW about the water quality](#). SWW

replied, stating that it was not “raw sewage” and added a smiley face emoji. Guthrie suggested the use of the emoji “isn’t really reading the room”, and asked: “Is there any sewage in it at all? Treated or otherwise?” The exchange ended.



‘We haven’t to my knowledge had one client say they’ve been sick’ ... Dany Duncan, MD of Elemental water sports at Swanpool beach. Photograph: Jonny Weeks/The Guardian

Some of the businesses on the beaches are reluctant to talk about sewage, seeing it as a turnoff for their potential customers. Dany Duncan, the MD of the watersports centre [Elemental UK](#), accused SAS’s alerts of being “hysterical”. “We haven’t, to my knowledge, had one client come back and say they’ve been sick,” he says.

But so many people do have a sickness story. Paul, 24, who kayaks, swims and surfs here, recalls coming straight out of the water one day and “throwing up everywhere”. He is from Mauritius. “It’s a big deal for us to keep the water really clean,” he said. “There seems a lack of motivation here.”

The fish and crabs are still there in pockets, but nothing like they were 20 years ago

Jaye Brighton

Visitors have come to these two beaches since the railway arrived in 1863. And for local people, they are so precious. The sand is their village green, their community hub, a space to exercise, retreat and to meet.

Jaye Brighton, 72, a retired teacher, bodyboarder and supporter of Ocean Rebellion, the aquatic arm of Extinction Rebellion, has lived close to Gylly for 40 years. “We’ve seen the degradation of the place. I remember what used to be in the sea in terms of wildlife, the abundance of fish swimming around my feet and the crabs in the rock pools. They’re still there in pockets but nothing like they were even 20 years ago.

“All of us have had bouts of being unwell – ear infections, stomach upsets.” She says the latest Gylly alerts were “the pits, so shocking”. “We’ve had hardly any rainfall, so what’s going on? The system is failing. We feel the grief, the loss. It’s hard to bear.”

The headline of this article was amended on 6 September 2022 to refer to Cornwall rather than Britain.

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2022.09.06 - Opinion

- A prime minister must get the big calls right. On the cost of living crisis, Truss got it badly wrong
- Having a baby is hard, but the grief of not being able to have one can be even harder
- Give Africa's youth a voice in shaping the climate agenda. It is their future at stake
- School uniforms – good or bad? Either way, the system makes us suffer

[**Opinion**](#)[**Liz Truss**](#)

A prime minister must get the big calls right. On the cost of living crisis, Truss got it badly wrong

[**Gaby Hinsliff**](#)



She takes office with a screeching handbrake turn on her flagship policy – how can anybody ever trust her judgment now?

'Deliver, deliver, deliver': Truss vows change and thanks Johnson in acceptance speech – video

Mon 5 Sep 2022 12.40 EDT Last modified on Tue 6 Sep 2022 11.17 EDT

It should have been Liz Truss's moment of triumph, her chance to bask in the glory of a whooping crowd.

Yet victory, when it came, felt curiously flat. Gone was the bouncy, confident, shoot-from-the-hip Truss who emerged over two long months of

hustings, after a wobbly start. When Britain's [new prime minister](#) rose to the lectern to embrace a narrower win over Rishi Sunak than expected – narrow enough to make you wonder if he could even have won, had he played it differently – the old, slightly flat, stilted speaking manner was back. In Truss, that's a sure sign of nerves. Perhaps only now does she feel the weight of what lies ahead.

When loyal Tories struggle for nice things to say about Boris Johnson, they often fall back on claiming that at least he got the big calls right. That cliche may be hard to square with the chaotic reality of his time in office, but they reach for it because the absolute minimum expected of a prime minister is that they inspire confidence in a crisis. When the proverbial hits the fan, we all have to hope their gut instincts will be right, whatever else we disagree with them over. What's unusual about Truss is that her first move on taking office will effectively be to acknowledge that at the start of her leadership campaign she got the big call wrong.

She won't put it that way, obviously, when she addresses the nation on Tuesday. But however valiantly she now tries to rewrite history, the fact remains that she horribly misjudged the cost of living emergency at first, insisting it could be handled [merely with tax cuts](#) and scrapping the green levy on fuel bills. Thankfully she now seems to have been persuaded that a much bigger and more direct intervention will be needed, and if the mooted £100bn plan includes swallowing her pride and [adopting](#) Labour's popular strategy of freezing fuel bills, then millions will heave a sigh of understandable relief. By doing so she may not only save the poorest from destitution this winter, but help build the confidence and certainty needed to halt an otherwise catastrophic spiral. If nobody knows what the next few months may bring, then even those with money to spare will stop spending it, with disastrous knock-on consequences for the wider economy.

But the fact remains that her initial gut instincts were wide of the mark, leaving her with alarmingly little time to bolt together a complex rescue package. None of this inspires confidence. Her biggest challenge is to defy the expectations of those already worried that she isn't up to it, inside and outside her own party. Unusually for a Conservative prime minister, that will mean battling to win the confidence not just of voters but of the markets.

There are audible jitters in the City, not just about the likely scale of borrowing under a Truss government but its intellectual heft, experience and general ability to cope with what's coming. The pound hit a 37-year low against the dollar today, while gas prices surged 35%; gilt yields are rising (which pushes up the cost of borrowing), business activity contracting, and markets are not rallying in the way you might expect if the City really believed Truss was about to unlock a golden era of growth fuelled by tax cuts. Business leaders like stable politics, offering some certainty about what conditions they'll be operating under. Instead, they've had six years of post-Brexit volatility followed by a new prime minister whose first act is a screeching handbrake turn, backed by a novice chancellor and the risible prospect of Jacob Rees-Mogg as business and energy secretary.

It remains unclear how Truss would pay for a massive bailout on top of the promised tax cuts from which she cannot retreat without triggering mutiny within her party. But so far, her thinking seems to involve borrowing on a scale that when advocated by Jeremy Corbyn triggered doomsday warnings of slashed national credit ratings, maybe even a full-blown sovereign debt crisis and the humiliation of an IMF bailout. If we're lucky, we're about to discover that those warnings were overblown, that balancing the books doesn't matter as much as convention dictates, and that who dares wins. If not, we're about to discover that driving head-on at a brick wall usually ends in a crash, possibly of Black Wednesday-sized proportions.

When she gets into Downing Street and finally opens up the books, maybe Truss will simply recalibrate. But she's certainly stubborn enough to consider charging head-on at the Treasury, the Bank of England, the independent Office for Budget Responsibility and the mainstream economists she scornfully accuses of practising stale "abacus economics", or insisting on making everything actually add up. Talk of establishing an independent council of economic advisers suggests she will seek rival sources of wisdom, having already raised eyebrows by citing the likes of the 79-year-old former Thatcher adviser Prof Patrick Minford in her support. Johnson's preferred brand of populism pushed the law, the courts, parliament and the media to their limits, revealing just how ill-prepared many institutions were for someone who didn't play by the rules. Under Truss it may be the turn of economists and central bankers, facing the kind of

onslaught they never expected from what once (though it seems a long time ago now) called itself the party of business.

Unlike Corbynism, meanwhile, Trussism could combine lavish borrowing with painful spending cuts, given that departmental budgets fixed at a time of low inflation will surely need revising now that the costs of everything from construction to public sector wages have shot up. One of the most telling aspects of that speech was when she promised to “deliver” on the NHS and then stopped in what felt almost like mid-sentence. Deliver what, exactly, and how? She couldn’t say.

Politics is often a leap of faith, a triumph of hope over cynical experience. But now as never before, we are being asked to put our trust in Truss’s judgment; to believe that she is a visionary, more brilliantly far-sighted than any expert she dismisses, possessed of some magic elixir for growth that has eluded everyone else (including previous Tory administrations who have, as Sunak kept plaintively saying, slashed corporation tax out of similar ideological conviction but been disappointed with the results). It is a hell of a gamble she is taking with all our lives, against daunting odds. For a split-second, as she stood on that strangely lonely podium, it looked almost as if she knew it.

- Gaby Hinsliff is a Guardian columnist
- [Guardian Newsroom: What does Liz Truss’s leadership mean for the UK?](#) Join our panel including Hugh Muir, Jessica Elgot, Owen Jones and Salma Shah as they react to the announcement of the new PM in this livestreamed event. On Tuesday 6 September 8pm BST | 9pm CEST | 12pm PDT | 3pm EDT. Book tickets [here](#)
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[Republic of Parenthood](#)[Parents and parenting](#)

Having a baby is hard, but the grief of not being able to have one can be even harder

[Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett](#)



As women, we owe it to one another to make space for difficult conversations. Friendships depend on it



‘The gulf that can emerge during our childbearing years can only deepen with time.’ Photograph: Graeme Robertson/The Guardian

Tue 6 Sep 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 6 Sep 2022 12.05 EDT

“It’s as if you are pressing your nose against the sweet-shop window of life, and you’re never ever going to be on the other side.” Jody Day is describing involuntary childlessness. The author and founder of [Gateway Women](#), a global friendship, support and advocacy network for childless women, tells me about what she describes as the “friendship apocalypse” that can happen between women when one is able to have the children she dreamed of and the other doesn’t. After realising that children weren’t going to happen for her as a result of “[social infertility](#)” (which means not having children due to circumstance rather than medical issues and is the most common reason for childlessness), Day experienced profound grief. In the process, she lost friends.

“I began to find it incredibly painful to be around my friends with children. And I also realised that I had been the one doing the work to maintain friendships. And when I stopped doing that, when I stopped keeping up with their children’s birthdays, with likes on Facebook, with just making sure I was included – what happened? Crickets. It was like I had dropped off the planet. I heard from practically nobody. It was an incredibly lonely period of my life.”

Parenting can be hard, but I've often reflected that it's far, far harder to want a baby and not to have one. This grief is still stigmatised – when Day first started talking about her experience, she was the only one, yet [one-fifth of British women](#) will be childless by the time they reach their early 40s.

In the course of researching this column, many women got in touch to reflect on how it has impacted their relationships, from both sides of the equation. “It is difficult feeling outside the club, to perpetually be the group’s auntie and uncle, to watch friends announce pregnancies and not feel churned up by resentment and jealousy, ugly emotions I feel guilty for having,” one tells me. Another woman whose friend is going through infertility says: “It’s so hard to know what to say, because I am conscious not to be too positive or negative, as the whole process is highly unpredictable. She is so sad all of the time … Honestly, I don’t think I’ve ever wanted anything as much as she wants this, and it’s just heartbreakingly to watch.”

The gulf that can emerge during our childbearing years can only deepen with time, as the childless friend slips from the consciousness of the busy parent, or an awkwardness becomes insurmountable, to the point where the two parties are simply performing friendship because they have stopped telling one another the truth. Part of the reason is that envy is such an uncomfortable emotion to admit to. How do you say to someone “I desperately want what you have” without making them feel uncomfortable? How do you admit feeling angry and resentful at the unfairness of life? “There’s something really cold at the heart of envy that, particularly as women, we don’t want to know about. We’ve been culturally conditioned to be nice,” Day says.

“We’re just not raised, as women, to know how to deal with such conflict within our friendships,” says Claire Cohen, author of [BFF? The Truth About Female Friendship](#), “So when it occurs, we end up losing friendships completely. And infertility was one of the areas that seemed to be happening with tragic regularity.” This is why I am trying to be mindful of my friends who don’t have children – I don’t want to lose them by being one of those tactless parents that Cohen mentions, who says things such as “At least you can have a lie in!” which amounts, essentially, to a denial of their grief.

And it is grief. Day reminds me that a woman in her 30s who is struggling with involuntary childlessness is only at the beginning of a journey that may mean coming to terms with a different kind of life, from not being involved with the schooling and education system, to not being part of a community of mothers. She will have to grieve not being a grandmother, and may not be treated as a proper adult by her own parents. Talking to Day helps me understand that to not have children when you want them desperately is as profound and transformative as having them, yet this is still rarely recognised despite childless women making up a large part of the population. Day's wisdom is part of the reason that her book *Living the Life Unexpected: How to find hope, meaning and a fulfilling future without children* is recommended by doctors and therapists.

As well as encouraging crucial friendships between childless women to help them in their grief, Day wants to help mothers be better friends to them. This involves recognising that you might not be the best person for them to be around at that time. "But keep inviting them," she says. "If in doubt, never send any baby photos to anyone unless they ask for them. She might say no to coming to birthday parties ... don't presume that they don't want to be part of your life. They just may not be able to cope with it this time, or this week, or this month, or this year."

Cohen says acknowledging a friend's grief is key, but also notes that infertility is an incredibly difficult thing to be honest about. It remains the fact that parenthood dominates the discourse in a way that a life without much-wanted babies does not. For that to change, parents need to be more comfortable having these difficult conversations, and be less wrapped up in our own lives.

What's working

Along with one other, the baby received special dispensation to attend an otherwise child-free wedding at the weekend. Apart from some unfortunate shouting during the speeches (he was promptly removed), he had a great time, managing to drop off during an especially raucous céilidh. I'm so grateful to my friends Ed and Anna for including him, it meant a lot.

What's not

I still haven't managed to paint my toenails (see [last week's column](#)), but I

did manage to get a haircut half an hour before closing time by evilly saying I only wanted my fringe doing and then, once he'd agreed, showing the hairdresser a photo of Dakota Johnson. It started karmically raining the moment I left the salon, necessitating a sprint home. Arriving with still-perfect hair, I picked the baby up and he was promptly sick in it.

- Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett is a Guardian columnist and author
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[**Opinion**](#)[**Global development**](#)

Give Africa's youth a voice in shaping the climate agenda. It is their future at stake

[Graça Machel](#)



By 2050, Africa's 1bn children will bear the brunt of the climate crisis, yet they have no say in decisions largely made by old men



Young Kenyans at a Fridays for Future protest in Nakuru. Some 490m children in 35 sub-Saharan countries will face the worst of the climate crisis.
Photograph: James Wakibia/Sopa/Shutterstock

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Tue 6 Sep 2022 02.30 EDT

It is ironic that Africa – sometimes called the “youngest continent” due to the average age of its [population being below 20](#) – has the oldest leaders in the world. Ten of Africa’s political leaders are over 75; the average age of an African president is 62.

According to the Global Center on Adaptation, young people in Africa are often [excluded from politics](#) precisely because Africa has its oldest generation squarely at the helm of political leadership.

There is nothing wrong with recognising the wisdom to be gained with age, and many African societies have a long and proud tradition of honouring and respecting their elders. But the dominance of political decision-making by men (yes, it is largely men) far past pensionable age is deeply concerning, especially when it comes to dealing with the climate crisis – fresh, innovative thinking is needed now, and well into the future.

Africa’s youth – including those not yet born – will bear the financial, environmental and social costs of our failure to meaningfully address the climate crisis in the decades since the alarm was first raised.

Africa’s significant income disparities and social inequalities will, in all likelihood, get worse as we progress through the 21st century, exacerbating poverty and intergenerational economic injustice.



Paul Biya, the 89-year-old Cameroonian president, has been in power for 40 years. More than two-thirds of the population have known no other leader.

Photograph: Ludovic Marin/AFP/Getty

The majority of Africans are under 18, and according to the [Children's Climate Risk Index](#), a overview of children's vulnerability to the impacts of global heating drawn up by Unicef, an estimated [490 million children](#) in 35 sub-Saharan countries are at risk from the worst effects of the climate crisis. By 2050, Africa will be home to [one billion children](#) and young people who, given the right chances in life, could power a social and economic renaissance across the continent.

However, the economic impacts of climate breakdown mean they face an uncertain and unenviable future of reduced opportunities, earning potential and productivity, coupled with curtailed personal and professional development. The very people who have most to lose – children and young people – are largely excluded from shaping their own future.

We need a groundswell of young Africans in their millions to take up the charge in charting a climate-just future

This week, I am taking part in the African Child Policy Forum's [Ninth International Policy Conference](#) in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa,

which will focus on the climate crisis and child rights in Africa. Alongside politicians, academics and experts, I will hear from young people about the impact of climate breakdown on their lives now and in the future.

It is only right that the voices of the young should be heard and integrated into policy decisions and actionable next steps – but this is all too rare. We need a groundswell of climate activists and young Africans in their millions to take up the charge in charting a climate-just future.

I am heartened that [young climate activists](#) are increasingly influencing global debates. From Senegal's [Yero Sarr](#) to South Africa's [Raeesah Noor-Mahomed](#), from Uganda's [Vanessa Nakate](#) to Morocco's [Fatna Ikrame El Fanne](#), African youth are passionate and vocal. Their voices will join thousands of others at the UN [Cop27 climate talks](#) in Egypt, demanding action for a fairer, sustainable future.

African governments urgently need to step up their financial investment and economic policies to prevent and respond to the effects of the climate crisis on children. We know it exacerbates existing global injustice; Africa – responsible for the [lowest share of the world's greenhouse gas emissions](#) – is expected to face the highest cost. It is only right that the most developed nations, which are mainly responsible for the climate crisis, should foot much of the bill for adaptation and mitigation measures. But African governments also have a responsibility to ensure that investing in a climate-resilient future does not come at a cost to young people.

Current and future generations face a paradox. On the one hand, the economic impacts of climate breakdown are significant and worsening. Adaptation, mitigation and building resilience are expensive, but without such expenditure, gross domestic product could be [reduced by up to 30%](#) – with dire consequences for employment and growth prospects.

On the other hand, governments and international donors may be tempted to divert precious budgets away from existing programmes in order to fund adaptation infrastructure. Which means already inadequate funding for education, child protection, nutrition, health and social care could be further cut.

Faced with these existential challenges, it is clear to me that children and young people should have greater involvement in shaping their own futures. They must be an integral part of the decision-making process and be meaningfully involved in shaping the climate agenda today and in the years to come.

Graça Machel is chair of the board of trustees of the African Child Policy Forum, the Foundation for Community Development and the Graça Machel Trust

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[**OpinionSchools**](#)

School uniforms – good or bad? Either way, the system makes us suffer

[**Zoe Williams**](#)



The annual ritual of buying school uniform has been more hellish than ever this year. Isn't there a better alternative?



Whether children are uniformed or not, inequality between them will persist (posed by models). Photograph: Tara Moore/Getty Images

Tue 6 Sep 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 6 Sep 2022 11.17 EDT

School uniform becomes a hot-button issue at this time of year, for obvious reasons: half the country is bankrupted by it, and the other half wonders why they have to dress their kids up like pretend executives on polyester wages, and there's a fierce debate on Mumsnet about whether it's bad for equality (so expensive), or good (at least you don't have to buy other clothes). Then they'll get distracted and never resolve the issue. I don't think it can be resolved – it's an empty signifier. Whether uniformed or not, inequality between children will persist for as long as inequality between adults does, and sure, send them to school naked in an awareness-raising exercise, but; don't kid yourself that this is the solution or even the beginning of one.

Even if you can't get aerated about uniform, you still have to buy it. The system for purchasing it is abstruse, and it is stacked against you, and there is no gaming it, and sometimes I think the people who don't know there is one are happier in the long run. In my local uniform shop, there are three queues: an orderly, short one, for the people who have an appointment; a longer one full of anguish, for the people who arrived late for their appointment; and a wild, tumultuous one, like the last airlift out of a war

zone, for the people who didn't realise you needed one. There is zero solidarity between the queues, which is a shame, because once you get inside, you're really going to need it.

The big-ticket items (blazers) are too high to reach, so you have to be helped by a guy with a ladder, except there are 50 of you, three of him and one ladder. The walls are festooned with “polite notices” telling you not to abuse the staff, and while I am broadly on board with not abusing people, if it happens enough that you need signs, maybe you don't have enough staff. Or ladders.

The kids about to start at big school arrive full of excitement – hell, maybe they'll get a new calculator on top of all the other new stuff – and you see the innocence drain from their faces as they realise: people are *mean*. If grownups are this mean, what are year 10s going to be like?

Do it online, is all I'm saying. If only I would tell that to myself.

- Zoe Williams is a Guardian columnist
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2022.09.06 - Around the world

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[Russia](#)

Russian journalist Ivan Safronov sentenced to 22 years in prison

Reporter handed a record sentence for trumped-up treason charges that shocked supporters inside the court



Ivan Safronov at his court hearing in Moscow on Monday. Photograph: Moscow City Court/Reuters

[Andrew Roth in Moscow](#)

Mon 5 Sep 2022 13.48 EDT Last modified on Tue 6 Sep 2022 11.17 EDT

A Russian court has sentenced the journalist Ivan Safronov to 22 years in prison on trumped-up treason charges, a record sentence that has shocked friends and supporters who gathered in court on Monday to protest against his imprisonment.

Safronov, a former defence reporter for the *Kommersant* and *Vedomosti* dailies, was tried on secret evidence. But case files revealed by Proekt

showed that much of the case against him came from public data in his articles and alleged ties to foreigners that were not backed up by evidence.

Nonetheless, a panel of judges came to a quick decision in the case, which his lawyer said would send a chilling effect through Russian journalism and showed that “for good, legal journalism work, you can go to prison for a long time”.

Safronov stared straight ahead as a judge sentenced him to 22 years in prison and another two years of strict probation when he is released, potentially in 2042, given time already served. As the court was adjourned, his supporters, many of them journalists present to cover the trial, began to applaud in his support.

“I’ll write to everyone. Keep writing to me. I love you!” he said from the glass cage where defendants are held in Russian courtrooms. Moments later, Safronov, who was dressed in a black vest and grey sweatpants, was led away.

“You can all go burn [in hell],” his fiancee told the remaining bailiffs in the courtroom, according to a Mediazona correspondent.

Safronov was put under enormous pressure to confess during the investigation. In a final hearing, a prosecutor offered to recommend him a 12-year sentence if he confessed. He refused and the prosecution sought 24 years in prison instead. “He told them to get lost,” Evgeny Smirnov, a lawyer for Safronov, told the Guardian.

Several hundred people attended the court hearing. Some were crying and hugging in the corridors and on the street outside after the verdict was read out. As the courtroom was cleared, one reporter cut off another asking about a detail of the sentence: “I don’t know. I heard 22 years and I stopped fucking listening.”

Russian officials claimed that they had caught Safronov “finding out and collecting secret and top-secret information … including in relation to Russia’s military-technical cooperation with the states that are members of

the Collective Security Treaty Organization, as well as the countries of the Middle East, Africa and the Balkans”.

The defence said they believed he was targeted for revealing details of the potential sale of 20 Su-35 fighters to Egypt in an aborted deal that caused the Egyptian military leadership to lodge a protest with Russia.

“The case of Ivan Safronov is one of the most closed and strangest cases in recent Russian judicial history,” said Katerina Gordeeva, a journalist who made a short film about the case. In an interview, Safronov’s mother told her: “He won’t break. He has a tough core. He can handle it.”

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Most of Russia’s independent media signed a public statement calling for Safronov’s release. “We believe this decision is unjust and politically motivated. Journalism is not a crime.”

In a final statement to the court before his sentencing, Safronov said: “The whole world will see that they want to put a journalist in jail for writing articles. To pass a guilty verdict means to end the topic of freedom of speech for a long time, if not for ever, because there will be no speech, no freedom.

“If I am destined to sit in prison, then I will serve my sentence with honour and dignity.”

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[Joe Biden](#)

‘Tired of trickle-down economics’: Biden calls for expansion of unions in Labor Day speech

President again pledges to be ‘most pro-union president’ in history during speech in Milwaukee



Joe Biden arrives at the Summerfest grounds in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on Monday for a Labor Day event. Photograph: Matt Marton/EPA

[Nina Lakhani](#) in New York

[@ninalakhani](#)

Mon 5 Sep 2022 18.21 EDTFirst published on Mon 5 Sep 2022 17.29 EDT

Joe Biden used a Labor Day speech in the battleground state of [Wisconsin](#) to endorse the expansion of unions, reiterating his election promises to be the “most pro-union president” in American history.

The US president argued in [Milwaukee](#) that a skilled, unionised workforce would help the US regain its place as a world leader in infrastructure and manufacturing.

Drawing on Franklin D Roosevelt's explicit support for unions during [the New Deal](#), Biden said: "I am encouraging unions ... we need key worker protections to build an economy from the bottom up and middle out. I am sick and tired of trickle-down economics."

Biden's comments come amid a [major resurgence](#) for the labor movement in the US, with more support for unions than at any time in the past 60 years, especially as low-paid workers across a range of industries [try unionising](#).

Earlier on Monday, Biden came out in support of a proposed law in California, the Agricultural Labor Relations Voting Choice Act – currently on Governor Gavin Newsom's desk – that would make it easier for farmhands to organise.

"The least we owe them is an easier path to make a free and fair choice to organize a union," Biden said.

The Labor Day holiday in an election year typically marks the start of the final sprint before the November vote. With so much at stake in this year's [midterm elections](#), Biden and Republican leaders are revving up the rhetoric.

There is also fevered speculation about whether Donald Trump will announce, before the election, a fresh run for the Republican nomination to recapture the White House in 2024, while he is embroiled [in a host](#) of criminal and civil investigations, from New York to Georgia.

In Wisconsin, Biden again attempted to distinguish between the type of mainstream Republicans whom he has previously worked with and the "extreme right, Maga Republicans, Trumpies", he said, who "pose a threat to democracy and economic security, and embrace political violence".

His [use of the word "Trumpies"](#) lit up social media. Biden in office has largely avoided referring to his predecessor by name in public or taking

direct aim at his loyalist voter base.

But last month he referred to the phenomenon of extremist Republicans hewing unshakably to Trump's "Make America great again" nationalist agenda amid encouragement of "political violence" as "semi-fascism", then last week said the US was in a battle for the soul of the nation.

Biden refers to MAGA republicans as "The Trumpies"
pic.twitter.com/I49hQZRzIe

— Acyn (@Acyn) September 5, 2022

On Monday he said: "You can't be pro-insurrection and pro-democracy," referring to defenders of the January 6 attack on the US Capitol by extremist Trump supporters hoping to overturn Biden's victory.

Biden continued on the campaign trail from Milwaukee to Pittsburgh for his third visit to Pennsylvania in a week – underscoring the importance of the swing state, which the president, a Pennsylvania native, won back for the Democrats in 2020. Trump, who won Pennsylvania in 2016, rallied there on Saturday.

After months of dire polling, the signs are more positive for Biden and the Democrats after a spate of legislative and policy wins, including getting a historic bill to tackle the climate crisis and healthcare costs over the line.

The US supreme court's decision in June to overturn the right to abortion also seems to be galvanising the Democrat base, independent and swing voters, especially women, which could hurt Republicans at the polls.

In a two-pronged push in favor of organized labor, the vice-president, Kamala Harris, spoke at an event in Boston, where she emphasized: "Joe Biden and I are determined to lead the most pro-union administration in America's history. We are proud."

She recalled her immigrant parents taking her to civil rights rallies as a child. "Today, on picket lines, in union homes, and on job sites; in hospitals,

schools and grocery stores, union workers fight for better wages and safer working conditions. You fight to protect union pensions and the right for all working people to be able to retire with dignity ... Our whole nation, whether they are a member of a union or not, benefits from your work," she said.

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[Russia](#)

Exiled Russian calls on those still in country to ‘sabotage’ Putin’s war

Mikhail Khodorkovsky claims ‘armed resistance’ may play role, although critics say mass opposition unlikely



Khodorkovsky was one of many opposition figures to address the so-called Congress of Free Russia in Lithuania last week. Photograph: Bernd von Jutrczenka/AP

[Shaun Walker](#)

Mon 5 Sep 2022 11.17 EDT Last modified on Tue 6 Sep 2022 11.17 EDT

Mikhail Khodorkovsky, the exiled Russian businessman, has called on Russians still inside the country to launch a wave of “sabotage” against state structures, with the aim of derailing Vladimir Putin’s war in Ukraine and destabilising his government.

Khodorkovsky, who spent a decade in jail between 2003 and 2013 and now lives in London, said Putin's invasion had completely changed the agenda for Russia's political opposition, and claimed that "armed resistance" may play a role at some point in the future.

"We need to explain to people what they can do, persuade them that they should do it, and also help people if as a result they end up in a dangerous situation," Khodorkovsky told the Guardian.

He said potential actions should depend on each person's tolerance for risk, and could range from painting anti-war graffiti in the streets to sabotaging railway deliveries linked to the war or burning down conscription offices.

"But we are very clearly against terrorist methods that harm unarmed people," he said, criticising the [killing of Darya Dugina](#), the daughter of a Russian imperialist ideologue, last month, which was [claimed without any evidence](#) by a hitherto unknown group of Russian partisans.

Khodorkovsky was speaking in his first interview about his new book, *The Russia Conundrum*, which is out later this week. Part memoir and part analysis of Putin's years in office, the book lays out a template for western states on how to deal with Moscow.

Khodorkovsky has one of the most remarkable personal stories of post-Soviet Russia, rising from economic beginnings in the Youth Communist League during Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms in the late 1980s to become Russia's richest businessperson through his chairmanship of Yukos oil company.

In the book, Khodorkovsky describes his early meetings with Putin, which he left convinced that the new Russian president was an ideological ally. "His technique is to look at you and mirror what you are saying ... He's a chameleon who leaves everyone thinking he's on their side," he writes.

Looking back, he admits he completely misread Putin. "I wasn't sharp enough to see it. He has that professional KGB skill of adapting to his interlocutor, but he also just has a personal talent for it ... Back then, he

didn't feel stable in his position and he didn't want to create enemies who would unite against him. Of course he never had any liberal views."

In 2003, Khodorkovsky was arrested on charges widely seen as political, after he publicly criticised government corruption during a meeting with Putin, and promised to fund opposition parties. His arrest was seen as one of the first milestones in Putin's gradual tightening of the screws over the past two decades.

Khodorkovsky said Putin's decision to launch a full-scale invasion of Ukraine had shocked him anew, and completely changed his views on how best to oppose the regime.

"Of course, [the invasion] was an absolutely fundamental moment. My impressions and feelings before and after 24 February are completely different," he said.

All four of Khodorkovsky's grandparents were either Ukrainian or spent time living in Ukraine, and as a young child, he used to spend summers at his great-grandmother's house near Kharkiv. Nevertheless, he always identified as Russian.

"It always felt normal, nothing to be ashamed of to be Russian. Now every time you say you're Russian, there is an internal discomfort," he said.

Like many Russians, Khodorkovsky has had arguments in recent months that have ended longstanding friendships. He said even among friends who supported him through his years of imprisonment, some had turned out to be fans of the Ukraine invasion.

"Imagine, you know people since you were both seven years old, and now you're both nearly 60 and you just can't speak to them," he said.

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However, he also said it was important for the west to focus on the many Russians who did not support Putin's regime or the war in Ukraine. He is strongly against the [policy being floated in some European capitals](#) of a full ban on tourist visas for Russians.

"The west has ideological allies inside Russia, who think that Russia should develop on a European path," he said.

"If Putin lives another 10 or 15 years it would really lower the number of European oriented Russians, and I don't think this is good for anyone except Putin."

During his decade in London, Khodorkovsky has remained an active commentator on issues inside Russia, and funded various civil society movements through his Open Russia foundation, which was ruled an "undesirable organisation" by Russian courts back in 2017 and ceased operations.

He was one of many opposition figures to address the so-called Congress of Free Russia, which took place in Lithuania last week and aimed to come up with a coordinated platform for opposition to Putin. But critics say much of the opposition is now disconnected from life inside the country. Associates of jailed opposition leader Alexei Navalny declined to take part in the Lithuania congress, dismissing it as a meaningless talking shop. For now, it is hard to see a mass opposition movement being possible inside Russia.

Khodorkovsky said that, sooner or later, Putin's regime would fall. One key element in this will be Ukraine winning the war, he hopes. Then, Russia should be "reformatted" as a loose parliamentary federation. There was a path to this outcome that did not involve bloodshed, he claimed, "but it's rather unlikely".

The most important thing, he said, was for the west not to write Russia off completely, so that when the crunch moment did come, there would be more chance of post-Putin Russia being liberal and pro-western.

“This is a nightmare, but this nightmare does not mean that Russia and Europe have separated for ever. It’s extremely important that in this difficult emotional background, we keep a sound mind, pragmatism and a vision of the future, of a democratic, European Russia,” he said.

- The Russia Conundrum: How the West Fell for Putin’s Power Gambit – and How to Fix It by Mikhail Khodorkovsky, with Martin Sixsmith, will be published on 8 September by WH Allen, £20
-

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Shinzo Abe

Japan's state funeral for Shinzo Abe to cost more than £10m

Public opposition to ceremony grows over cost to taxpayer and ex-PM's ties to Unification church



People protest against the state funeral for former Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe in front of parliament buildings in Tokyo. Photograph: Kimimasa Mayama/EPA

Justin McCurry in Tokyo

Tue 6 Sep 2022 05.46 EDT Last modified on Tue 6 Sep 2022 12.49 EDT

[Japan](#) will spend about 1.65bn yen (£10.1m) on the increasingly controversial state funeral for the former prime minister [Shinzo Abe](#), who was shot dead during a campaign speech in July, amid growing public opposition to the plan.

The government has come under pressure to cancel the ceremony, with opinion polls showing that a majority of voters oppose it due to the cost to the taxpayer and revelations about [ruling party politicians' ties to the Unification church](#).

The government had initially said the funeral, planned for 27 September, would cost a more modest 250m yen, but conceded that the sum did not include outlays for security and accommodating foreign dignitaries.

Policing the event will cost an estimated 800m yen, while hosting foreign delegations will add a further 600m yen to the bill, the chief cabinet secretary, Hirokazu Matsuno, said on Tuesday.

“If we were to give a simplified estimate, I guess the total would be close to what you said,” Matsuno said in response to a question speculating that total costs would reach about 1.7bn yen.

Organisers are expecting more than 6,000 guests to attend the ceremony at the Nippon Budokan hall in Tokyo, including Barack Obama, Kamala Harris and Emmanuel Macron, according to the Kyodo news agency. About 50 of the 190 overseas delegations will include “head of state-level” VIPs, Matsuno said.

Jun Azumi, an MP for the opposition Constitutional Democratic party, criticised the revised sum, noting that costs were more than six times higher than the government’s initial estimate.

Public opposition to the plans has [intensified](#) in recent weeks after revelations of connections between members of the ruling Liberal Democratic party and the Unification church, whose members are colloquially known as Moonies.

The suspect in the shooting, Tetsuya Yamagami, told police he had targeted Abe because he had expressed support for the church, which he blamed for [bankrupting his family](#).

Last year, Abe sent a [congratulatory video message](#) to a group affiliated to the church in which he praised its commitment to traditional family values.

His grandfather, the former prime minister Nobusuke Kishi, was instrumental in [promoting the church](#) in Japan as a postwar bulwark against communism.

Opinion polls suggest that the prime minister, Fumio Kishida, has failed to win public support for the ceremony, the first of its kind since the postwar prime minister Shigeru Yoshida was given a state funeral in 1967.

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Kishida said last week that he recognised that the [Unification church](#) scandal had shaken public confidence in politics, adding he would demand that party MPS [cut their ties to the organisation](#). He said members of the public would not be forced to mourn Abe, a divisive conservative who resigned in 2020 after becoming Japan's longest-serving prime minister.

In a poll conducted this month by the Yomiuri Shimbun newspaper, 56% of respondents said they opposed the state funeral, while 38% were in favour.

Civic groups opposed to the ceremony recently submitted a petition of 400,000 signatures calling for its cancellation, while last week an estimated 4,000 people demonstrated against the event outside parliament.

Mental health

Doomscrolling linked to poor physical and mental health, study finds

The tendency to be glued to bad news can spark a ‘vicious cycle’ that interferes with our lives, researcher says



The pandemic has made people more inclined to doomscroll because of the amount of bad news around plus the extra spare time, researchers say.
Photograph: Catherine Falls Commercial/Getty Images

[Caitlin Cassidy](#)

Mon 5 Sep 2022 13.30 EDT Last modified on Mon 5 Sep 2022 13.52 EDT

There's no shortage of bad news in the media to “doomscroll”, from a global pandemic to the war in Ukraine and an impending climate crisis, but [new research](#) suggests the compulsive urge to surf the web can lead to poor mental and physical health outcomes.

Doomscrolling is the tendency to “continue to surf or scroll through bad news, even though that news is saddening, disheartening or depressing”, a practice researchers found has boomed since the onset of the pandemic.

The study, published in the journal Health Communication, found 16.5% of about 1,100 people surveyed showed signs of “severely problematic” news consumption, leading to greater levels stress, anxiety and poor health.

Associate Prof Bryan McLaughlin, the study’s lead author and a researcher at Texas Tech University, said the 24-hour-news cycle could bring about a “constant state of high alert” in some people, making the world seem like a “dark and dangerous place”.

“For these individuals, a vicious cycle can develop in which, rather than tuning out, they become drawn further in, obsessing over the news and checking for updates around the clock to alleviate their emotional distress,” he said.

“But it doesn’t help, and the more they check the news, the more it begins to interfere with other aspects of their lives.”

About 27.3% of those surveyed reported “moderately problematic” levels of news consumption, 27.5% were minimally impacted and 28.7% experienced no problems.

While some readers can comfortably receive news updates without any tangible psychological effects, others demonstrate a more compulsive obsession with the media, and struggle to detach themselves from the bad news they’re reading.

These respondents scored high on five problematic news consumption dimensions listed by the researchers: becoming absorbed in news content, being preoccupied with thoughts about the news, attempting to reduce anxiety by consuming more news, finding it difficult to avoid the news and having news consumption interfere in their daily life.

And those with higher levels of problematic news consumption were “significantly more likely” to experience poor mental and physical health, the survey found, even when controlling for demographics, personality traits, and overall news use.

Of those with severely problematic consumption levels, 74% reported experiencing mental health problems and 61% reported physical problems compared to 8% and 6.1% of all other study participants.

“We did anticipate that a sizeable portion of our sample would show signs of problematic news consumption. However, we were surprised to find that 17% of study participants suffer from the most severe level,” McLaughlin said.

“This is certainly concerning and suggests the problem may be more widespread than we expected. A lot of people appear to be experiencing significant amounts of anxiety and stress due to their news consumption habits.”

Dr Kate Mannell, a media studies researcher at Deakin University in the Australian state of Victoria, said Covid-19 made the public “more inclined” to engage in doomscrolling because of the amount of bad news, coupled with extra spare time.

Mannell studied the impact of news consumption on Victorians affected by strict Covid-19 lockdowns in 2020. She found partial news avoidance was beneficial for the wellbeing of surveyed participants, who reported being less distracted and calmer at home.

“People weren’t avoiding it completely, but were taking conscious steps to limit their news consumption after realising [it] had become unhealthy,” she said.

“They found strategic ways of staying informed … doing one longer form piece of news engagement or going directly to public health.”

Mannell said for news addicts the key was acknowledging when it became detrimental to health, rather than encouraging people to switch off media

entirely.

“We’re in an unstable world,” she said.

“We’re going to have increasing climate catastrophes – crisis contexts in place around Covid are going to become more prevalent.

“Becoming stressed and anxious is a legitimate natural reaction to the world around you, but it’s important … people are able to gauge when [news consumption] becomes problematic.”

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Business live**Business**

Opec and allies to cut oil output in October; gas prices jump after Russia pipeline closure – as it happened

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Gas

Gas prices soar and pound and euro fall as Russia shuts Nord Stream pipeline

European countries scramble to store as much gas as possible before winter as they brace for shortages



Gazprom, the Russian state-controlled gas company, closed the Nord Stream 1 pipeline from Russia to Germany on Friday. Photograph: Hannibal Hanschke/Reuters

[Jasper Jolly](#) and [Graeme Wearden](#)

Mon 5 Sep 2022 12.06 EDTFirst published on Mon 5 Sep 2022 05.20 EDT

Gas prices surged on Monday and the pound and euro slumped after [Russia](#) shut down a big pipeline indefinitely.

Russia has used its control of gas supplies to exert pressure on European countries in retaliation against sanctions imposed after its invasion of Ukraine. Gazprom, the Russian state-controlled gas company, [closed the](#)

[Nord Stream 1 pipeline from Russia to Germany](#) on Friday, saying it had found a leak requiring repair.

The threatened cuts to supplies of gas from Russia have prompted a scramble by European countries to store as much gas as possible before winter, as well as efforts to find alternative supplies.

However, the prospect of Russia cutting off an important pipeline completely caused prices to rise on Monday, as [investors braced for severe shortages](#). The contract for gas delivery next month in the UK soared by 35% at one stage, and was about 12% higher in afternoon trading at 465p a therm. That was an increase from the 410p a therm cost on Friday afternoon, and approaching the five-month high of nearly 650p set last month.

Winter gas prices were also up sharply. The wholesale UK gas contract for November and December both jumped about 15%, near to last month's record highs.

The benchmark Dutch TTF October gas contract rose by up to 30%, up €62 to €272 a megawatt hour.

The threat of gas shortages has also deepened concerns over [recession risks in economies dependent on the fuel for industry](#) and electricity generation, including the UK and the EU. That has caused their currencies to weaken as investors seek safety in the US dollar and reduce exposure to an economy that may have to cut back industrial production meaningfully.

The euro hit a 20-year low against the US dollar, falling as low as \$0.9879 in early trading on Monday.

On the day that Liz Truss was confirmed as the UK's next prime minister, the pound hit \$1.1444, its lowest value against the dollar since the early days of Covid-19 in March 2020. [Truss is expected to reveal her plans](#) to mitigate the energy crisis in the coming days.

European stock market indices also dropped. Germany's Dax lost about 2% with France's CAC down more than 1%.

Kit Juckes, a macro strategist at the Société Générale bank, said: “It’s unclear how long the pipeline will remain shut, but it is still obvious that President Putin is using it as a weapon to weaken European resolve in supporting Ukraine.”

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Lee Hardman, a currency analyst at MUFG Bank, said: “Russia’s ongoing weaponisation of energy supplies continues to increase downside risks for European economies and the euro.”

Oil prices also jumped after Opec, the cartel of oil-producing countries, and allies including Russia agreed to cut production by 100,000 barrels a day in October.

The price of Brent crude oil futures, the global benchmark, rose by 3% to more than \$95.78 a barrel, up from \$93. West Texas Intermediate, the North American measure, gained almost 3% to hit \$89.37 a barrel.

Leaders of the G7 countries – the UK, US, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and Canada – agreed a plan on Friday to [cap the prices paid for Russian oil](#) to prevent sales from enriching the Kremlin, although it is unclear if the cap will result in lower prices.

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[UK news](#)

Fourth man arrested in connection with murder of Olivia Pratt-Korbel

Detention of man, 34, by police on the M42 on Sunday evening followed three arrests earlier that day



Olivia Pratt-Korbel was shot in her home in Dovecot, Liverpool, on 22 August. Photograph: Family Handout/PA

[Mark Brown](#)North of England correspondent

[@markbrown14](#)

Mon 5 Sep 2022 12.47 EDTFirst published on Mon 5 Sep 2022 05.51 EDT

Four men have been arrested in the space of 24 hours by officers investigating the murder of nine-year-old Olivia Pratt-Korbel, Merseyside police have said.

The latest arrest was made after police stopped a 34-year-old man who was driving on the M42 near Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, on Sunday

evening. He was arrested on suspicion of assisting an offender.

Earlier on Sunday police made three other arrests. Two men were arrested in the early hours in the Runcorn area, including a 34-year-old man from Liverpool suspected of murder and attempted murder.

The other man, a 41-year-old from Knowsley, is suspected of assisting an offender, as is a 29-year-old who was arrested in Liverpool on Sunday afternoon.

Olivia was shot dead by a gunman who had forced his way into her family home in the Dovecot area of Liverpool on the evening of 22 August.

The assailant was chasing a convicted burglar, Joseph Nee, who had burst into the house when Olivia's mother Cheryl opened her front door to see what the commotion outside was.

Cheryl was shot in the wrist. Nee was shot in the leg and torso. Neither of the men who entered the house had any links to the family.

At a press briefing on Monday, the Merseyside police assistant chief constable Chris Green said the response from the public in providing information had been phenomenal.

“We have had fantastic support from the community, whether that is people coming forward and providing us with witness evidence, people uploading dashcam footage or CCTV from their house or other information ... It has been really, really positive.

“The appeal still stands. This is a detailed, complex investigation. Those who were responsible are not coming forward and saying, ‘Right, I was responsible ... here you go.’ We need to go and uncover all of the evidence.”

Green said officers would do everything humanly possible to gather every single piece of evidence, no matter how tiny.

He would not be drawn on whether it was information from the public that had led to arrests in the Olivia case. But he said: “Often it is two, three, four,

five different bits of information that will come in that will lead to action or a particular arrest. But it is fair to say that we have had really good support from the community, as I would expect.

“Everyone is completely outraged about what has happened in Merseyside over the last two weeks. The support we have had has been excellent and that has certainly assisted and allowed us to make investigative decisions and take action.”

Olivia’s murder and two other fatal shootings over recent weeks have shone an unwelcome spotlight on Liverpool and gun crime. Merseyside police said tangible progress was being made, with the biggest drop in firearm discharges in the region in 20 years.

DCS Lee Turner, the head of the force’s intelligence bureau, said: “It is so tragic that events like this then put the spotlight on Merseyside. Until the horrific events of two weeks ago, we were having a really positive, significant impact on the level of criminality using firearms – they were going away from that and using other tactics.”

He said it was not easier to get a gun on Merseyside than in other areas. “It is difficult to get a firearm wherever you are in the UK because of the strict laws that we have regarding their use. If you’re convicted of carrying, you’re going to get five years.”

He said the force monitored 119 organised crime groups in Merseyside, not all of which were active.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/sep/05/fourth-man-arrested-in-connection-with-of-olivia-pratt-korbel>

[Canada](#)

Canada stabbings: police say 10 killed and 15 hurt in Saskatchewan

Police extend search for two suspects over three provinces after attacks at 13 different locations

- [Canada mass stabbing: one suspect in Saskatchewan attacks found dead, say police](#)
- [Saskatchewan stabbings: what we know so far about the attacks in Canada](#)

Canada stabbings: some victims targeted while others were attacked at random, say police – video

[Leyland Cecco in Toronto and agencies](#)

Sun 4 Sep 2022 21.51 EDTFirst published on Sun 4 Sep 2022 18.07 EDT

A manhunt was under way in western [Canada](#) on Sunday night as police searched frantically for two men suspected in a series of stabbings that have killed 10 people and wounded at least 15 others.

The bulk of the attacks targeted residents of James Smith Cree Nation, an Indigenous community of 3,400, with other injuries reported in the neighbouring village of Weldon, north-east of Saskatoon.

The attacks in the province of Saskatchewan have shocked the country. The prime minister, Justin Trudeau, described them as “horrific and heartbreaking. I’m thinking of those who have lost a loved one and of those who were injured.”

Trudeau said his government had been in direct communication with the James Smith Cree Nation community leadership and was ready to assist,

adding: “Those responsible for today’s abhorrent attacks must be fully brought to justice.”

Rhonda Blackmore, the assistant commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted police (RCMP) in Saskatchewan, told reporters on Sunday evening that police believed some of the victims were targeted and others were attacked randomly.

“It’s horrific what has occurred in our province today,” she said.

Police identified Damien and Myles Sanderson as the two suspects in the killings. Damien is 31 years old, 5ft 7in (170cm) tall, weighing 155lb (70kg) with black hair and brown eyes.



DAMIEN SANDERSON

MYLES SANDERSON

Damien Sanderson, left, and Myles Sanderson are being sought by police in connection with the stabbings. Photograph: Royal Canadian Mounted Police/EPA

Myles is 30 years old, 6ft 1in (185cm) tall and 240lb (108kg), with brown hair and brown eyes.

Blackmore said the relationship between the suspects was unclear. She said there was no motive yet – but the men were presumed to be armed and dangerous.

Bobby Cameron, the chief of the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN), which represents First Nations groups in Saskatchewan, suggested the attacks may have been drug-related, saying: “Our hearts break for all those impacted. This is the destruction we face when harmful illegal drugs invade our communities.”

As the communities mourned, the identities of some of the victims emerged.

Residents identified one of the victims in the attacks as Wes Petterson. Ruby Works said the 77-year-old widower was like an uncle to her. Speaking to the Associated Press, she said: “He didn’t do anything. He didn’t deserve this. He was a good, kind-hearted man.

She said the event had shaken a community where the sounds of sirens are rarely heard. “No one in this town is ever going to sleep again. They’re going to be terrified to open their door,” she said.

Two more victims have been identified as mother-of-two Lana Head and her partner. Head’s former partner Michael Brett Burns told local media APTN News that the couple died of their wounds on the James Smith Cree Nation. Burns described the community as being in mourning, adding that he spent Sunday evening at Melfort hospital comforting many family members.

Map

Calvin Sanderson, one of the elected leaders of the three communities that make up the James Smith Cree Nation, has spoken of the impact the attacks have had on the close-knit community. He told Associated Press: “Everyone’s been affected … They were our relatives, friends. Mostly we’re all related here, so it’s pretty hard … It’s pretty horrific.”

Police began receiving reports early on Sunday morning from James Smith Cree Nation of a stabbing in the community. Within two hours, a dangerous persons alert was sent to residents in the area, asking them to shelter in place.

More alerts were sent as the scope of the attack, spread over at least 13 sites, became clearer.

The nation leadership declared a state of emergency “in response to the numerous murders and assaults on members of the James Smith Cree Nation”, and established two emergency operations centers, it said in a statement.

On social media, residents of James Smith Cree Nation chronicled the terror that gripped the community on Sunday morning. One posted an image of a broken door handle, adding that she was glad her younger sister wasn’t home when it was broken into.

“This is forever gonna traumatize me,” she wrote.

Others posted tributes to family members killed in the attack, including a young woman who had seen her grandfather the night before, only to learn he was a victim in the attacks.

[Canada map](#)

Doreen Lees, an 89-year-old grandmother from Weldon, told the Associated Press she and her daughter spotted one of the suspects when a car came speeding down her street early in the morning, as her daughter was having coffee out on her deck. A man approached them and said he was hurt and needed help, said Lees.

But the man ran when her daughter said she would call for help.

“He wouldn’t show his face. He had a big jacket over his face. We asked his name and he kind of mumbled his name twice and we still couldn’t get it,” she said. “He said his face was injured so bad he couldn’t show it.”

She said the man was by himself and “kind of a little wobbly”.

“I followed him a little ways to see if he was going to be OK. My daughter said ‘Don’t follow him, get back here.’”

Saskatchewan’s premier, Scott Moe, called the attacks “horrific” and said he offered his government’s support to all those affected. “There are no words to adequately describe the pain and loss caused by this senseless violence. All of Saskatchewan grieves with the victims and their families.”

Throughout the day, the scope of the search expanded more than 300km (186 miles) south, towards Regina, the provincial capital, where thousands of fans were gathered for a sold-out Canadian Football League game between the Saskatchewan Roughriders and the Winnipeg Blue Bombers.

The men had initially been spotted driving a stolen black Nissan Rogue but police warned they did not know if the pair had changed their vehicle. The RCMP had no indication they had left the province, but alerts were also issued in neighbouring Alberta and Manitoba.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/04/canada-police-10-stabbed-death-15-hurt-saskatchewan-province>

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[Canada](#)

What was known on the first day of the Canadian attacks

Ten people were killed and at least 15 wounded in series of stabbings in the Canadian province of Saskatchewan on Sunday

- [Saskatchewan stabbings: what we know on day two](#)
- [Canada mass stabbing full report: one suspect in Saskatchewan stabbings found dead](#)

Canada stabbings: some victims targeted while others were attacked at random, say police – video

[Samantha Lock](#)

[@Samantha_Lock](#)

Sun 4 Sep 2022 22.24 EDT Last modified on Mon 5 Sep 2022 21.16 EDT

Note: the information here is what was known on the first day of the mass stabbing in Canada. Here's [what we know on day two of the Saskatchewan stabbings](#).

- **Ten people were killed and at least 15 wounded** in a spate of stabbings in 13 locations across an Indigenous community and a nearby village in the Canadian province of Saskatchewan on Sunday.
- **Police first began receiving reports of stabbings around 5.40am on Sunday** in the James Smith Cree Nation community. Reports of additional attacks quickly followed in the nearby village of Weldon, north-east of Saskatoon. Both communities are sparsely populated with 3,400 and 200 people respectively.

- **At least 15 people were taken to hospital** although “there may be additional injured victims who transported themselves to various hospitals”, Rhonda Blackmore, commanding officer of the Saskatchewan Royal Canadian Mounted police, said. Mark Oddan, a spokesperson with Stars air ambulance, said two helicopters were sent from Saskatoon, and another from Regina.
- **Some of the victims appear to have been targeted** but others appear to have been attacked at random, Blackmore said. She did not provide a motive.
- **Police identified the suspects as Damien Sanderson, 31, and Myles Sanderson, 30** and asked them to turn themselves in. Both are said to have black hair and brown eyes, though the relationship between them is unclear. The pair were last sighted driving a black Nissan Rogue with licence plate 119 MPI in Saskatchewan’s capital of Regina, about 200 miles (320km) south of the attacks in the James Smith Cree Nation and the village of Weldon.
- **Canada’s prime minister, Justin Trudeau, described the attacks as “horrific and heartbreaking”** in a statement of support to the families of those killed. “The attacks in Saskatchewan today are horrific and heartbreaking. I’m thinking of those who have lost a loved one and of those who were injured,” he said in a tweet.
- **One witness said she believed one of the suspects approached her** and her daughter claiming he was hurt. Doreen Lees, 89, said she and her daughter thought they saw one of the suspects when a car came barreling down her street in Weldon early in the morning. Lees said a

man approached them and said he was hurt and needed help but took off when her daughter said she would call for help. “He wouldn’t show his face. He had a big jacket over his face. We asked his name and he kind of mumbled his name twice and we still couldn’t get it,” she told the Associated Press. “He said his face was injured so bad he couldn’t show it.” She said the man was by himself and “kind of a little wobbly.”

- **Saskatchewan’s premier, Scott Moe,** also issued a statement, describing the attacks as “senseless violence”. “There are no words to adequately describe the pain and loss caused by this senseless violence. All of Saskatchewan grieves with the victims and their families,” he said.
- **Residents of James Smith Cree Nation chronicled the events on social media.** One woman posted an image of a broken door handle, adding that she was glad her younger sister wasn’t home when it was broken into. “This is forever gonna traumatize me,” she wrote. Others – including a young woman who had seen her grandfather the night before, only to learn he was a victim in the attacks – posted tributes to killed family members.

[Map of Saskatchewan province in Canada: ten people were killed and 15 wounded during a spate of stabbings in 13 locations in the Canadian province.](#)

Map of Saskatchewan province in Canada: ten people were killed and 15 wounded during a spate of stabbings in 13 locations in the Canadian province.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/05/canada-stabbings-saskatchewan-what-we-know-so-far-about-the-stabbing-attacks-in-james-smith-cree-nation-weldon>

2022.09.05 - Spotlight

- 'I didn't want it anywhere near me' How the Apple AirTag became a gift to stalkers
- 'Picasso nearly fell over backwards when he saw her' Lee Miller's son on their intense relationship
- Fun, glamour and chaos How Gazzetta Football Italia won our hearts
- Explain it to me quickly What's up with Olivia Wilde, Harry Styles and Florence Pugh? The worry over Don't Worry Darling

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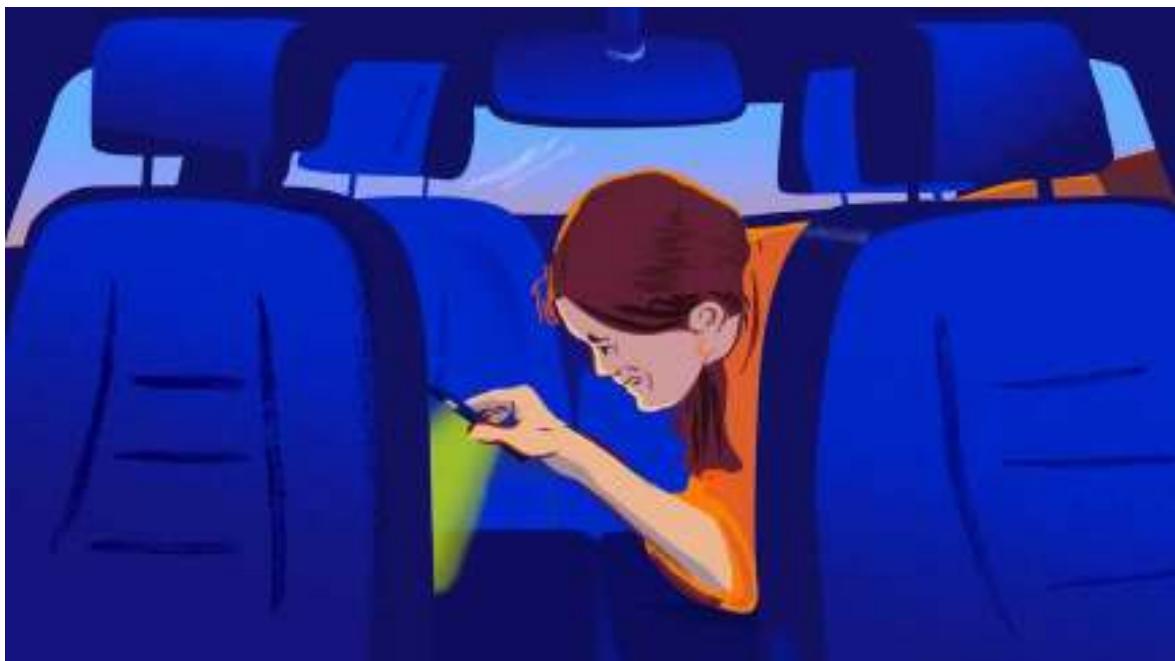
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[Apple](#)

‘I didn’t want it anywhere near me’: how the Apple AirTag became a gift to stalkers



Cars are a popular place to hide AirTags.

Illustration: Christine Rösch/The Guardian

A gadget the size of a 10p coin, the AirTag was intended to help people find their keys. Instead it has facilitated a boom in terrifying behaviour from abusers

Anna Moore

Mon 5 Sep 2022 05.00 EDT

In March this year, Laura (not her real name) was in her car when a notification showed up on her phone, alerting her that an [Apple](#) AirTag had been detected nearby. “I didn’t know what it was or what it meant. I felt quite panicky,” she says. “I pulled over and still didn’t know what I was looking at. My phone was showing a map of where I was with a trail of red dots indicating the route I’d just followed. I think I was in shock. I drove straight to a friend’s house and we searched the car.”

They emptied the glove compartment, opened the bonnet, checked underneath it and then behind the number plate. “Eventually we found it under the carpet in the back – a tiny gadget the size of a 10-pence piece. I didn’t want it anywhere near me.”

To Laura, it was obvious how it got there. She had recently separated from her partner, but he had spent the previous day with their young son – and had transferred his child seat from his car to the back seat of Laura’s when he had dropped him back.

The AirTag was [launched in April last year](#) – a wireless, Bluetooth device designed to keep track of items such as keys, purses, cars or anything else at risk of being lost or stolen. But it has also been a gift to stalkers. “We’re finding it’s quite an issue,” says Violet Alvarez from the Suzy Lamplugh Trust, which supports stalking victims. “It’s so small, it’s unnoticeable and very user-friendly. It doesn’t require any technical skill whatsoever and it is relatively cheap to buy [from £29].”

AirTags are also widely available. While a mind-boggling range of spyware is available on eBay or Amazon, the Apple brand is ubiquitous, part of everyday life. “I saw AirTags for sale in my local supermarket,” says Emma

Pickering, senior operations manager for tech abuse at the domestic abuse charity Refuge. “People see them, think about tracking more, and the concept of tracking becomes more established. We’re normalising it.”

Both Refuge and the Suzy Lamplugh Trust have been contacted by women like Laura, who have received AirTag notifications on their phones. Some went on to find the devices planted in children’s backpacks by ex-partners. Others had been slipped into the women’s pockets or handbags. In one case, the AirTag couldn’t be located at all. The Refuge team talked the caller through how to disable it, but she still doesn’t know where it is hidden.



The Apple AirTag is about the size of a 10p piece. Photograph: Jim Lo Scalzo/EPA

This month at Swansea crown court, Christopher Paul Trotman, 41, pleaded guilty to stalking his ex-girlfriend by [gluing an AirTag under her car bumper](#). Although she had received notifications about the device on her phone, she had no idea what they meant and initially ignored them. It was only when her daughter also began getting notifications that the tag was found.

In most cases seen by Refuge and the Suzy Lamplugh Trust, the victims have a clear idea of who planted the device – usually current or former

partners – but this is not always the case.

In June, the Irish actor Hannah Rose May [tweeted a warning after an AirTag was planted on her person](#) during an after-hours event at Disneyland, California. She was in the car park at 2am, about to drive home, when she received a notification that someone had been tracking her for two hours. Sports Illustrated model Brook Nader [shared a similar experience on Instagram](#). Someone slipped an AirTag into her coat pocket when she was in a New York restaurant. Four hours later, in what she described as “the scariest moment ever”, Nader was walking home alone when she received a notification that she was being tracked.

Apple has stressed that the company takes the issue of stalking very seriously, which is why it designed the alert system that appears on your iPhone if an AirTag not registered to you is seen moving with you over time. It adds that it works with police when there have been incidents, and stresses that misuse of AirTags is rare.

That alert system only works if the stalking victim has an iPhone, however. So in December 2021, eight months after AirTags were launched, Apple released [Tracker Detect](#), an app that will alert you on an Android device – so long as you’re sufficiently informed and far-sighted to install the app and keep it active.

The AirTag also emits a warning chime after a while to alert anyone close by of its presence. Initially the chime sounded after three days, but subsequently this was shortened to [a random time between eight and 24 hours](#). Apple has been working to make the chime louder – it can be especially difficult to hear on a busy street or when hidden under a car – and to make the AirTag easier to find after you have received an alert.

The approach is: ‘Launch it, monetise it and we can solve problems later. That doesn’t happen in any other industry’

Rory Innes, Cyber Helpline

To Rory Innes, founder of the Cyber Helpline, these safety updates serve to illustrate the problem. “The approach is: ‘Launch it, get it into the world, get

it to market, monetise it and we can solve problems later,” he says. “That doesn’t happen in any other industry. You don’t launch a car and fix the seatbelts months down the line – and that’s because there are strict laws and regulations, safety standards and testing. That just doesn’t exist in tech – and it’s a real gap.

“All these features need to be designed into the product pre-release,” he says. “I’ve sat in rooms with social media companies and software developers and their security concerns are always around hackers and encryption. They focus on protecting company servers and databases or protecting consumers from cyber-viruses. But what about when the threat is from someone inside the house? There’s a total lack of understanding when it comes to domestic abuse and stalking, and how individuals become victims.”

Another issue is the lack of support when it happens. “If you find an AirTag under your car or you get a notification, it’s impossible to speak to anyone at Apple,” says Innes. “At that point, speed is important. You need expert advice very quickly.”

There are complex risk assessments to be made, depending on where you are and who you think the perpetrator might be. A study of female homicides as a result of male violence found stalking behaviour in 94% of cases and surveillance activity in 63%. Disabling access on an AirTag notifies the stalker that you know what they are doing. A stalker who is losing control might escalate their behaviour. Some women might be tempted to confront someone they suspect of planting the device. Any reaction has potential dangers attached, warns Innes: “Apple just don’t offer enough support, and that is about profit.”

Apple declined an interview, but did point out that the company has a 24-hour support line. It added that the AirTag support website advises anyone who feels they might be at risk to go to a public location and contact the authorities, who can work with Apple to request information related to the item.

The [UK government’s online safety bill](#) (currently at the report stage in the House of Commons) offers little help here. “There’s a lot of focus on

removing harmful content, which is a lot better than nothing, but what it doesn't cover in any way is the design of products and the support offered when they are used maliciously," says Innes.

He advises victims to contact the police – every AirTag has a unique serial number that should identify the purchaser through their Apple ID – though the Suzy Lamplugh Trust has heard of cases of the police failing to take this issue seriously enough.

Laura had never seen her partner as abusive during their relationship, but when they separated, his tech-abuse went beyond an AirTag. "I'm a dinosaur; he loved fancy new gadgets, and when we were together, he bought the technology," she says. "He set up her computer passwords, she says, and when they separated he locked her out of her machine. "I was actually in the car on the way to getting it fixed when I got the AirTag alert.

"He also put some kind of tag on my keys – he said it was so we wouldn't lose them – but it meant he knew where I was at all times. He had security cameras on the house, which he viewed on his phone. One night after we had separated, I got in at 11.30 at night, and as I was walking upstairs, loud music started blaring out of the boombox. He had watched me come in on his phone and activated the sound system remotely. I was running around the house unplugging everything. By then I didn't want to stay at home any more. I felt like I was going crazy."

Laura now has a stalking protection order for five years. Though her ex was originally charged with stalking, this was later downgraded to a public order offence. He claimed that the AirTag must have fallen out his pocket and it was impossible to prove otherwise. Laura says she is still processing it all. "On a bad day, I get this feeling of panic, I have to switch my phone off and do nothing," she says. "The stuff he has done is so unbelievable – it's not normal behaviour and yet he seemed such a normal person. That's what puts me on edge."

In the UK, the national stalking helpline can be reached on 0808 802 0300. The national domestic abuse helpline is on 0808 2000 247.

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‘Picasso nearly fell over backwards when he saw her’ – Lee Miller’s son on their intense relationship



‘He kissed her and he hugged her’ ... detail of a photograph of Picasso and Miller at his Paris studio after liberation. Photograph: Lee Miller Archives, England 2022. All rights reserved. www.leemiller.co.uk © Succession Picasso/DACS 2022

She was a model-turned-photographer whose unflinching eye captured the horror of the Nazis. But for too long, this extraordinary woman was defined as ‘Picasso’s muse’. As a new show puts this right, her son looks back



[Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett](#)
[@rhiannonlucyc](#)

Mon 5 Sep 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 5 Sep 2022 03.58 EDT

There's a picture of the US photographer and war correspondent Lee Miller with [Pablo Picasso](#), taken by her after the liberation of Paris in 1944. They are gazing into one another's eyes with such intimacy that you feel you're intruding on something deeply personal. Not romantic, exactly – although the way his hand grazes the back of her neck is certainly intimate – but profoundly loving, perhaps. With this in mind, it's unsurprising that the image has been chosen to promote a new exhibition centred on Miller's extraordinary life and the relationship between these two artists, which opens this week at Newlands House Gallery in Petworth, West Sussex.

It captured, her son Antony Penrose tells me, an extraordinary moment after years of hardship and separation. “Lee found her way to Picasso's studio in Rue des Grands-Augustins, hammered on the door. He opened it and nearly fell over backwards. And he hugged her and he kissed her and he hugged

her, and then finally, when he stood back, he looked at her and he said, ‘It’s incredible. The first allied soldier I should see is a woman. She is you.’”

She was photographed in Hitler’s bathtub the day he died – and later made fun of how tacky his place was

Miller and Picasso met properly in 1937, on a beach holiday in the south of France, although they may have crossed paths earlier that decade when she was working with Man Ray and discovering the process of solarisation for which he, not she, would end up being credited. A deep friendship ensued between their two families: Miller was married to the British artist, poet and historian Roland Penrose, Picasso was with Dora Maar, then Françoise Gilot, and they would holiday together, often at the Spaniard’s various houses. Antony, who was born in 1947, remembers lots of children and animals: Picasso allowed a goat called Esmerelda to sleep outside his room and he would call out to her, because she was afraid of the dark. There would be long lunches, featuring the sort of exotic foods that were a rarity in postwar Britain, and practical jokes too. Miller enjoyed placing trick ice cubes containing frozen flies in drinks.



Miller’s photo of a picnic with Nusch, Paul Éluard, Roland Penrose, Man Ray and Ady Fidelin. Photograph: © Lee Miller Archives, England 2013.

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Penrose recalls being asked in school what he had done during the holidays, and astonishing his classmates with his response. “I said quite casually, ‘Oh, we were visiting Picasso.’ I had no idea that this was an exceptional thing to be doing, because it was approached by my parents with such incredible modesty. They never said, ‘Look, this guy is the greatest living modern artist in the world.’ He was just a person that they treated with a great deal of respect and reverence.”

Picasso respected Miller as an artist, says Penrose, long before anyone else did. “Of course, she was very beautiful. But the fact that she was highly intelligent, and knew how to do things, was significant to him. He knew she was a good photographer. He knew his way around photographers because he’d been with Dora Maar for six years.”

Miller’s beauty and background as a fashion model led to her own considerable talents being overlooked, a situation not helped by the fact that Picasso painted her six times and there has long been a preoccupation with his “muses”. This became a problem when Penrose started trying to put together exhibitions of his mother’s work. “To begin with, when I was approaching people who should have known better, I would have to explain that Lee Miller was a woman. Then they would get it and say, ‘Oh yes, she was Man Ray’s muse.’ And then I would have to disabuse them of that notion.”

Things began to change in the 1980s, though, when feminists started reexamining the lives of female artists, particularly surrealists. As has been the case with other models turned artists, Miller’s job made her curious about image-making. “When she was younger,” says Penrose, “she was photographed by the key photographers of the time: Edward Steichen, George Hoyningen-Huene, people like that. Talking to some of them later in life, they said it was like she regarded it as a tutorial. She would be constantly asking questions.”



A famous family friend ... a young Antony Penrose with Picasso in 1950.
Photograph: © Lee Miller Archives, England 2022. All rights reserved.
www.leemiller.co.uk © Succession Picasso/DACS 2022

This meant that when Miller's career as a fashion model abruptly ended – she was blacklisted after modelling for Kotex, there being stigma surrounding period products – she was able to skip from New York to Paris and reinvent herself as a photographer and later a war correspondent for Vogue, documenting first the blitz, followed by the liberation of Europe. The image of her in Hitler's bathtub, taken by fellow photographer David E Scherman as the Fuhrer's death was announced, shows her defiance: she used to make fun of how tacky his apartment was, Penrose says. The boots in front of the bath are still coated in mud from the death camps.

Miller's 1945 images of the liberation of Dachau – some of which appear in the exhibition – are, Penrose explains, exercises in controlled fury. As a child of seven, Miller was raped. It was this, as well as seeing the boy she was in love with die in an accident when they were teenagers, that shaped not only her worldview but also her work. Trauma, says Penrose, often generates a sense of disconnection. "If we look at Lee through that prism, we see she was able to emotionally distance herself to a point. So we get her staring into the faces of dead people in concentration camps, and photographing them close up. When I interviewed Scherman, I said, 'How

does she do it? How does she stand there and take these pictures?' And he said she was in an ice-cold rage."

Her wartime experiences compounded what Penrose believes was PTSD. He says Miller wasn't much of a mother. Prone to alcohol abuse, as many traumatised people are, she could fly into rages, and there was a distance between them. Miller had seen babies dying in hospital in Vienna for want of drugs that were being sold on the black market – and held her son at arm's length, despite worrying a lot about his safety.

I get the sense it must have hurt profoundly, especially as Miller could be so warm towards others. Yet Penrose is magnanimous, having dedicated much of his life to establishing her legacy as an artist and acting as director of the [Lee Miller Archives and Penrose Collection](#), at his parents' former home, Farley House in Sussex, where Picasso stayed on his second visit to the UK in 1950. They also hosted, over the years, Man Ray, Miró, Max Ernst, Eileen Agar, Eduardo Paolozzi and Richard Hamilton. There's a gorgeous photo in the show of young Penrose sitting on Picasso's knee, a look of cheerful complicity between them. It was on this visit that Picasso took a shine to the couple's Ayrshire bull, William, inspiring the 1950 print Grasshopper Bulls, never before displayed in the UK.

"I know there have been implications that there was a sexual aspect to the relationship he had with her," says Maya Binkin, artistic director at Newlands House. "But I just don't think that matters. He hugely respected her, enjoyed her company and valued her friendship." When I ask how she feels about female artists being continually viewed in terms of their relationship to men, she is frank about using Miller's friendship with Picasso as a way of bringing new audiences to her work – but also says that you can hardly separate the two. Miller took almost 1,000 photographs of the artist over 40 years.



Inspiration ... Picasso's Grasshopper Bulls were created after he took a shine to Miller and Penrose's Ayrshire bull, William. Photograph: © Lee Miller Archives, England 2022. All rights reserved. www.leemiller.co.uk © Succession Picasso/DACS 2022

"Their relationship was extraordinary," adds Binkin. "She captures some wonderful images of Picasso at work and at play, but also at home and at leisure, which in his later years was harder because he was very, very aware of the camera. He knew the importance of having his photograph taken. She has access to Picasso at moments when he isn't playing to the camera."

The #MeToo movement, Binkin notes, has not been kind to Picasso. "I personally don't think we can judge him as harshly as he has been by some," she says. Penrose agrees. Although he sees the feminist criticism as justified in its way, he points out that Picasso the man was a complex character. "Of course, there were times when perhaps he did not treat women well. But I don't think it's right that we should be in judgment at this point. It's very easy to trip off all the bad things he did, and to forget that he had this incredible humanity and kindness. It's very convenient for some people to forget that because they feel it weakens their case of making him into a monster." As for his mother, he adds: "It was a deep love. He always said things were so much better when Lee was there. He seemed to have a

particular affection for her. And he would be more mellow when she was around.”

Miller would later call herself, perhaps sardonically, a “Picasso widow”. She had had to fight all her life to carve out a space for herself. “To begin with in Paris,” says Penrose, “she was very happy to allow her photographs to be published under Man Ray’s name. She said, ‘We were so close, it was as if we were the same person, so it didn’t matter.’ Then it began to matter.” But when it came to Picasso, Miller was anything but embittered, and her work now speaks for itself. Getting to this place, says Penrose, “was uphill all the way. But we won in the end.”

- [Lee Miller and Picasso](#) is at Newlands House Gallery, Petworth, West Sussex, 10 September to 8 January.
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Serie A

Fun, glamour and chaos: how Gazzetta Football Italia won our hearts

The iconic show which brought Serie A to millions of UK screens every Saturday celebrates its 30th anniversary



James Richardson was the face of Gazzetta Football Italia for ten years.
Photograph: Channel 4

Jonathan Grade

Mon 5 Sep 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 5 Sep 2022 09.48 EDT

“Welcome to [Serie A](#) – the greatest league in the world.” With those words the late Kenneth Wolstenholme kicked off a new era as Serie A became an institution in living rooms up and down the United Kingdom.

A few weeks earlier coverage of the newly-created, and much-hyped, Premier League had launched on Sky and was supposed to take centre stage. But back then, Serie A dominated every other division and Channel 4 had

captured coverage of it for next to nothing. It was the only live football that was free to air in the UK and viewers loved it.

Italian football was meant to be slow and boring but in the first game broadcast by Channel 4 – the 30-year anniversary of which is on Tuesday – Sampdoria and Lazio shared six goals in Genoa. And that was just the start of the fun.

In the summer of 1993 I was fortunate enough to join Chrysalis Television and for so many of us working for the production company back then, Gazzetta Football Italia was the jewel in their crown. It perfected the mix of football and entertainment. Viewers loved James Richardson's brilliantly scripted links and news stories, while at the same time had a real taste of the passion and colour of *calcio*.

While there was magic on the field, there were also more than a few chaotic incidents off it. In those pre-internet days, getting critical information such as team line-ups was a battle in itself. On some occasions we even had to phone the stadium.

Football Italia was also the first of its kind not to have commentators at the stadium. The beauty of it was that nobody knew. However, Peter Brackley's cover as an “off tube” commentator was nearly blown one week when somebody switched our feed of Milan versus Parma to Fiorentina against Bari. As ever Brackers brushed it all off, commentating on a game he hadn't even prepared for before we returned to San Siro.



Gianluca Vialli and Franco Baresi ahead of the clash between Juventus and AC Milan in 1992; Serie A boasted a glittering array of star players.
Photograph: Etsuo Hara/Getty Images

There were other dramas, too. The feed went down during Parma's clash with Juventus in 1998, meaning we had to use our own solitary camera in the stadium to continue live coverage and catch Filippo Inzaghi's dramatic equaliser.

Then there was Perugia in 2000 where a biblical storm delayed the second half for more than an hour. Somehow, we talked Channel 4 into staying on air as Lazio celebrated their centenary season with only their second league title.

The show's opening links, meanwhile, became the stuff of legend. One of the best was Attilio Lombardo doing the lambada. Gianluca Vialli wore a wig, Gianfranco Zola talked cockney rhyming slang and James stopped world player of the year Roberto Baggio in a car park, acting like they were best friends. Back then access to the stars was far easier; you simply cannot imagine something similar happening today.

The Brits in Italy got in on the act too. Paul Ince wore a chicken suit; David Platt turned his Mr Nice Guy image on its head by mimicking Arnold

Schwarzenegger with an ‘I’ll be back’ sketch. Paul Gascoigne, of course, shone too, on one occasion doing links at a wildlife park with an enormous python around his neck as well as sitting next to a tiger. Suffice to say there were no risk assessment forms.



Paul Gascoigne was happy to go along with some of the more unusual requests of the Football Italia producers. Photograph: Football Italia

The comedy didn’t just come from the players either. When Faustino Asprilla returned to Parma from Newcastle in 1998 we talked one of our producers – a proud Geordie – into doing a voiceover in his native accent while the Colombian star was talking in perfect Italian.

Despite Gazza’s departure from Lazio to Rangers in 1995, Channel 4’s coverage went from strength to strength, mainly because the biggest stars in the world were continuing to head to Italy – the original Ronaldo, Zinedine Zidane, Andriy Shevchenko and George Weah joining a cast featuring the likes of Francesco Totti, Gabriel Batistuta, Alessandro Del Piero et al.

As the years went on, Channel 4’s commitment to Serie A expanded. Saturday night games – including the Milan derby – were shown live along with both legs of Italy’s World Cup qualifying playoff with Russia.

Sadly, the turn of the millennium saw what had previously been Europe's glamour league suffer a fall from grace. The financially stricken Fiorentina and Parma went to the wall. Racism and crowd violence also became widespread and in 2002 Channel 4 decided [not to renew the contract](#).

Those last couple of years do not detract, though, from one of the great eras of modern football, when fans first got to embrace the passion, colour and excitement of the Italian game. The biggest compliment one can pay is that Football Italia is still being talked about 30 years on.

Golazzo – The Football Italia Years by Jonathan Grade is available on Amazon, priced £9.99 and from the Kindle Store at £7.99.

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[Explain it to me quickly](#)[Movies](#)

What's up with Olivia Wilde, Harry Styles and Florence Pugh? The worry over Don't Worry Darling

Have the headlines, memes and receipts been dominating your tabs? As the film gets set to premiere at Venice, here's a quick summary to catch you up



(L-R) Shia LaBeouf, Florence Pugh, Olivia Wilde and Harry Styles are all linked to the movie Don't Worry Darling, which is sending the internet into a lather. Composite: Getty images



[Michael Sun](#) explains it to [Steph Harmon](#)
[@mlchaelsun](#)

Mon 5 Sep 2022 00.59 EDT Last modified on Mon 5 Sep 2022 01.00 EDT

Michael, I can't open a tab without being assaulted by one or a variety of the following names: [Florence Pugh](#). [Olivia Wilde](#). [Shia LaBeouf](#). [Harry Styles](#). I don't know where to start with this story. What's going on?

Steph, welcome to your crash course in the film they are (or were) all starring in, which, for a movie called *Don't Worry Darling*, has actually involved a significant quantity of worrying.

don't worry darling's PR team every day for the last few weeks
[pic.twitter.com/W86GxgDIKZ](#)

— raya (@intoanewlife) [August 26, 2022](#)

Directed by Olivia Wilde (of [Booksmart](#) and breaking-up-with-her-fiance-to-[date-Harry-Styles](#) fame), it has courted a great deal of controversy over the past few months, but let's begin with the most recent turn of events: *Don't Worry Darling* has its world premiere on Monday at the Venice film

festival, but Florence Pugh, who co-stars alongside Styles, will not be appearing at a prescreening press conference.

This is because Pugh's flight from Budapest (where she is filming the Dune sequel) [doesn't land](#) until the conference is over – though of course it could also (hypothetically) be an elaborate way to avoid spending time talking about a film you (hypothetically) did not enjoy working on and do not wish to promote.

A newly released still from Don't Worry Darling (2022)
pic.twitter.com/sOP8gvba3e

— Meech (@MediumSizeMeech) [August 26, 2022](#)

OK. This is ringing some bells. Say more.

So let's whip back to 2020, the early stages of the film's production. [Shia LaBeouf](#) was initially cast in Styles' role – a company man living with his wife (Pugh) in a Stepford-y town, whose world begins to unravel when shady stuff goes down at work.

The relationship between LaBeouf and Wilde quickly soured, and he was replaced in the role. In an [interview](#) last month with Variety, Wilde says: "His process was not conducive to the ethos that I demand in my productions. He has a process that, in some ways, seems to require a combative energy ... my responsibility is to the production and to the cast, to protect them."

But then, the plot thickened: LaBeouf fired back his own receipts, claiming he was the one who [chose to quit](#).

Amid the he said/she said, Pugh was caught in the crossfire – in one video LaBeouf shared with Variety, Wilde hints at on-set tensions with her. "This might be a bit of a wake-up call for Miss Flo," she says. "If she really commits, if she really puts her mind and heart into it at this point and if you guys can make peace ... what do you think? Is there hope?"

How does Harry Styles fit in?

Well, the whole sordid affair is exacerbated by ... the other affair happening on set. The timeline of it all is a little murky, but most agree that after Wilde split from her fiance Jason Sudeikis in November 2020, she met Styles while shooting *Don't Worry Darling* and the pair were seen holding hands two months later (the most middle-school way of confirming a relationship possible).

Fast forward to July of this year: a source tells [Page Six](#) that “Flo seeing Olivia and Harry all over each other on set did not go down well”. As we all know, “a source told Page Six” is not a line that holds much credibility – and indeed [other sources](#) have denied that Wilde and Styles’ burgeoning relationship was ever an issue.

There was also another – again, unconfirmed – rumour too: around pay disparity between Styles and Pugh. Wilde has vehemently denied these claims as merely “[invented clickbait](#)”.

Perhaps the biggest issue is Styles’ acting? For a film set in the suburbs of 1950s America, this man is sounding very ~~British Australian Irish~~ unplaceable. It’s ... um ... avant garde.

Yorkshire to Boston to the Bronx to the Gold Coast in one take
<https://t.co/FZbes1K5Ac>

— cassidy xcx (@olsencassidy) [August 24, 2022](#)

I also seem to be hearing a lot about the sex scenes in this film?

Yes – although on this, you’d be forgiven for confusing *Don't Worry Darling* with the *other* Harry Styles film that’s caused some recent [sex scene controversy](#).

In Wilde’s film, the [trailer](#) features a sex scene between Styles and Pugh that sent the internet into extremely horny mania – before Pugh distanced herself from the discourse in one of the only pieces of promo she’s done. “When it’s reduced to your sex scenes, or to watch the most famous man in the world

go down on someone, it's not why we do it," she said in a [Harper's Bazaar](#) interview. "It's not why I'm in the industry."

Fair enough – but this doesn't seem to gel with Wilde's take: that there should have been more sex in the trailer, as she recently told [Associated Press](#).

Florence Pugh: I wish everyone would just stop focusing purely on the sex scenes. This film is way more than that.

Olivia Wilde: <https://t.co/SGeu05P0gC>

— ZedZee (@ZedZeeEdits) [August 25, 2022](#)

For a film whose star isn't giving any press, this film does seem to be getting a lot of press. Did I read something about Jordan Peterson too? I'm so sorry you had to see that. Unfortunately (as if it wasn't messy enough already), there *is* a character [inspired by Peterson](#), played by Chris Pine.

Right. Has Pine said weighed in on all this?

No. Unbothered king!

chris pine trying to keep up with don't worry darling news on his flip phone pic.twitter.com/Tq7wArNQtU

— ivy (@ohhhhherewego) [August 27, 2022](#)

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2022.09.05 - Opinion

- Boris Johnson broke all the rules, but history may be kind to him yet
- Rich countries caused Pakistan's catastrophic flooding. Their response? Inertia and apathy
- A crisis is coming for UK energy prices and this is what has to be done
- I have been called a coconut more times than I can count. It is painful, but I understand it

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

Boris Johnson broke all the rules, but history may be kind to him yet

[Vernon Bogdanor](#)

From Brexit to Covid, there were some gleams of light – but the PM's belief he was above the law did for him in the end



'By his insouciant attitude towards conventions, Boris Johnson has inadvertently strengthened the case for a constitution.' Photograph: Frank Augstein/AP

Mon 5 Sep 2022 05.46 EDT Last modified on Tue 6 Sep 2022 11.17 EDT

Boris Johnson was chosen by the Conservatives, and the voters in the 2019 election, to break the parliamentary deadlock and get Brexit done. Brexit is now yesterday's argument. We are out of the [European Union](#).

But the settlement leaves much for his successor to untangle. The [Northern Ireland protocol](#), part of the withdrawal agreement, leaves Northern Ireland

within the EU's internal market and required to observe EU customs rules. This puts the union in question. If Northern Ireland is linked economically with Ireland, why, some ask, should it not be linked politically as well? Paradoxically, a unionist prime minister has put the union in doubt. Nor has he been able to persuade the Scots that he has their interests close to his heart.

Critics of Brexit predicted it would make Britain insular and racist. There is little evidence of either. We have led Europe in providing arms and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine, where, by contrast with Britain, Johnson is regarded as a hero. An Ipsos Mori poll in February showed [46% of British voters](#) believe immigration had a positive impact on the country, double the [global average](#). There are still more people from EU countries [in London](#) than in any other European city.

Johnson has himself done much to raise the status of people from ethnic minorities and women. Of the eight candidates for the succession, four were from ethnic minorities, and four were female. Of three others who hoped to stand but could not attract sufficient support, two were from ethnic minorities while one was Jewish. If Liz Truss enters No 10, she will be the third female Tory prime minister. [Labour](#) has not yet had one.

However, there has been intolerance towards illegal migrants, desperate people with much to contribute to Britain. To propose sending them to Rwanda, a country whose [human rights record](#) is, to put it mildly, dubious, is shameful. In the words of Winston Churchill on the 1904 Aliens bill, the policy “looks like an attempt on the part of the government to gratify a small but noisy section of their own supporters and to purchase a little popularity in the constituencies by dealing harshly with a number of unfortunate aliens who have no votes. It will commend itself to those who like patriotism at other people’s expense.”



Boris Johnson waves as he enters 10 Downing Street after his appointment, 24 July 2019. Photograph: Vickie Flores/EPA

The 2019 election saw a startling psephological transformation. Johnson led the Conservatives into new territory, the so-called red wall seats, most of them previously held by Labour. A Joseph Rowntree Foundation report [on the 2019 election](#) showed the Conservatives, after nine years of being in government, for the first time in their history outpolled Labour – by as much as 15% – among voters with low incomes. Labour is now more than ever the party of the exam-passing classes, devoted to “the material and psychological needs of the relatively affluent and the well-heeled”, as [John Gray wrote](#) in the New Statesman. If the vote had been restricted to graduates in 2019, [Jeremy Corbyn would be](#) securely in Downing Street, not an isolated independent on the Commons backbenches.

To meet the needs of the red wall seats, the Johnson government produced in its dying days a [levelling up white paper](#). Many journalists dismissed it – but I wonder how many had actually read this important 300-page document. The government’s lifetime loan entitlement will offer every young person four years of post-secondary education, with a reformed funding model ending the artificial distinction between further and higher education. It will be just as easy for an 18-year-old to obtain a loan to study electrical engineering at a further education college as to read history at a university.

“Take back control” was the slogan of the Brexiters: restore the sovereignty of parliament as it was before Britain entered the European Community, as the EU then was, in 1973. But the constitutional reforms of the Blair era – devolution, directly elected mayors, the Human Rights Act, House of Lords reform – have created too many countervailing bodies. Johnson has not shown himself to be tolerant of checks on the elective dictatorship which parliamentary sovereignty legitimises. He has been reported as saying that [devolution was a mistake](#), wanting to [limit the Human Rights Act](#) and has stuffed the Lords with [ill-qualified cronies](#), whose only virtue is that they are prepared to do as he tells them.

But the central weakness of the Johnson administration, for which some will never forgive him, stems from his belief that rules are for others, not for him, culminating in the Partygate scandal which destroyed his premiership. There have also been allegations of [questionable financial dealings](#), of misuse of patronage, and of economies with the truth. All this has been subversive of good government, for the Whitehall machine relies on ordered rules. By his insouciant attitude towards conventions, Johnson has inadvertently strengthened the case for a constitution. Life without rules, he has proved, can be nasty and brutish as well as short.

How is one to evaluate this strange premiership? It was of course disrupted almost from the start by the pandemic – and on that the jury is still out, awaiting the report of the inquiry now in train.

All political lives, the saying goes, end in failure. Behind his public optimism, so valuable in raising the nation’s spirits during lockdown, Johnson may feel that the same has become true for him. But political legacies are complex matters, and the immediate verdict of the pundits can be far removed from the judgment of history. Clement Attlee was little regarded after his premiership ended in 1951. Today his reputation is high. Harold Macmillan’s, by contrast, is lower than in the days when it seemed we had never had it so good.

Churchill once said that history would be kind to him since he would be writing it. Johnson, an admirer of Churchill, may feel the same, and will no doubt seek to polish his record. He should be allowed to do so, free of the

vindictiveness and self-righteousness which so often disfigures the liberal left. Loss of the premiership is punishment enough.

- [Guardian Newsroom: What does Liz Truss's leadership mean for the UK?](#) Join our panel including Hugh Muir, Jessica Elgot, Owen Jones and Salma Shah as they react to the announcement of the new PM in this livestreamed event. On Tuesday 6 September 8pm BST | 9pm CEST | 12pm PDT | 3pm EDT. Book tickets [here](#)

Vernon Bogdanor is a professor of government at King's College London. His book *The Strange Survival of Liberal Britain* will be published in October

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[**OpinionPakistan**](#)

Rich countries caused Pakistan's catastrophic flooding. Their response? Inertia and apathy

[Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar](#)

If Cop27 fails to bring the major polluters to heel, the global south will be forced to act on its own

- Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar is a senator in Pakistan

Pakistan floods affect 33 million people as national emergency declared – video report

Mon 5 Sep 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 9 Sep 2022 07.13 EDT

What we've witnessed this summer in Pakistan is nothing short of a climate catastrophe. First came the early heatwaves that brought an end to spring, reducing crop yields and increasing the rate of glacial melt. Then came the monsoon downpours that lasted for days on end and [wreaked havoc](#) across the country. One-third of Pakistan is now underwater. More than 1,200 people have been killed and more than 33 million people affected. And the monster monsoon isn't over yet.

Experts say the heavy rainfall was caused by higher than average warming of the Arabian Sea. In Sindh province, [which produces half the country's food, 90% of crops are ruined](#). More than [75%](#) of Balochistan, which covers half of Pakistan, is partially or completely damaged. People's homes and patches of land are inundated. Of the 650,000 pregnant women who have been directly affected in flood-hit areas, 73,000 will be delivering their babies this month. The sheer scale of destruction those children will be born into is unimaginable.

The “third pole”, as it is often called, is a vast mountainous region that stretches from Myanmar to Afghanistan. This frigid wall of ice separates China and seven south Asian countries, including [Pakistan](#), India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan. The region is home to the world’s highest peaks and countless glaciers. The flights from Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan, to the northern cities Gilgit and Skardu take barely an hour. In the good old days before Pakistan’s national carrier ran into financial difficulties, it also used to run a weekly flight called the air safari. If you were lucky enough to get a window seat, the journey was a visual feast.

The flight would give passengers a tour of the snow-capped “eight-thousanders” (mountaineers’ lingo for peaks above 8,000 metres) and glaciers from the comfort of their seats. Five of these peaks are in Pakistan; our country also has the highest number of glaciers outside the polar regions. The air safari was an impressive, comfortable alternative to months of training, weeks of trekking in treacherous terrain, and frostbite.

Little grows at such high altitude. But the third pole functions as a water reserve whose 10 major rivers flow downstream from these mountains and sustain more than 1.5 billion people. When you understand this, you start to see the mountains, valleys, and continuously flowing streams and rivers in a different light. The prediction that this magnificent, awe-inspiring landscape will in time be transformed into bare rocks is terrifying.

By 2100, a third of the ice sheets in this region will be gone, even if the world limits itself to the global warming target of 1.5C. Temperatures are rising higher than that, bringing the doomsday closer. This is a crisis hardly anyone talks about. The floods that Pakistan has experienced are one of the early signs of this crisis. Climate catastrophe is now in plain sight, for everyone to see.

Despite this, major economies have failed to reach a consensus on emission reductions. There have been countless summits and international meetings, and yet we are still not on track to reach net zero by 2050. For countries such as Pakistan, which falls into the unfortunate category of “most vulnerable to climate change”, every failed climate summit is bad news. It is frustrating for us to see rich countries haggle with each other over cutting

back emissions while we continue to pay the costs in lives and livelihoods at a far greater frequency than before.

The results of western economies' inertia and apathy are now glaringly obvious. Pakistan contributes [less than 1% in global emissions](#) and yet it is one of the countries most at risk due to climate change and global heating. We can only hope that Cop27, which will be held this year in Egypt, won't fall short on expectations. But we've been here before: at Cop26, the response of major polluters [failed to match the scale of the climate crisis](#).

If this happens again, the message for countries such as Pakistan will be clear: the biggest polluters, despite mounting evidence of deadly climate events such as heatwaves, droughts and floods, are still not willing to compromise on a trade-off between economic growth and saving the planet. If this is the case, countries such as Pakistan, with other vulnerable nations that are responsible for a fraction of greenhouse gas emissions yet are most at risk of climate change, should consider forming their own coalition within Cop to highlight their plight and put pressure on rich polluters to establish a fund that would help them cope with the aftermath of climate catastrophes.

The global north has long resisted such calls to establish a fund to help poor countries deal with the effects of the climate emergency and to pay for the damages. Perhaps this is because it would be construed as an admission of guilt. As a consequence of the recent climate catastrophe in Pakistan, millions of lives have been destroyed. The likelihood is that thousands will be pushed below the poverty line. Children will drop out of schools and many mothers will die during childbirth. The effects of the floods will be long term and catastrophic. We're now living through a crisis that wasn't of our making.

- Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar is a senator in Pakistan. From 2009 to 2013, he served as the adviser to the prime minister of Pakistan on human rights
- *Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a letter of up to 300 words to be considered for publication, email it to us at guardian.letters@theguardian.com*

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UK cost of living crisis

A crisis is coming for UK energy prices and this is what has to be done

[Alfie Stirling](#)

We need to target our response by replacing price caps with a new system of ‘free basic energy’

- [Ditch price cap for ‘free basic energy’ plan to help poorest, report says](#)



Under the New Economics Foundation scheme, the poorest 10% would get most of their energy use across the year free. Photograph: Ian Shaw/Alamy

Mon 5 Sep 2022 01.00 EDT

The word “crisis” is often overused. But when it comes to the outlook for energy prices, it is exactly right. By October, the annualised energy price cap

for a typical household paying their bills by direct debit will have trebled to more than £3,500 in 18 months.

Fast forward to next April and it's expected to rise again, to £6,600, before remaining at about £5,900 for the rest of 2023. Next spring a typical family could be paying 500% more than they were before the pandemic, and the UK's overall annual household energy bill will have risen from around £30bn to more than £180bn in just two years. With the costs of energy permeating the wider economy, headline inflation is expected to exceed levels not seen for more than 40 years.

The response from government so far has ticked all four of the wrong boxes: too little; too late; poorly targeted; and overly complicated. Even after accounting for wage growth and benefit uprating, annual family costs are set to grow £3,100 faster than incomes on average between April 2021 and April 2023. If existing government support were to be extended, the average family will still be facing a black hole of £2,400.

There has been little from the Conservative leadership candidates to change these prospects. Rishi Sunak's proposals are similar in size and scope to existing measures, and Liz Truss' plans to cut national insurance would lead to just 15% of the benefits go to the poorest half of the population.

A freeze in the price cap this October is now needed to buy time. But it is a sticking plaster rather than a viable solution beyond a few months. At more than £116bn a year from April 2023, the cost of freezing energy prices in line with the April 2022 cap are similar to the entire running costs of the NHS in England before the pandemic.

Neither tax cuts nor price caps help to address energy security, draughty housing stock or the weakest income safety net among advanced economies globally. A full response to this crisis must seek to address these structural challenges too.

We need three things. First, the existing energy cap system must be scrapped. In its place, the New [Economics](#) Foundation is proposing a new system of "free basic energy". The scheme is simple: every household in the

country receives an equal share of energy for free, and everyone pays the same premium price for energy above this level.

Although simple, the effects are highly targeted. Overall, the richest 10% of families, who consume more energy on average, would pay double the amount expected under the April 2023 price cap. This helps to pay for lower bills for everyone else and creates strong incentives to improve energy efficiency where it's needed most.

The poorest 10% of families would get the majority of their energy use across the year free. They would pay £1,900 on average for the rest, compared with an expected bill of £6,200 in April.

Next, the government should create a new permanent energy element in all means-tested benefits – just as there are already separate elements for housing and children – to help the poorest families cover their remaining energy bill, and paid for by increasing capital gains tax.

Finally, to support all families with the indirect effects of energy on the wider cost of living, government should create a “cost of living allowance” worth £750 for each household in the country from April, funded through a reformed windfall tax on oil and gas. The payment would provide immediate relief now, but it would also create a permanent facility for reaching a wide distribution of families quickly in the event of future crises too.

Combined, the package would more than double the value of support currently being offered by the government, but at well under half the cost of freezing the price cap for 12 months. Disposable incomes would rise for 80% of families on average, and for the poorest 50% it would be enough to fully reverse the squeeze since April 2021.

The current crisis is unprecedented. If things stay as they are, not just millions, but tens of millions of people will be struggling to make ends meet, and not just for the coming months, but for potentially years to come.

If, as with the pandemic, the support from government is only temporary, we will soon find ourselves paying the price of starting over once again. That could be when energy prices rise again next year, or it could be the next

economic shock from war, disease or environmental catastrophe. Winter is coming, but we must also think to what's coming next.

Alfie Stirling is the director of research and chief economist at the New Economics Foundation

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/sep/05/a-crisis-is-coming-for-uk-energy-prices-and-this-is-what-has-to-be-done>

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OpinionRace

I have been called a coconut more times than I can count. It is painful, but I understand it

[Ella McLeod](#)

People suggest that I am somehow a race traitor because I love Shakespeare and listen to Taylor Swift. But I am enormously proud of my blackness



‘I love going to see plays but I can understand why many don’t thanks to expensive tickets and a sea of white faces.’ Photograph: (Posed by models) MixMedia/Getty Images

Mon 5 Sep 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 5 Sep 2022 02.24 EDT

I like listening to Taylor Swift; I love period dramas; I am enormously proud of my blackness – and I have been called a “coconut” more times than I can count. To be called a “coconut” – a person who is “black on the outside and

white on the inside” – is to be told that having defiantly forced your way into a space previously inaccessible to you as a result of racism, unconscious or otherwise, you are no longer permitted to return to your community. You are now a traitor. It operates under an assumption that “blackness” is a small singular box of identity, not a vast sprawling landscape of experiences and intersections. That is not to say that being a “race traitor” is an entirely redundant concept. There are lots of ways people of colour can do harm to their own communities – by working for political groups with a proven track record of race- and class-based discrimination, for example.

My grandmother grew up with no money in 1930s Jamaica and was one of only two people in her year to pass the exams necessary to train as a nurse. She was bookish and studious and, for her, literature and education were her liberators. She moved to London as part of the Windrush generation in 1952, and bought a house in Clapham in 1973, where she raised and educated a family. I have always been very proud of this. As a child, sitting at the feet of my grandmother, the books thrust into my hands were treated simultaneously as treasures and weapons, and the scholarship I got to an all-girls private school was an achievement, a prized opportunity. It was only when I became this person, a proud product of the environment so many had worked hard to create, that I felt the sting of *that* word.

To be called a “coconut” or an “Oreo” by other women of colour is painful, but I understand it. I, like any child of the diaspora, or any child who has benefited from their parents’ social mobility, have had to reckon with feeling I am a contradiction. I love Shakespeare, for example, but I can understand why many black students feel fatigued with the “male, pale and stale” curriculum. I love language, studied Latin, am articulate and proud of it – but I can also recognise the role played by my privileged, elitist education. I love going to see plays, but can understand why many don’t, thanks to expensive tickets, a sea of white faces and a performed formality that is often at odds with the liveness of theatre. I recently got told off by the white woman behind me for being too “rowdy” at [Six the Musical](#) (a show that demands rowdiness). Beside me, my two friends were taking part in an enthusiastic singalong – so it was interesting that I, the lone brown face in the crowd, was the target of her ire.

A “coconut” is a uniquely hurtful thing to be called, but those who use the word are rarely wielders of structural power. Middle-class white people have often told me that I “don’t sound black”, that it is uncommon for black girls to like the things I like; an unspoken “for a black girl” often hangs at the end of their compliments. And so I write this to reach out a hand to the black art kids, the black kids who love indie music, the black kids who get told they’re “not black enough”. The author [Zora Neale Hurston](#) once said that she “feels most colored when thrown against a sharp white background”. That line lodged itself between my ribs. In defying the gatekeeping of white supremacy, in persisting even if no one who looks like you has persisted before, we don’t betray who we are, but celebrate and redefine our blackness. Every time I am called a coconut, I feel black to my bones, and infinitely proud of it.

Ella McLeod is a writer, poet and performer

Rapunzella, Or, Don’t Touch My Hair by Ella McLeod is published by Scholastic, £8.99. To support the Guardian and the Observer, order a copy at [guardianbookshop.com](#). Delivery charges may apply

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Pakistan authorities breach lake to save other areas from floods

Up to 100,000 people will be displaced from homes by Lake Manchar after waters reached dangerous levels



Flood victims receive aid in Sukkur, Pakistan. Photograph: Fareed Khan/AP

Reuters

Sun 4 Sep 2022 11.42 EDTFirst published on Sun 4 Sep 2022 09.04 EDT

Authorities in flood-hit [Pakistan](#) have breached the country's largest freshwater lake, displacing up to 100,000 people from their homes but saving more densely populated areas from gathering flood water, a minister said.

Record monsoon rains and melting glaciers in Pakistan's northern mountains have brought floods that have affected 33 million people and killed at least

1,290, including 453 children. The inundation, blamed on climate breakdown, is still spreading.

Lake Manchar, which is used for water storage, had already reached dangerous levels and the increased pressure posed a threat to surrounding areas in southern Sindh province, said the region's irrigation minister, Jam Khan Shoro.

He said about 100,000 people would be affected by the breach but it would help save more populated clusters and also reduce water levels in other, harder-hit areas.

"By inflicting the breach we have tried to save Sehwan town. Water levels on Johi and Mehar towns in Dadu district would be reduced by this breach in the lake," Shoro told Reuters.

It was not clear how many of the 100,000 asked to leave their homes would actually do so.

Some displaced by the floods have complained that shelters are crowded, while others are reluctant to leave their possessions.

Aside from historic rainfall, southern Pakistan has had to contend with increased flooding as a surge of water flowed down the Indus River.

The country has already received nearly three times the 30-year average rainfall in the quarter through August, totalling 390.7mm (15.38in). Sindh province, with a population of 50 million, was hardest hit, getting 464% more rain than the 30-year average.

Being downstream on the Indus River, the southern parts of the country have experienced swelling river waters flowing from the north. Pakistan's limited dams and reservoirs are already overflowing and cannot be used to stop downstream flows.

Tarbela dam in the north-west has been at capacity – 1,550ft and 5.8m acre ft – for weeks, according to National Disaster Management Authority

(NDMA) data. Downstream in Sindh, barrages are under pressure with the Indus at high flood level, the NDMA said in its latest situation report.

Authorities are also prepared for more rain in the north over the next few days until Tuesday. “Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has forecasted that weak monsoon currents from Arabian Sea are penetrating upper and central parts of the country which subsequently cause rain-wind/thundershowers,” the NDMA said.

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It cautioned local administrations to be on an enhanced state of alert and to restrict vehicle movement in areas prone to flash floods and landslides as well as those close to water channels.

It said some populations in the north could be at risk and advised “timely evacuation”.

The overnight death toll from the floods increased by 25, of which 12 were children, according to an NDMA update. The United Nations children’s agency, Unicef, said there was a risk of “many more” child deaths from disease.

Pakistan’s prime minister, Shehbaz Sharif, on Sunday appealed to Unicef and other global agencies to help control child deaths. “As Pakistan battles one of the worst climate-induced calamities, among the most adversely affected are children,” Sharif [tweeted](#).

On Sunday, flights carrying aid from Unicef, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates landed in Pakistan.

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Russia

Nine climbers killed on Klyuchevskaya Sopka volcano in Russia's far east

Another three mountaineers are stranded on the 4,754-metre volcano after gale-force winds hamper rescue effort



Klyuchevskaya Sopka volcano in Russia's Kamchatka peninsula, centre, where nine climbers have died. Photograph: Alexander Piragis/Alamy

Reuters

Tue 6 Sep 2022 00.00 EDTFirst published on Sun 4 Sep 2022 22.19 EDT

Nine climbers have died attempting to scale the Klyuchevskaya Sopka volcano in Russia's far east, according to local officials, with another three still trapped on the mountain.

The party of 12, which included two guides, set off together to climb the 4,754-metre (15,597-foot) volcano – Eurasia's highest active volcano – last Tuesday.

After setting up camp at 3,300m, nine of the group set off to climb higher on Saturday, local media reported.

Of those nine, investigators say at least five fell to their deaths at an altitude of around 4,150m on Saturday, while the others died subsequently. Temperatures on the mountain can fall to -14C (7F) overnight, rescuers say.

Russia

Rescuers tried on Monday to reach those left behind – two tourists and a guide – in the cabin at 3,300m where they were sheltering after attempts to land a helicopter at the volcano on Sunday failed due to gale-force winds and heavy cloud cover.

“They were scheduled to land at an altitude of 3,300m, but due to gale force winds at 30 metres per second [67mph] they failed to do so, although two attempts were made a few hours apart,” rescuers said.

“The outcome of the search and rescue operation depends on various factors: weather conditions (wind strength, precipitation, cloud cover), ash clouds on slopes, melting glaciers, debris flows and rock falls,” the local civil defence authority said.

The remaining three members of the group have been able to contact their relatives, Interfax news agency reported.

Klyuchevskaya Sopka is the tallest of more than 160 volcanoes whose snowy peaks tower over the Kamchatka peninsula. It forms part of a Unesco world heritage site listed for its exceptional natural beauty.

Rescuers warn that the mountain, made up of mounds of volcanic rocks mixed with snow and ice, is considered particularly hazardous to climbers due to its altitude and the risk of volcanic eruption.

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[India](#)

Cyrus Mistry, billionaire ex-chairman of Tata Sons, dies in India car crash

Prime minister Narendra Modi calls 54-year-old's death 'a big loss' as politicians and business leaders express shock after accident near Mumbai



Cyrus Mistry in 2014. The former chairman of Indian conglomerate Tata Sons has died in a car crash near Mumbai aged 54. Photograph: Harish Tyagi/EPA

Associated Press in New Delhi

Sun 4 Sep 2022 20.04 EDT Last modified on Sun 4 Sep 2022 21.21 EDT

Cyrus Mistry, an Indian-born Irish businessman and former chairman of Indian conglomerate Tata Sons, has died in an accident after his car crashed into a road divider in western [India](#), police said. He was 54.

The crash occurred on a river bridge in Maharashtra state's Palghar district near Mumbai on Sunday, police officer Prakash Gaekwad said.

Mistry served as chairman of [Tata](#) Sons, the holding company of the \$300bn salt-to-software Tata conglomerate, for five years until he was removed by the board in October 2016. He challenged the board's decision, but India's top court upheld his dismissal.

Politicians and business leaders reacted with shock to news of Mistry's death. The prime minister, [Narendra Modi](#), said Mistry was a promising business leader who believed in India's economic prowess.

"His passing away is a big loss to the world of commerce and industry," he said.

Anand Mahindra, an Indian business leader, said: "I was convinced he was destined for greatness. If life had other plans for him, so be it, but life itself should not have been snatched away from him."

Mistry was travelling to Mumbai from Gujarat with three others, said B Patil, the top police official in Palghar district.

The car in which Mistry was travelling had rammed into a divider and he died at the scene, a senior Mumbai police official said.

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), in which Tata Sons owns a majority stake, said it was mourning its former chairman's untimely death. "He was a warm, friendly and congenial person who built a strong relationship with the TCS family during his time as the chairman of the company," it said in a statement.

Mistry owned an 18.4% stake in Tata Sons through his company, Cyrus Investments. In 2018, his net worth was about \$10bn.

Mistry joined the family construction company, Shapoorji Pallonji and Co, as managing director in 1991.

A graduate in civil engineering from London's Imperial College and in management from the London Business School, Mistry described himself as a voracious reader of business books and golfer, and shared his family's love of horses.

He is survived by his wife and two sons.

With Reuters

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[Texas](#)

Conservative Texas phone company fueling extremist takeover of schools

Patriot Mobile, a ‘Christian conservative wireless provider’, is targeting school board elections to push its far-right agenda



A Trump cutout stands at Patriot Mobile display at the Republican party of Texas convention in June 2022, in Houston, Texas. Photograph: Elizabeth Conley/AP

[Erum Salam](#)

Mon 5 Sep 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 5 Sep 2022 05.01 EDT

A conservative Texas-based phone company is planning a takeover of political offices in the US state, starting with public schools.

Patriot Mobile, which calls itself “America’s only Christian conservative wireless provider”, has been fueling an extremist conservative movement taking over curriculum in public schools across Texas.

Leigh Wambsganss, the executive director of the company and its political arm, proudly declared victory in 11 out of 11 school board seats in the last election cycle in school districts around the Dallas-Fort Worth area on behalf of the company and conservative American Christians.

She said: “What this means is that now in north Texas, over 100,000 students who, before May, had leftist leadership now have conservative leadership!”

Earlier this year, the company established a political action committee, Patriot Mobile Action, which allows them to legally fundraise and finance political campaigns.

By acting as the financial backbone for the campaigns of far-right candidates for school boards, the phone company is seeking to promote its conservative agenda on issues like abortion, books and gender identity. It happens as across the US, school boards and local elections have witnessed intense fights as far-right candidates and groups have sought to win positions.

“Patriot Mobile Action is engaging on the front lines of this culture war. We are independently researching candidates and advocating on behalf of those who will stand for American values and stand against leftist indoctrination, racist Critical Race Theory and the sexualization of children that is rampant in public schools,” their website says.

Some key beliefs of the organization are American exceptionalism, “Critical Race Theory and Marxist policies have no place in schools or government,” and that “the United States constitution was founded on Judeo-Christian principles”.



Glenn Story, co-founder and president of Patriot Mobile, speaks at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in Dallas, Texas.
Photograph: Shelby Tauber/Reuters

In Keller independent school district, where Patriot Mobile played a key role in getting school board members elected, a new policy went into effect that required the board's review and approval of books in its schools.

At the start of this academic year, faculty and staff were tasked with removing certain books previously challenged by parents like Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and a graphic novel adaptation of Anne Frank's diary, in order for the school board to review the books according to new unknown criteria.

Patriot Mobile also concentrated its efforts in the school board elections of Carroll independent school district, and emerged triumphant. It was here that Patriot Mobile donated "In God We Trust" signs, after a state law passed requiring public schools to display any signs with the nation's official motto, so long as it was donated.

Local resident Sravan Krishna donated signs that read "In God We Trust" in Arabic and another with a rainbow background. The school board rejected those signs, citing having enough signs as the reason.

More recently, the Patriot Mobile sponsored [CPAC](#) (Conservative Political Action Conference), partly held in Dallas this year. Far-right politicians like Texas senator Ted Cruz and Colorado Congresswoman Lauren Boebert were seen signing their books at Patriot Mobile sponsored booths at the event.

Patriot Mobile's chief financial officer and founder Glenn Story was a guest on former Trump White House chief strategist Steve Bannon's podcast.

Speaking on Patriot Mobile's recent wins in the state's school boards, Bannon said: "The school boards are the key that picks the lock."

The phone carrier said it will donate \$1.5m to conservative causes in 2022 and expects to double that contribution by next year.

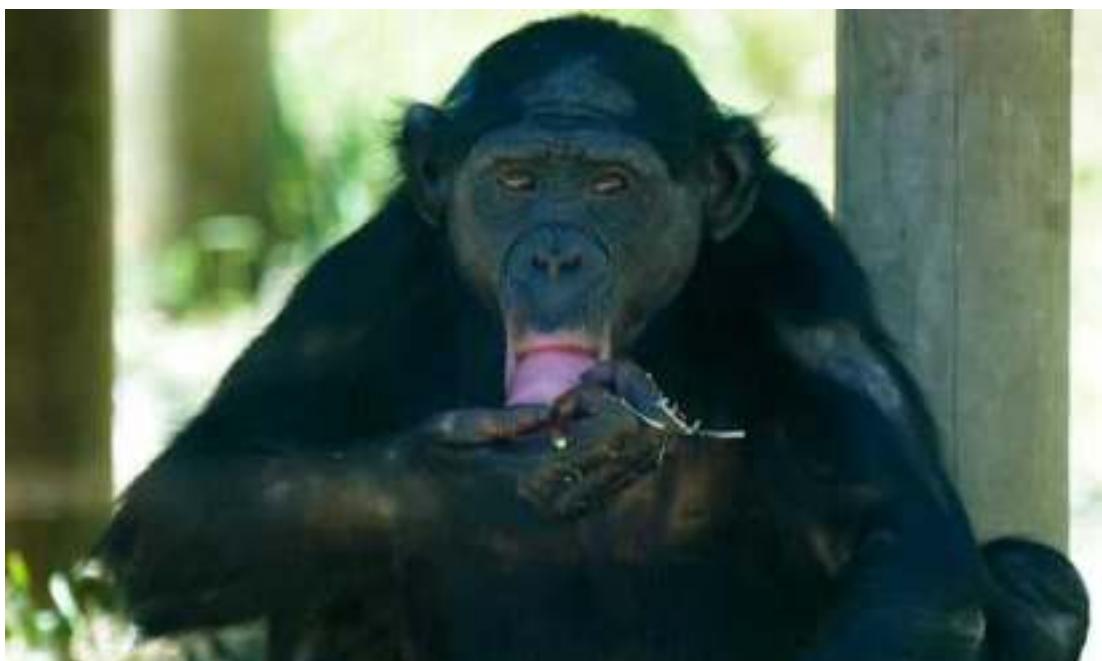
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Animal behaviour

Humans were not the only primates to get lockdown blues, UK study finds

When zoos were closed some primates became solitary and sedentary while others displayed dominant behaviour



A bonobo licking an ice lolly at Twycross zoo in July. Primate behaviour was normal again after visitors returned. Photograph: Jacob King/PA

[Matthew Weaver](#)

Mon 5 Sep 2022 02.01 EDT

Humans weren't the only ones to develop bad habits during lockdown. According to new research, some primates in zoos became more solitary and sedentary, and others displayed more sexually and physically dominant behaviour.

The study compared the behaviour of bonobos, chimpanzees, baboons and gorillas in a zoo and safari park in 2020, when they were hidden from the gaze of humans during lockdown, with how they behaved after visitors returned.

Olive baboons performed less sexual and dominance behaviour when visitors came back than they had shown during lockdown, the researchers observed.

They also approached visitor cars more frequently than they had the ranger's vehicle when the park was closed.

The study, published in the journal [Animals](#), found that when visitors returned bonobos and gorillas spent less time alone and gorillas spent less time resting.

The chimpanzees that were studied ate more and engaged more with their enclosures when the zoo was open.

According to the scientists, it is difficult to state whether lockdown experiences were positive, negative or neutral for individual animals, but the chimpanzees and baboons appeared to be specifically stimulated by the return of visitors.

Similarly, bonobos and gorillas spending less time alone could be seen as positive.

But the reduction in resting behaviour in more sedentary gorillas could also suggest they were disrupted by visitors, the researchers say.

The gorillas altered the use of their enclosure, which suggested they were able to modify their behaviour to reduce potential overstimulation and manage their own experiences effectively, the research suggests.

According to the findings, while the olive baboons may have been stimulated by visitors and the presence of cars, there was a threshold after which this did not increase.

The study also reports that their increased sexual behaviour during closure may have been because they did not have the stimulation of the presence of moving vehicles.

Dr Samantha Ward, a zoo animal welfare scientist at Nottingham Trent University's School of Animal, Rural and Environmental Sciences, said: "Primates are some of the most cognitively advanced species in zoos and their interactions with visitors are complex.

"A limitation to understanding how visitors can affect behaviour of animals in zoos and parks is that they are rarely close to the public for prolonged periods, so this provided us with a unique opportunity."

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The interactions between humans and animals, and the impacts of the presence of zoo visitors, are considered crucial in relation to animal welfare, experts suggest.

Research has shown that different species, and even individual animals, respond differently to different humans.

Dr Ellen Williams, a zoo animal welfare researcher at Harper Adams University, said: "Our study showed the varied ways in which visitors can influence the behaviour of primates in captivity.

"Behavioural changes and changes in enclosure use in the presence of visitors highlights the adaptability of zoo species to their environments.

“Provision of environments which enable animals to actively adapt in this manner is really important for their welfare.”

Behavioural data for the study was collected between April and September 2020 and from November 2020 to January 2021, spanning multiple open and closed periods during the coronavirus pandemic.

Bonobos, chimpanzees and gorillas were observed at Twycross zoo in Leicestershire, while baboons were monitored by staff at Knowsley Safari in Merseyside.

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- [Exclusive Schools in England risk losing teaching assistants to supermarkets over ‘chronic’ low pay](#)

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Russia-Ukraine war: US secretary of state Blinken tells Zelenskiy war is at ‘pivotal moment’ – as it happened

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Lloyd's

Lloyd's of London takes £1.1bn hit from Ukraine war

Insurance market warns of financial fallout from conflict and tough year of natural catastrophes

- [Russia-Ukraine war: latest updates](#)



Lloyd's of London made a pre-tax loss of £1.8bn in the first six months of the year. Photograph: Simon Dawson/Reuters

[Julia Köllewe](#)

Thu 8 Sep 2022 03.21 EDT Last modified on Thu 8 Sep 2022 16.39 EDT

Lloyd's of London has warned of a "challenging year" of natural catastrophes, Russia's invasion of Ukraine and inflation as the world's oldest insurance market braced for a £1.1bn hit from [unrecoverable planes and cargoes](#) related to the war in Ukraine.

The group said it had set aside the sum for customers affected by the conflict, [mostly for grounded aircraft](#), ships trapped in the Black Sea and disrupted exports of cereals and agricultural products from Ukraine and [Russia](#).

Bruce Carnegie-Brown, the chairman, said Lloyd's had estimated the losses using the same methodology as for the Covid-19 pandemic but only about 4% of claims for losses from the war had been received so far. The pandemic was far more costly for the Lloyd's market, where 76 firms operate, at £3.5bn. Overall, the war in [Ukraine](#) could cost the global insurance industry £10bn to £12bn, according to industry estimates.

Lloyd's has worked with the UK government to implement sanctions imposed over the war, including [cancelling Russian firms' insurance cover](#). At the same time, it insures ships transporting grain from Ukraine's ports under a UN-brokered deal in July, up to a limit of \$500m (£433m).

"These grain exports are going to emerging market countries and the countries that are most vulnerable to famine as a result of the food shortage. A number of them have been docking in east Africa as we speak," Carnegie-Brown told the Guardian.

"These exports are on ships that are trapped in Ukraine. The key issue will be whether people are willing to sail back into the Black Sea to pick up further exports of grain and we haven't reached that point yet ... Time will tell, but so far the results are good."

As the cost of living crisis worsens, the corporation will make a one-off £2,500 payment to about 1,000 staff who earn less than £75,000 a year, 60% of its headcount, to help them with soaring energy and food bills.

Despite the £1.1bn hit from the Ukraine invasion as well as flooding claims in Australia and [Europe](#), Lloyd's improved its underwriting profit to £1.2bn in the first six months of the year from £960m a year earlier. However, a £3.1bn investment loss caused by higher interest rates pushed Lloyd's into an overall pre-tax loss of £1.8bn in the first half, against a profit of £1.4bn a year earlier.

It noted that financial markets had a difficult first half of the year as global stocks fell sharply, and bonds sold off as their yields jumped as a result of markets expecting higher inflation. Most of the investment loss was driven by valuation losses on fixed-income securities but Lloyd's said these losses would reverse as the bonds matured over the next two years.

John Neal, the Lloyd's chief executive, said: "With political and economic uncertainty looming large over society, it's more important than ever that insurers are ready to support."

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"Rising interest rates, while prompting an unrealised investment loss on paper at the half year, will be good news for insurers in the long term as returns on assets strengthen in 2023 and beyond."

Lloyd's third annual culture survey showed some progress towards its target of 35% of leadership positions filled by women by the end of 2023 – it is now at 30%, up from 29% last year. A third of new hires come from ethnic minority backgrounds at the corporation, while the rest of the market has yet to achieve this target, where one in five are currently from ethnic minorities.

Insurance brokers and agents have slowly returned to the Richard Rogers-designed Lloyd's building in the City of London since Covid restrictions were lifted. About 3,000 people come in to do face-to-face business every week now, compared with 5,000 before the pandemic. They tended to go to the office on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, while "the market remains quite quiet on Mondays and Fridays", Carnegie-Brown said.

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NHS

Record 6.8m people waiting for hospital treatment in England

Expert on NHS says latest figures show Liz Truss is inheriting a health service in ‘critical condition’



At the end of July, 377,689 people in England had been waiting more than a year to start hospital treatment. Photograph: MartinPrescott/Getty Images

[Denis Campbell](#) and [Pamela Duncan](#)

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Liz Truss has received a stark insight into the dire state of the NHS after new figures showed millions of people in [England](#) were facing often record delays to access vital healthcare.

One leading [NHS](#) expert said the long waits for care, diagnostic tests and hospital beds showed that Britain’s new prime minister “inherits an NHS in critical condition”.

The total number of people in England waiting for hospital treatment rose again to a record high of 6.8 million at the end of July – almost one in eight of the population.

Waiting lists in England

Patients are also facing long waits for accident and emergency care, cancer treatment, such as surgery or chemotherapy, and for an ambulance to arrive after a 999 call.

Of the 6.8 million people on NHS England’s “referral to treatment” waiting list, 2,665,004 had been waiting for more than 18 weeks, which is the supposed maximum waiting time for procedures such as a joint replacement, hernia repair or cataract removal.

In addition, 377,689 had been waiting more than a year to start their treatment, almost 22,000 more than a month before, according to the latest monthly [performance data](#) published by NHS England.

The data showed that ministers and NHS bosses had failed to fulfil their pledge to eradicate two-year waits by the end of July; 2,885 such cases had not been resolved by then, despite major efforts by hospitals to meet the target.

Wes Streeting, the shadow health secretary, accused the Conservatives of breaking their promise.

Nigel Edwards, the chief executive of the Nuffield Trust health thinktank, said: “These figures clearly show what a monumental challenge faces the new prime minister and health secretary in delivering on the NHS.”

He said that in August more than 130,000 patients were left waiting for more than four hours in accident and emergency units for a hospital bed.

“These waits are now worse than they were in previous winters. The new prime minister inherits an NHS in critical condition,” he said.

Truss has [declared](#) the NHS to be one of her “three early priorities” and pledged to “put our health service on a firm footing”. Thérèse Coffey, the

health secretary who is also Truss's deputy prime minister, is expected to unveil an “emergency plan” [next week](#) to tackle the service’s rapid deterioration.

Although ambulance response times across England in August were better than in July, the service was unable to meet a single one of its targets across its four major callout categories: life-threatening, emergency, urgent and non-urgent.

Response times for suspected stroke or heart attack patients were better than in July, when it took ambulance crews an average of 59 minutes to reach such patients. However, the average 42 minutes and 44 seconds seen in August was still more than double the 18-minute target.

The NHS data also showed that:

In July 1,521,711 people were waiting for a diagnostic test, of whom 424,605 had been waiting at least six months for a test that should be done within six weeks.

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[Waiting lists for diagnostic tests](#)

[Hospitals](#) missed all but one of the targets covering patients’ access to cancer care.

Almost 40% of cancer patients had to wait longer than the two-month maximum to start their treatment after being urgently referred by a GP.

Cancer care

The proportion of patients seen within four hours at hospital-based accident and emergency units was 58% in August when it should be 95%.

A&E attendances

Richard Murray, the chief executive of the King's Fund, said the figures showed that Truss "will now be responsible for a health and care service that is being shaken to its foundations as we head into the winter months in the grip of a worsening staffing crisis".

Coffey has set out her priorities in the acronym "ABCD": ambulances, backlogs, care, doctors and dentists. However, Murray said she would need to tackle "systemic workforce shortages and sustained funding shortfalls in social care" if the NHS was to get back on track.

At the end of August, 13,200 hospital beds were occupied with patients who were medically fit to leave but could not be safely discharged, mainly because of a lack of social care.

NHS England sought to portray the figures in a more positive light. It highlighted that "the number of patients waiting for tests and checks has fallen for the third month in a row and is at the lowest level since the NHS launched its elective recovery plan – the biggest, most ambitious catch up programme in health history".

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Schools

Schools in England risk losing TAs to supermarkets over ‘chronic’ low pay

Exclusive: report finds cost of living crisis driving teaching assistants into other work and budget cuts will mean fewer roles



Promised staff pay rises will force schools to cut TA roles, leaving the most vulnerable children without the support they need. Photograph: Alex Hinds/Alamy

[Alexandra Topping](#)

Thu 8 Sep 2022 02.00 EDT

Schools in [England](#) risk “haemorrhaging” vital teaching assistants to better-paid jobs in supermarkets and other places because of the cost of living crisis with recruitment becoming increasingly difficult, according to a report.

Headteachers have also said that cuts to school budgets and promised staff pay rises – that will not be funded by the government – will put schools in a desperate situation and many will have to cut TA roles, taking away support for some of the most vulnerable children.

Researchers at the University of Portsmouth's Education Research, Innovation and Consultancy Unit said the “chronic” low pay of TAs – despite their increased role in many schools – was an “an urgent threat to TAs’ livelihoods and to schools”.

Dr Rob Webster, a University of Portsmouth researcher who co-authored the report with Dr Sophie Hall, said: “Schools are facing many challenges, but the consequence of the loss of teaching assistants is the most catastrophic. Without these staff, schools will struggle to provide adequate support to children with additional needs. Teachers’ workloads will also skyrocket, driving yet more from the profession and deterring others from joining.”

Almost all – 96% – of TAs questioned for the report said their pay was not enough to cover their needs, and many who spoke to the report’s authors said their commitment to improving the lives of the most vulnerable children kept them in post. “It’s never, never been about the money. I definitely wouldn’t be doing this for the money,” said one.

One headteacher said a rolling advert for eight TAs had attracted only one since January. Another told the report’s authors: “Basically, I think we will start haemorrhaging TAs. Not only here, but in other places, because you can get paid more money in the supermarket.”

Headteachers are resorting to offering “wellbeing days” and special treats alongside access to more training and a greater voice in the school to encourage TAs to stay at schools, even as many struggle to pay for the petrol to get to work, the report found.

The most effective actions taken by schools to retain TAs were “including them in the school community and school processes, such as lesson

planning, and investing in and supporting their development as classroom professionals”, said the report.

The Unison-commissioned report, From Covid to the Cost of Living: The Crises Remaking the Role of [Teaching](#) Assistants, found that the pandemic has transformed TAs’ role “potentially forever”.

“Teaching assistants stepped up during the pandemic and repeatedly proved their worth, as they were doing long before the crisis struck,” said Unison’s head of education, Mike Short. “But chronic low pay is threatening to rob classrooms of dedicated, experienced staff, just when schools need them most.”

A [previous Unison-commissioned report](#) by researchers at UCL’s Institute for Education found nearly nine out of 10 (88%) TAs supported vulnerable and key-worker children in school during lockdown, with 51% managing a whole class or bubble on their own, as teachers prepared and taught remote lessons, often from home.

The report – which looks at the “recovery” year (2021-22) and includes data from 22 interviews with TAs, teachers and headteachers from five primary schools in England – finds TAs are now helping students who have fallen behind, supporting their emotional needs, filling in for special educational needs and disability (Send) staff, such as speech and language therapists, and supporting parents and carers.

This has “led to marked increases in TAs’ workload and their emotional load pre-pandemic” even as pay has stagnated, according to the report’s authors. In one school, TAs were running toilet-training workshops, while another TA spoke of how parents often approached them with family and financial problems.

The report’s authors have called on the government to take urgent action and “provide sufficient financial support so that TAs can meet rising costs and schools can retain their TAs”, adding that a failure to do so was “likely to have serious implications for maintaining Send provision and teacher workload and retention”.

The report recommends a government survey of schools to reveal changes to the role of TAs, the impact of the pandemic, and the rising cost of living on the recruitment and retention of TAs and teachers.

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‘I don’t know how my school would function without TAs’

Sian Carr, the headteacher at Townhill junior school in Southampton, is already seeing the impact of the cost of living crisis on teaching assistants. A number of TAs at Townhill have started working in the school as lunchtime supervisors and cleaners to make ends meet.



Sian Carr: ‘TAs are fundamental to children’s wellbeing.’

“TAs are so incredibly poorly paid, people can’t survive on it in this climate,” she says. Carr is clear about the importance of TAs. “If you haven’t got teaching assistants you can’t follow the best practice for teaching,” she says. “We have a number of children – and this is also because of Covid – who come up who are not ready in terms of their reading level and need to do phonics and daily reading. And there’s no way a class teacher can listen to every child read every day, while teaching effectively.”

In Carr’s school 49% of children come from disadvantaged backgrounds and 29% need additional support – so the TAs also provide vital pastoral care, she says. “I don’t actually know how my school would function without them,” she says. “They are so fundamental to the children’s wellbeing.”

Despite this, she has had to cut the number of TAs. Three years ago every class had a teaching assistant; now there is one for each three-class year, she says.

“There is no wriggle room in school budgets any more,” she says. “The children need to have a pencil, they have to have something to write in, obviously we have gas and electric bills going up – it’s the only thing we have got left that we can cut.”

And there is a new storm on the horizon. Schools are struggling to pay soaring energy and wage bills, while a proposed 5% increase to wages will not be covered by the government but will have to come from already squeezed budgets. The school is, says Carr, significantly worse off than at any time in the past five years.

“Where are those pay rises coming from when it’s in the public sector?” she asks. “That’s what is actually morally repugnant in this: people cannot survive without these pay rises, but if we give them the pay rises, I’m not quite sure how schools will survive.”

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Nine million people in a city 170km long; will the world ever be ready for a linear metropolis?



Virtual light ... Neom's vision of the Line in north-western Saudi Arabia.
Photograph: Neom/AFP/Getty Images

Saudi Arabia has unveiled designs for a futuristic megastructure in the desert. But it is an idea that has preoccupied the imaginations of architects – and megalomaniacs – for generations



[Oliver Wainwright](#)

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Thu 8 Sep 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 8 Sep 2022 14.02 EDT

“The contemporary city needs a full redesign,” purrs a seductive voice, over surging orchestral strings. “What if we removed cars? What if we got rid of streets? What if everything you needed was always a five-minute walk away?” The words accompany an animation depicting an oblong megastructure sprouting from a desert landscape, slicing through sand dunes and mountains in a continuous urban strip: a city of 9 million people, sealed inside a mirror-clad box. “A 170km revolution in urban living,” the narrator continues, “protecting the Earth’s most stunning nature, while creating unmatched liveability.”

Most cities don’t come with their own Hollywood-style trailers, but then most cities are not [the Line](#). Unveiled in July, the project is the latest heady fantasy to emerge from the kingdom of Saudi Arabia’s marketing machine, garnering breathless headlines and torrents of clicks ([its videos](#) have 400m views and counting). The slick trailers promise a car-free, carbon-neutral

bubble with its own temperate microclimate, where artificial intelligence will be “continuously learning predictive ways to make life easier”.



A simulation of what it might look like inside the Line's two massive flanking skyscrapers. Photograph: Neom/AFP/Getty Images

The city's 500-metre-high glass walls drip with lush hanging gardens, a vision of hyper-nature taking over the buildings' pixelated glass blocks, their facades etched with circuit-board motifs, as if the metropolis itself were a habitable supercomputer. The walls frame a deep canyon sprinkled with Edenic terraces, swimming lakes and picnicking couples, all floating above a high-speed rail line ready to whisk them along the urban ribbon, safely protected from the outside world.

If it looks like something from a Marvel movie, there's a reason. The army of consultants commissioned to work on Neom, the \$500bn urban region of which the Line is part, comprises not only urban planners but numerous digital artists from the special effects industry. According to a [Bloomberg report](#), they include Olivier Pron, a designer who helped create the look of Marvel's Guardians of the Galaxy films; Nathan Crowley, known for his work on the brooding Dark Knight trilogy of Batman movies; and futurist Jeff Julian, who worked on the apocalyptic extravaganzas World War Z and I Am Legend. The ominous dystopian undertone to the aesthetic of the

project can also be partly explained by Saudi ruler Mohammed bin Salman's apparent penchant for [cyberpunk](#) – a sci-fi genre, notes the Oxford English Dictionary, “typified by a bleak, hi-tech setting in which a lawless subculture exists within an oppressive society dominated by computer technology”. If ever there was an urban vision that embraced our end-of-days climate apocalypse, a petrodollar mirage of horizontal glass skyscrapers in the desert as the world burns, then this is it.

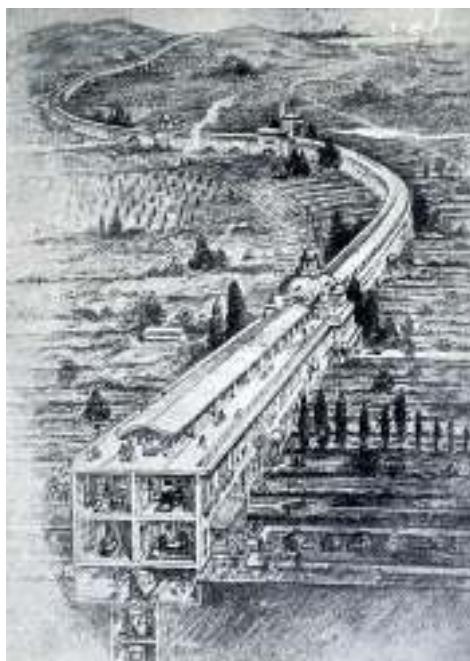
The plans for the Line were instantly compared to the [Continuous Monument](#), a theoretical project drawn up by Italian collective Superstudio in 1969, which was not a blueprint for a smart city but a searing critique of the relentless urbanisation of the planet. Their collages of a glass megastructure, ploughing through desert landscapes, cutting across oceans and engulfing Manhattan, were intended to represent a “negative utopia”, according to Superstudio co-founder Adolfo Natalini, and stand as a warning against “the horrors architecture had in store, with its scientific methods for perpetuating standard models worldwide”. Another Superstudio member, Gian Piero Frassinelli, was rueful in [a recent interview](#): “Seeing the dystopias of your own imagination being created,” he said, referring to the Line, “is not the best thing you could wish for.”



Superstudio's Continuous Monument, a critique of urbanisation.
Photograph: Design Museum

It may now be seen as a dystopian nightmare, the far-flung folly of an autocrat desperate for global approval, but the idea of building a self-contained linear city has preoccupied the imaginations of architects and planners for generations. The Line might bill itself as a “never-before-seen approach to urbanisation”, but the principles behind it have been proposed many times over – though never successfully realised.

The origins of the linear city dream are usually credited to the Spanish town planner Arturo Soria y Mata, who first articulated the concept 140 years ago. Writing in 1882, in the Madrid newspaper *El Progreso*, [he argued](#) that the “almost perfect” type of city would be “a single street unit 500 metres broad, extending if necessary from Cádiz to St Petersburg, from Peking to Brussels”. His Ciudad Lineal imagined urban functions separated in bands either side of a central boulevard and tramway, “for every family its own house, for each house an orchard and garden,” the urban strip insulated by woodland on either side. Soria even went as far as founding a tram company and buying land on the outskirts of Madrid to test out his theory. But the surrounding land values soon inflated out of reach, and his experiment gradually became swallowed up by the city.



Roadtown, Edgar Chamberlain's vision of a linear street running right across the US.

If history repeats itself first as tragedy, then as farce, the first tragic attempt to follow in Soria's footsteps came in 1910 in the United States. That year, Edgar Chambless took a map and a ruler, and drew a straight line from the Atlantic coast to the Allegheny mountains of West Virginia, then on to the Mississippi, across the prairies to the Rockies, and down to the beaches of the Pacific. His line represented the path of a continuous street of two-storey houses, to be built atop a triple-decker stack of railway lines, with a promenade along the rooftops, leaving untouched expanses of countryside extending for miles around on either side.

“The idea occurred to me to lay the modern skyscraper on its side,” [Chambless wrote](#). “I would take the apartment house and all its conveniences and comforts out among the farms by the aid of wires, pipes and rapid and noiseless transportation. I would extend the blotch of human habitations called cities out in radiating lines. I would surround the city worker with the trees and grass and woods and meadows, and the farmer with all the advantages of city life – I had invented Roadtown.”

Just like the Line, Roadtown was premised on the lure of convenience, and the idea that the messy chaos of the city could be corralled inside a singular, sanitised strip, with “rent reduced, taxes minimised, slums exterminated”. Chambless’s sales pitch sounds almost identical to the Saudi scheme, describing the linear city as a hyper-connected place, joined by modern communication and “arrow-swift” noiseless transport, with “telephones, telegraphs, teleposts, parcel-carriers, freight service, compact, punctual, prompt, accurate, enabling you to live along the line from part to part and from end to end, and be served with the best at the cheapest at all times, while sitting in your easy chair”.

Roadtown was enthusiastically backed by Thomas Edison, who donated his patents for moulded-cement housing, and the inventor William H Boyes, who gifted his monorail invention. But, as with Soria’s scheme, wider support was unforthcoming. Undeterred, Chambless continued to promote his project for the next two decades, entering his plan to the 1939 New York World’s Fair competition, suggesting that the fair itself should be built around transportation, with prefabricated buildings to prevent waste. His submission went unanswered, and [he killed himself in 1936](#).

While Chambliss's vision was an embodiment of the American dream of freedom, mobility and man's triumph over the land, the idea of the linear city was also taking root among radical architects of the Soviet Union around the same time, driven by a very different ideology. Mikhail Okhitovich, a constructivist theorist and town planner, rejected the centralised city as a product of capitalism. Instead, he championed the idea of "[disurbanism](#)", plotting cities in the form of long ribbons of decentralised development, as a means of populating the country's sprawling rural hinterland with self-sufficient settlements. Housing would be dispersed along linear routes, with communal dining, leisure facilities and employment centres at major road junctions.



Modern-day Magnitogorsk. A plan to redesign it into eight 'ribbons' converging on a factory was rejected. Photograph: Maria Kuzkina/Alamy

Okhitovich put his ideas to the test in 1930, in a competition proposal for Magnitogorsk, an industrial city named after its "magnetic mountain" of iron ore. He imagined a network of eight 25km-long ribbons, along which the city's resident-workers would live in individual "pod-houses" that could be easily reconfigured, the ribbons converging on a giant iron and steel works. Children would receive their own separate pods, with the aim of dissolving traditional family structures, while a divorce would no longer entail haggling over property – you could simply decouple your pods and go your own way.

But Okhitovich's disurbanist thinking was rejected as economically crippling and politically dangerous. He was reprimanded by the politburo for speaking out against the Stalinist "cult of hierarchy" and sent to the gulag, where he was executed in 1937.

While Chambless was peddling Roadtown across America, and Okhitovich imagining urban ribbons snaking through the Ural mountains, the Swiss-French architect Le Corbusier, maestro of megalomaniacal urban plans, was busy drawing up a linear city of his own. In 1931, to mark the centennial of French rule in Algeria, the colonial government unveiled a new city plan for the capital, Algiers. Le Corbusier saw it as a sorely missed opportunity – and a promotional opportunity for himself to offer a more radical vision. Without any official commission, he concocted [Plan Obus](#), a wildly implausible scheme that included a vast elevated highway winding between the hills, with 14 storeys of housing for the working class stuffed underneath it, like a kind of inhabited viaduct, with room for 180,000 people.

"Here is the new Algiers," he declared. "Instead of the leprous sore which had sullied the gulf and the slopes of the Sael, here stands architecture."

Le Corbusier's brutal intervention in the landscape was strangely at odds with his professed appreciation of the local vernacular. "O inspiring image!" he wrote, stirred by the sight of the dense, cubic architecture of the city's casbah. "Arabs, are there no peoples but you who dwell in coolness and quiet, in the enchantment of proportions and the savour of a humane architecture?" Yet, at the same time, his plan advocated razing more than half of the casbah to make way for a new business centre. Thankfully, his inflated colonial ambitions remained just that.



Kenzo Tange's 80km 'plug and play' masterplan for Tokyo. Photograph: Tange Architects

Despite these failures, linear city fever returned in the 1960s, fuelled by a wave of postwar techno-utopian optimism, and the firm belief that infrastructure could cure the ills of the overcrowded metropolis. In 1961, Japanese architect Kenzō Tange presented his scheme for the future of Tokyo Bay on national television, and, in doing so, triggered among architects a thirst for megastructures that would last for the next two decades. He proposed [an 80km urban spine stretching across the bay](#), with city modules connected by three levels of looping roads, and modular buildings clipped on to the highway skeleton – a plug-and-play system that could be easily updated as and when needed. As with Roadtown before it, Tange's plan was based on a firm belief that communication and mobility would inevitably shape the future city in linear form.

"Mass communication has released the city from the bonds of a closed organisation and is changing the structure of society itself," he proclaimed. "It is the arterial system which preserves the life and human drive of the city, the nervous system which moves its brain. Mobility determines the structure of the city." Just as the cathedral had stood at the symbolic centre of the medieval city, so would his "civic axis" provide the new organisational spine of the modern metropolis. In fine tradition, his proposals remained firmly on

paper, although they went on to inspire the Japanese metabolist movement, which would conjure ever more feverish sci-fi plans, the linear city sprouting branches and blooming into vertical clusters of inhabited trees.

Back in the US, the evangelical belief in roads as the saviour of cities continued apace. In 1965, young architects Peter Eisenman and Michael Graves imagined [a linear city](#) that would stretch all the way from Boston to Washington DC, built on a podium of multi-deck highways. Depicted without any of the seductive finesse of Tange's plan, the architects' vision included a pair of spartan oblong blocks, one for industry, the other for housing, offices and shops, looking like an infinite extrusion of a generic office-cum-mall. The idea, they wrote, was that these urban "corridors" might join existing cities from Maine to Miami, like links in an endless chain.

"The final result could be a system which at once would send the longest manmade structure ever seen on earth snaking across its horizons," cooed [Life magazine](#), "and at the same time make it possible to conduct most urban activities within distances a man enjoys to walk." The article noted that the linear form "would avoid any cross-town traffic jams" – conveniently overlooking the fact that the city itself would probably be one gigantic linear traffic jam, stretching up the entire eastern seaboard.

So will The Line succeed where other linear city dreams before it have failed, or is it merely set to repeat the mistakes of the past, on an epic scale? In the deserts of northwestern [Saudi Arabia](#), a faint linear furrow is already visible from the air. Time will tell if it becomes anything more than that, or if it remains a line in the sand, an Ozymandian bookend to 140 years of deluded urban fantasies.

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Saviour or wrecker? The truth about the Treasury

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‘Intelligent women are dangerous, no?’ Samantha Morton on sexism, success and survival

[Emine Saner](#)



Samantha Morton: ‘A lot of the roles I’ve chosen have had an edge.’ Styling: Karen Clarkson; fashion assistant: Molly Ellison. Samantha’s black jacket is vintage Comme des Garçons from Found and Vision. Photograph: Pål Hansen/The Guardian

Taken into care, abused, objectified: the actor had a traumatic start to life – and her career. Why does she feel such a strong connection to her new TV role: privileged, notorious Catherine de Medici?



[@eminesaner](#)

Thu 8 Sep 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 8 Sep 2022 06.39 EDT

Not so long ago, [Samantha Morton](#) was given a relic from her past – her application form to join Nottingham’s Central Junior Television Workshop (one of the organisation’s leaders, clearly proud of Morton’s success, had hung on to it). It had asked her to list what she wanted to be when she grew up. Prime minister, she wrote, followed by novelist and actor. She laughs, remembering it. We had been talking about whether she might go into politics one day – not such a leap for an actor who is intensely political (the “novelist” bit might have to wait). But it also seems to sum up so much else about the young Sam I’m picturing, defiant blue eyes staring out from the scrappy passport photo that would have been stapled to the corner of the sheet. Drive and ambition, and a feeling that despite everything she had been

through by that point – in and out of care for years, subjected to physical and sexual abuse – that her hopes and dreams could be as big as anyone's.

Through immense talent, luck and sheer force of will, Morton, 45, did make it – Hollywood success, indie superstardom, two Oscar nominations, a Bafta for the first film she directed, and now starring roles in big TV shows. She was in *The Walking Dead*, playing Alpha, the leader of a zombie army, and has just been announced as the lead in another series, *The Burning Girls*. Her latest is in *The Serpent Queen*, as Catherine de Medici, the 16th-century queen of France, vilified throughout history, but portrayed here by Morton with characteristic empathy (and [based on the biography by Leonie Frieda](#)).



‘The smartest woman in the room’ ... Morton as Catherine de Medici in *The Serpent Queen*.

How did she get into the head of such a legend? “I think ultimately with any character, it’s about finding them in a private moment,” says Morton, speaking over Zoom from a home that looks lovely, with old wooden beams and plenty of art. “When I’m alone with the scripts, I need to be able to see in my head who they are, how they walk, how they breathe.” Morton didn’t know much about Catherine, but realised she “had permeated my life in all different ways, from Disney films to Grimm fairytales to the arts. She was

an original thinker. She was massively educated, spoke many languages, was a great mathematician, astrologer, astronomer.”

She is always, says Morton, “the smartest person in the room, and then has to almost dumb down in order to facilitate other people’s egos and make sure that ...” She pauses. “Make sure she’s going to survive. She can’t expose herself as being intelligent. Intelligent women are dangerous, no? She was able to overcome all those obstacles and not only survive, but she thrived and she became the longest ruler in France. It’s an extraordinary story, knowing – as much as we can tell, because history is written by men – that it was true.”



As Alpha in The Walking Dead. Photograph: AMC

Some of the themes, she adds, are as relevant today as they were then, “certainly the ownership of a female body, and how they talk about young Catherine getting pregnant [her worth was in providing heirs, and she didn’t conceive for 10 years]. We only have to look at what’s happening in America, and what’s potentially going to happen in the UK, in regards to the ownership of our bodies by the state. Any woman watching the show will have something in common with her, because of the way times are changing for us.”

Then there are personal similarities between Morton and Catherine – the resilience, the survival instinct – if at opposite ends of the privilege scale. Morton was first taken into care as a baby, and later was made a ward of court – under the responsibility of the state, like Catherine, an orphan who grew up in a convent until her marriage to the second son of the French king Francis I. “She was given the best education money could buy. I’ve often said, when I was in care, it would have been great if I’d have been sent to a fancy boarding school because at least I would have come out of it ...” She pauses again. “I might have been scarred in some way, but I would have had a great education at the end of it.” Many children in care, she points out, leave “with no GCSEs and no future that doesn’t just tick the statistic box of ending up sadly in prison or homeless”.



Styling: Karen Clarkson; fashion assistant: Molly Ellison. Samantha's dress is Sports Banger X Max Allen; shoes are Manolo Blahnik. Photograph: Pål Hansen/The Guardian

Where Catherine is calculating and cunning, Morton seems instinctive. Would the actor have had a different type of career if she had played the game? “Oh, yes,” she says instantly and laughs. “But how long would that career have lasted?” When she was still building her career, she called out sexist comments, and did things such as tell executives to “fuck off” – she was to star in one big Hollywood movie, but was appalled when she was

asked to wear a skirt to dinner with executives, and relayed the message through her agent. “I didn’t play the game and those actresses that did, and knew how to, are certainly very successful today. I just had to be able to go to bed at night and be comfortable with myself.”

She preferred, she says, “staying in the independent film sector whereby I had really good relationships with directors and producers. That worked for me because a lot of the people that were in power back then were people that I didn’t feel very safe around.” She has spoken before about being touched inappropriately and repeatedly on film sets. Long before the film producer Harvey Weinstein was exposed as a sexual predator, she was one of the few young actors who had publicly denounced his bullying behaviour; she was dropped from the film *The Brothers Grimm* after Weinstein allegedly said male stars [would not want to have sex with her](#). One of Morton’s upcoming roles, with delicious irony, [is in She Said](#), about the New York Times journalists who broke the Weinstein story; [she plays Zelda Perkins](#), the former Miramax assistant who reported Weinstein to her bosses in the 90s and was forced to sign a nondisclosure agreement.



Morton in *She Said*. Photograph: Landmark Media/Alamy

Anyway, says Morton, the choices she made worked out. “I’m still working.” Does she feel vindicated? She is a hugely respected actor, with an

impressive body of work behind her, and now she's doing the big, well-paid TV jobs, too. "I don't know if I feel vindicated," she says. "I feel sad that we got to where we got to, and I feel devastated for people that were abused. I sometimes look back, doing the kind of films I was doing or auditions and how I was treated, and just go: 'That just wouldn't happen today.' It shouldn't have happened then." What sort of things? "Just that women were treated a certain way in the 90s and 2000s, we just were in any industry – there was misogyny everywhere. And there still is – I think there's misogyny on film sets still, and we have to deal with it on a day-to-day basis. That can even be down to how people talk down to us, or how they talk to the makeup team or female runners. It's a pretty male industry."

She was ambitious to make good work, not necessarily good money, which made her more selective. "I was from a situation where I had no money at all, so any money was a bonus, and I knew how to budget and look after myself. If I wasn't working for seven or eight months because I didn't want to do the projects that were available, I'd be like, I'll go and try my hand at poetry. I'll go and retrain, go to college."



Morton in Band of Gold in 1995. Photograph: ITV/Shutterstock

Morton grew up in Nottingham. She has always spoken with love about her parents, who had nine children between them, but it was not a safe

environment in which to grow up; her mother, having endured her own traumatic childhood, had poor mental health and Morton has said her father could be violent. After she was taken into care, she would return on and off to her father, who had custody, before permanently moving into the care system, which meant going in and out of foster homes and then children's homes. In 2014, [she spoke about being the victim of sexual abuse](#) at one home – she reported the abuse to her mother and the police and she was moved. No action was taken against the perpetrators. At the next home she lived in, she experienced physical abuse. She would run away, sleeping rough rather than stay at the home, and shoplift food.

At 13, she left school, but around this time she also got a place at what was then the Central Junior [Television](#) Workshop. Within a couple of years, Morton was getting acting roles in London – in TV shows such as Cracker and Band of Gold, and in theatre. She had grit in abundance, but it gave her discipline and made her realise a successful career would involve sacrifice and commitment. One of her best friends was killed in a car accident and the funeral was scheduled for the first day of rehearsals at the Royal Court theatre. “The director said: ‘If you don’t turn up, you’re not in the play,’” says Morton. “I remember thinking how tough that was, and talking to my friend’s mum and her saying: ‘She’d want this opportunity for you.’ I was living in a homeless hostel at that point.”

Even if she didn’t entirely play the Hollywood game, Morton’s career rocketed – roles in Woody Allen’s Sweet and Lowdown, which brought her first Oscar nomination (the second was for the immigrant drama In America), and Steven Spielberg’s Minority Report, as well as British independent films such as Morvern Callar. Many of her roles, including as an [18th-century brothel owner in Harlots](#) or as a single mother forced to sell sex to survive in I Am Kirsty, have portrayed women who are judged by society. “Certainly, a lot of the roles I’ve chosen have had a social ...” She thinks of the word. “An edge to them.”



With Lesley Manville in *Harlots*. Photograph: Robert Viglaksy/ITV/Hulu

Morton's 2009 film, *The Unloved*, about a young girl going into care, did incredibly well – 3 million people watched it on TV, and it won a Bafta and a best actor award for Robert Carlyle – but frustratingly, Morton has found it hard to get funding for her next film, *Starlings*, intended to be the second of a trilogy. "Film4 didn't want to make the film with me, which broke my heart a little bit because they'd made *The Unloved*. They didn't even want to read my script," she says. "The BBC didn't want to read my script either. I don't know that if I was Michael Winterbottom they might want to, but I found all that really tough." Is it harder for female film-makers? "One hundred per cent. I think a lot of the people that make the decisions about films are men, and for some reason, they trust male film-makers – even if they've only done a commercial or a music video, they seem to trust them [more]."

At one point, Morton says: "I think the older I get, the more little Sam is almost something in the distance," but if her own trauma is lessened, the issues that affected her as a child – and that children are going through today – are still things she thinks about on a daily basis. She has been "ranting and raving", she says, about the effects of austerity for years, and with the cost of living crisis, life is going to get a lot worse for the most vulnerable in society. "It's always the children that suffer the most when there's poverty,

depression, alcoholism, addiction problems. When people have it really tough, children suffer the most.”



In Sweet and Lowdown. Photograph: Sweetland Films/Allstar

Child protection services are [grossly underresourced and in need of reform](#), she points out. “This isn’t rocket science – this can be fixed with the right attitude, and knowing how to spend public money, but it seems those things are shoved under the carpet by successive governments.” Every so often, when a horrific story breaks about child abuse, she says, “the whole country will go: ‘Aren’t those people evil?’” She would rather people ask, she says: “What could we have done as a society to have helped that situation have a different outcome?” It is frustrating, she says, because some of the answers are “not out of the reach of any politician. They’re things that can happen. They need money, they need the right people, but we’re not asking for the world.” Meanwhile, the top 10 providers of [children’s homes made £300m profit last year](#). “Why would you privatise the care of young people? If you privatise everything, we’re in a really bad situation.”

There is something so bracingly uncompromising about Morton, and she has an eye on the wider issues – it has never just been about her. In some ways, this helped – she instinctively understood from a young age that none of what she went through was her fault. “I was almost caught up in someone

else's tornado," she says. "I was kind of collateral damage." But I still don't know how she survived (personally, she seems incredibly happy, and is married with three children). She has had "lots and lots" of counselling, she says; the drugs she took as a teenager, particularly psychedelic drugs (now being [researched as treatments for depression](#)), may have had a therapeutic effect, she thinks. "I've dabbled and experimented with all sorts of ways to heal trauma, because there must be trauma."

Faith helped – a mix of the Catholicism of her childhood, and other spiritual elements she has picked up. She feels loved, she says. "I have a huge amount of love for people and the world. I never felt hate." Mostly she feels very lucky. "I count my blessings each day. My family might think I'm a bit weird, but I always go: 'Let's just have a moment. How lucky are we right now?'" She smiles, face lighting up. "It can get a bit annoying."

The Serpent Queen starts 11 September on Starz Play, and streams on Stan in Australia. She Said is out in November.

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[LGBTQ+ rights](#)

Trans Gaelic footballer Giulia Valentino: ‘I’d like to leave a legacy of inclusion’

Exclusive: In her first interview since being targeted on social media, Valentino argues for trans inclusion



Ireland’s Gaelic sports authorities have promised to develop a policy on trans players. Photograph: Damien Meyer/AFP/Getty Images

Rory Carroll Ireland correspondent
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Thu 8 Sep 2022 00.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 8 Sep 2022 00.05 EDT

It was the game that triggered a backlash and compelled Ireland’s Gaelic sports authorities to review whether transgender women can compete in female teams.

Ireland's first openly LGBTQ+ club, Na Gaeil Aeracha, was playing Na Fianna's ladies E team in a minor championship at the end of July.

The referee paused play and told the captains there was "a problem" with Na Gaeil Aeracha's number 21. "The player is a man."

Play resumed but the incident made [headlines](#) and shined a spotlight on the trans player, Giulia Valentino. Commentators on social media posted a photograph from an earlier game showing Valentino, arms outstretched, closing in on a younger, more slightly built opponent.

Denunciations flooded Twitter and other platforms calling Valentino a safety hazard, among other things. Others said Na Gaeil Aeracha had an unfair advantage and credited Valentino with crucial scores in the LGBTQ+ club's tournament victory.

The Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) and the Ladies' Gaelic Football Association (LGFA) responded by promising to develop a policy on trans players. With online commentators from the UK and US swelling the issue into a culture war skirmish, Na Gaeil Aeracha and Valentino hunkered down and froze their social media accounts.

Five weeks later, speaking to the Guardian in a first media interview since the controversy, Valentino sought to set the record straight about the tournament final and make the case for including trans people in sports.

"There was a lot of misinformation. They said I had scored two goals and nine points. I didn't score anything. My position is half-back and I'm not such a good player."

Commentators had suggested the game they played in, called the Dublin Junior J Shield football final, was for teenagers whereas it was for adults, with junior signifying a lower skill level, said Valentino. "A lot of the misinformation was clearly intentional; they wanted to give the public a specific angle. This is the well-known toxic narrative against trans people we know so well."

An Italian tech worker who moved to Ireland two years ago, Valentino is a newcomer to Gaelic sports and by her own account not especially skilled, yet she may leave a lasting mark if the GAA and LGFA allow trans players to compete – she has been consulted by the policy review. “I will never be remembered for my sporting results but I’d like to be remembered for leaving a legacy of inclusion for other trans players.”

For opponents of such inclusion, the photograph of Valentino closing in on an opponent appeared to tell its own story: a bigger, stronger athlete with an unfair physical advantage from having undergone male puberty.

The Guardian agreed not to publish this or any photograph that identified Valentino, who has been harassed. “Safety is a privilege that doesn’t belong to trans people,” she said.

Valentino, who is in her 30s and of medium height and slim build, said five years of hormone therapy had eroded any physical advantage and made testosterone levels compliant with Olympic committee regulations.

“I’m not capable of doing things that I could before. There is no way to consider me an outstanding performer or unfair competitor or a safety risk. If anything, my injuries show it’s the other way round.” Valentino quit rugby after dislocating a shoulder.

She urged sporting organisations to commission medical research and devise objective criteria. “Test me against a cis-gendered counterpart similar to me in shape, size and fitness level to see if I have any advantage. In groups of cis-gendered athletes there are many differences – small, big, fast, slow, tall – I want to identify and quantify those gaps. See if what I bring to the field is already included in that range. If it is then I belong there.”

Research, including a [study by Joanna Harper](#), a trans woman at Loughborough University, has found that trans women may [retain strength](#) during the first three years of hormone therapy.

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Valentino said that since starting to play Gaelic football in February she had heard no objections from other players in the ladies' league. "Cisgender women players are our main supporters. I never had an issue on the pitch."

Unlike [rugby league](#), [swimming](#) and other global sports, where a ban on trans players by one organisation can influence counterparts in other countries to follow suit, Gaelic sports authorities have full autonomy, said Valentino. "The GAA has a huge opportunity to make history because they don't have to report to anyone."

Once a conservative bastion rooted in Catholic, rural Ireland, the GAA – following Irish society's secular liberalisation – has embraced ethnic and [religious diversity](#) and welcomed LGBTQ+ players.

"Other teams have been very supportive, inviting us for matches, giving us locations to train, marching with us at Pride events," said Martin Murray, who earlier this year founded Aeracha Uladh, the [first LGBTQ+ inclusive club in Northern Ireland](#), and is now helping to set up other clubs around the island.

However, there is no consensus – not even within LGBTQ+ circles – about including trans players, said Murray. "It will be more difficult."

Murray, who is gender fluid, favours inclusion and the establishment of rules based on fairness and scientific data. "I think we're going the right way at the moment. It could be a decade before they have the right measures in place. I have sympathy for the national sporting bodies. It's not easy to put these measures in place."

In a brief statement the GAA said: “We are working with our sister organisations to review this whole area and, until such a time that this process is complete, we won’t be putting any spokesperson forward.”

Transgender issues have continued making headlines in Ireland. This week Enoch Burke, an evangelical Christian school teacher who refused to call a pupil by their preferred pronoun “they”, was jailed for contempt of court after ignoring an order to not attend the school.

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Looking at the state of Britain from the US, for once I feel very glad to be here

[Emma Brockes](#)



It was an unfamiliar feeling of relief: whatever may be wrong with America, at least no one is looking to Liz Truss to solve it



Britain's new prime minister Liz Truss being welcomed by staff in Downing Street, 6 September 2022. Photograph: No 10

Thu 8 Sep 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 8 Sep 2022 08.27 EDT

It is a common refrain among foreigners living in the US, one that comes round like clockwork whenever something bad happens: what are we doing here? During the Trump administration, after the supreme court [overruled Roe v Wade](#), or in the wake of yet another school shooting, the choice to live in this country when there are better alternatives seems at best eccentric, at worst actively mad. It was an odd feeling, therefore, to glance across at Britain from the US this week and experience a powerful sense of relief. No matter how bad things are in the UK, they're usually slightly better – more reasonable, less bonkers, however you want to phrase it – than in America. Not so now. Whatever may be wrong with the US, at least no one is looking to [Liz Truss](#) to solve it.

If we have been here before, it was never this bad. After the Brexit vote or during the lies and reversals of Partygate, Britain didn't exactly shine on the international stage. Still, it benefited from certain comparisons. Parallels drawn between Donald Trump and Boris Johnson inevitably flattered the British prime minister. Unlike Trump, it was said, Boris Johnson wasn't actually stupid. And while he might have been venal, untrustworthy and a

habitual liar, he did at least stop short of inciting a mob to invade parliament and overthrow British democracy.

To be fair to Truss, it seems unlikely she'll outdo Trump on this front, either. The idea of following Truss anywhere, let alone to a violent death on the barricades, would be like following [Captain Mainwaring](#) on to the beaches at Normandy. Paradoxically, of course, this is part of the horror of her ascent. That someone of Truss's abilities should be in charge at this dire moment of British history makes her seem, in defiance of political physics, even worse in some ways than her predecessor.

Cometh the hour, cometh the woman; Britons could only laugh hysterically on Monday and rock back and forth. In the US, where Britain's influence dwindle hourly, seeing Truss's appointment splashed on the homepage of the New York Times triggered a brief ping of excitement: oh, look! We made the news! It didn't last. One after the other, American media organisations summarised Truss's task as one of reckoning with "[a time of crisis for Britain](#)" (New York Times), "[a country in crisis](#)" (CNN), and Britain's "deepening crisis" (NBC). Over on NPR, [analysts asked](#): "what broke Britain's economy?"

For Britons in the US, meanwhile, it became apparent that the precise nature of Truss's shortcomings weren't immediately discernible to everyone. From her record, clearly, she has the gravitas and integrity of a Weebie. But the exact nature of her shitness – that peculiarly British marriage of feebleness, glibness and a sort of aggressive vacancy – doesn't entirely translate over here. If Sarah Palin wore her chaotic energy so boldly you couldn't miss it, the danger of someone like Truss is in a swivel-eyed officiousness untethered to any idea beyond her own survival – and that, at a glance, can read vaguely as normal.

As a result, the American media has been somewhat generous. In the New York Times, Truss was [described as](#) "a party stalwart, hawkish diplomat and free-market champion" with a "practical, unfussy style [that] could appeal to Britons after the circuslike atmosphere of the Johnson years". The Washington Post [sought cheerfully](#) to present her as a corrective to Johnson, a happy transition from "a prime minister known for colorful metaphors and

a loose relationship with the truth” to “one who offered unadorned bullet points for dealing with the country’s looming economic crisis”. In the Wall Street Journal, John Bolton, former national security adviser to Trump and himself no stranger to the swivel-eyed school of management, [furthered the opinion](#) that “Liz Truss may be just the prime minister America needs.”

If US coverage of Truss had a through-the-looking-glass feel, figures attesting to the scale of the national crisis in Britain snapped things back to reality. With an incredulity matching domestic reporting, American newspapers detailed the predicted 80% jump in household fuel bills, the double-digit inflation and the forecast of imminent recession in Britain. Anecdotally, friends reported stocking up on basic supplies in anticipation of a winter of blackouts and shortages.

Things will swing back; the forces that put Trump in office haven’t gone away. But for five minutes, many Britons in America are looking across the Atlantic and finding themselves in the novel position of feeling lucky to be a long way from home.

- Emma Brockes is a Guardian columnist
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Serena Williams

Serena Williams had to be so good no one could deny her. Black women can relate

Leslie Jones

Sports is a male-dominated space, just like comedy. I know Serena's dad told her the same thing my dad told me: 'Hey, you're good, but you've got to be better than everybody else'



Serena Williams celebrates after winning at the 2020 Australian Open.
Photograph: Clive Brunskill/Getty Images

Thu 8 Sep 2022 04.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 8 Sep 2022 07.25 EDT

What people don't understand about strong Black women is that we were raised strong. We have a different experience. The one thing I remember my father always telling me was: 'Hey, you're good, but you've got to be better than everybody else.' That's what [Serena Williams](#) represents to me. What

sets her apart is her endurance to keep going and keep going no matter what the obstacle is to reach that higher standard. To be undeniable.

It's just harder for us. We all know this. Racism is the dumbest thing I've ever had to deal with. The fact that she's dealt with that and still made it to No 1 and never used it as an excuse is something else. We know her as a Black phenomenon, but she just wanted to go into her field like all of us want to go into our fields, as actresses or comics or tennis players. We don't want to be the first Black this, the first Black that – it's great when it happens, we're not scared to be first either – but what stands out is how hard she had to fight just to get a seat at the table.

When I was coming up, I went to Lynwood High School in South Central Los Angeles. And there's a tennis court in Lynwood Park. I don't remember Compton having tennis courts, so I think Serena and Venus had to come and practice there. I remember some nights hearing them playing when I was going through the park on my way back from basketball practice. We used to always laugh at those tennis courts in Lynwood. Who's gonna play tennis in the hood? People would go play backhand ball there, but it was like why are they there?

Turns out that's why. *That's* why they were there. Those Lynwood courts that we used to laugh about gave birth to two phenomenons, against all the odds.

Serena and Venus have brought a whole different crowd into the sport. It's like what Tiger Woods did for golf: there might have been *some* Black people who watched golf before Tiger, but I can tell you the percentage was probably very low. The day that I got Saturday Night Live, I was in a parking lot off of Crenshaw and Adams. That's the hood. And I was screaming: "I got SNL! I got SNL!" None of these motherfuckers knew what SNL was. But now they do. A whole different audience of people now know what SNL is, just like a whole different audience of people know what tennis is.



Serena Williams poses with sister Venus and father Richard at a local tennis court in Compton, California, in April 1991. Photograph: Paul Harris/Getty Images

There's also the way Serena embraces her femininity and how beautiful she is and how strong she is. I remember my best friend telling me one time, when I was crying about how big my feet were: *So what are you gonna do? You just going to cut them off, have a foot surgery or something?* She said if anybody is going to accept who you are, you have to start accepting yourself. And that's what Serena did when people were said her body type was all wrong for tennis. Serena accepted who she was, who she was gonna be and went right through it. That message got through to a lot of people whether she realized it or not.

And she did it all with flavor and swag. Those tutus and all of those outfits. I've never seen another tennis player dress like them. The shoes, the glitter, the braids. It's like a whole cultural funk. They brought that Flo-Jo flair to it. That's just the Black Girl Magic she brought to the court. That's just her.

Sports has always been a male-dominated space, just like comedy. I hate to say it, but so many men – instead of looking at a woman and recognizing their talent and ability – they'd rather say *fuck them* instead of giving them

their due. That's their insecurity coming out and it's just so dated and old. Serena has dealt with that her entire career.

When I think about all the ridiculous criticism that she has faced, it reminds me of that old Michelle Obama saying: when they go low, you go high. At some point, it really becomes a thing where it's like: I already know you're gonna call me a bitch. I already know you're gonna call me a nigger. I already know you're gonna call me less than. It's like the final battle in 8 Mile when Eminem does the rap where he just says all the shit they were going to say about him. When Serena walks out there, she doesn't give a shit. Her parents, her family, her life has taught her to hold her head high and play right through it. And those are the best players in any sport, who don't let anything get in their head.

I know Serena's dad told her the same thing my dad did: Be undeniable. If you're so good, nobody can deny you. At the end of the day not even her biggest critics could deny what she became. I do hope I can have the same strength as her. I do hope that everyone sees the same strength that I see in her. I do hope that years from now, we will still be talking about Serena Williams.

- *Leslie Jones is a comedian and actor.*
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[The politics sketch](#)[Politics](#)

Unlike the Convict, Truss gives direct answers at PMQs, even if logic fails her

[John Crace](#)



Truss ruled out a windfall tax while also saying that what people wanted was more of their money in their own pockets

Liz Truss and Keir Starmer face off for first time at PMQs – video

Wed 7 Sep 2022 13.05 EDT Last modified on Thu 8 Sep 2022 00.11 EDT

Imagine. A prime minister's questions where the prime minister actually answers the questions. Where ideology and policy are debated in a relatively civilised way. There was a calmness. Without sneering, bombast or diversion. And only the odd one-liner putdown. It probably won't last. But it was a refreshing change while it lasted.

Liz Truss arrived in good time for [her first PMQs](#) and took her place between Penny Mordaunt and Thérèse Coffey. Other new cabinet

appointees, including the big guns of Kwasi Kwarteng, James Cleverly and Suella Braverman, squeezed in as close as possible. To see and be seen.

The Tory backbenches – minus Rishi Sunak, Dominic Raab, Grant Shapps, Boris Johnson and other possible Liz refuseniks – were packed, though relatively quiet for a new leader. Hardly surprising, perhaps. Most of them had thought other candidates would be a whole lot better. Hadn't we all?

With the Tories already committed to Labour's plan of imposing an energy price cap, Keir Starmer focused his questions on who exactly was going to pay for the bailout. Could Truss say categorically whether she was planning to impose a windfall tax? Weirdly, she could. She was more than happy to rule one out entirely.

Starmer appeared rather taken aback. He was used to dealing with Boris Johnson, who had never knowingly given a direct answer. Or engaged with policy. PMQs was just pure theatre for the Convict. A forum for point scoring and getting cheap laughs. Truss was entirely different. She really did seem to believe all that mad stuff she had been spouting at the Tory leadership hustings. It hadn't been just a pose to fuel the wet dreams of some moribund Conservative members. She actually was more rightwing than Margaret Thatcher. Even Maggie had imposed a windfall tax.

Just to make sure he had heard right, the Labour leader repeated himself. So what Librium Liz was saying was that she was more than happy to commit the UK to borrowing billions of pounds more than strictly necessary and for the public to pick up the tab, rather than asking the energy companies for a penny more. Even though the energy companies had openly admitted they had more money than they knew what to do with and were quite relaxed about a second windfall tax.

Truss just kept going and going. Imposing higher taxes was a mortal sin. What people wanted was more of their money in their own pockets. Here her logic – never her strongest suit – failed her. She didn't seem to realise that a windfall tax on energy companies would be allowing people to keep more of their own money in the long run. Details, details.

On and on. It had categorically been proved that the trickle-down economics of lower corporation tax boosted investment. Er, it hadn't. George Osborne's failed maths had long since been discredited and France, with a much higher corporation tax rate, had attracted more foreign investment than any other European country for three years running.

"There's nothing new about Labour putting up taxes," Librium Liz declared. The Tory benches, which up till now had been half-hearted in response to her wooden delivery, now erupted. As if she had just said the funniest, cleverest thing imaginable. As if they had now been given proof that their new leader was capable of thinking on her feet.

This was something of which they had never dared dream. She couldn't just talk in complete sentences when she applied herself! She also had advanced AI! A sense of humour switch. Or something like that. Mind you, they had said the same about Theresa May at her first PMQs when she did a Maggie impersonation. And that hadn't ended so well.

Starmer merely smiled. He hadn't exactly shone on his first outing against Truss: it was tougher than he had thought being burdened with the expectation of now being the leader with charisma after years of being the boring one. But he would get better. And Librium Liz probably wouldn't. Besides, he could live with a score draw if that's what it was. He had got his points across. And being on the side of taxing Shell and Amazon was a hill he could die on. After all, most of the country would join him on it.

That was just about the best of it. No Tories asked the traditional tame questions wondering why the new prime minister was so brilliant. Their constituents are all far too scared of the cost of living crisis; a price cap is the least anyone expects and even that may not be enough for millions of people to eat and heat.

But there was a doozy from May. How come the Tories had had three female leaders while Labour had had none? Be careful what you ask. The reason there was a third was because the Tories had unceremoniously dumped the second one a few years ago. And on current form they could be heading for a fourth in 12 months' time when the novelty of Librium Liz's incompetence has worn off.

Truss struggled to explain how she could be trusted to deliver. After all, she has been in cabinet for the last eight years. During which you'd have thought it might have occurred to her she was supposed to be delivering something. She also ticked off a Labour MP for talking down the country by saying the NHS was on its knees. Odd. Most of us could have sworn Liz had spent the leadership hustings saying the NHS wasn't working.

The Speaker brought the session to a close. The Tories breathed a sigh of relief. Truss hadn't been as awful as they had feared. But then, everyone gets a free, honeymoon pass for their first PMQs. Starmer even walked over to Librium Liz to exchange a few words. To congratulate her on surviving the ordeal. Something he would never have dreamed of doing for the Convict. But next week may not be quite so friendly.

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Movies

Can you ignore your family's politics? Jennifer Lawrence and Sydney Sweeney disagree

[Arwa Mahdawi](#)



The Euphoria actor wants to keep things apolitical – but treating politics as abstract has always been a privilege



‘You don’t have to disown your parents for their views, but if you don’t confront them in some way, then you are complicit.’ Composite: Matt Winkelmeyer/Getty Images/ Rob Latour

Thu 8 Sep 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 8 Sep 2022 09.16 EDT

Jennifer Lawrence says she “can’t fuck with people who aren’t political”. In a cover interview with [Vogue](#), the actor revealed that she no longer has any patience for people who are passive about politics because things are now “too dire … Politics are killing people.”

Politics have been killing people for a very long time, of course. Military spending decisions kill people. [Austerity](#), and a lack of social welfare spending, kills people. Climate crisis and gun control policies, or a lack thereof, kill people. Treating politics as something abstract, something that doesn’t significantly impact your day-to-day life, has always been a privilege.

I’m not here to scold Lawrence for not being woke straight out of the womb, though (this isn’t Twitter). She grew up in a conservative household in Kentucky and, as many people do, adopted her parents’ politics. Since then, however, she has evolved and been very frank about how and why she gradually moved away from Republican policies. Travelling for work

expanded her worldview, Lawrence has said, and made her realize that wherever she went, wealth never seemed to trickle down but was always concentrated at the top. She wasn't exactly radicalized but she became firmly liberal and now, she tells Vogue, she has nightmares about Tucker Carlson.

Nobody chooses their family. But when you're an adult, you choose how you react to your family's politics

Lawrence's views may have evolved but her family's don't seem to have, which has caused a painful rift. The 2016 election fractured her relationship with some relatives, including her dad, she told Vogue. The reversal of Roe v Wade dealt it another blow. "I don't want to disparage my family, but I know that a lot of people are in a similar position with their families. How could you raise a daughter from birth and believe that she doesn't deserve equality? *How?*" Brett Kavanaugh, dad to two daughters, might be able to tell her.

Lawrence isn't the only celebrity whose family's political leanings are making life hard for them. The Euphoria star Sydney Sweeney recently caught flak because her mother threw a hoedown-themed 60th birthday that [looked a little Trumpy](#). Photos of party guests wearing Maga-style red baseball caps with the phrase "Make Sixty Great Again", and one unidentified guest wearing a "Blue Lives Matter" T-shirt (a pro-police backlash to Black Lives Matter), went viral.

Twitter detectives went to work and found a picture on Sweeney's brother's Instagram account of a baby with a Maga hat on outside the White House. Rumours started swirling that Sweeney's family were Trump-loving Republicans and a lot of fans got very upset and started questioning the actor's politics. Sweeney, it should be noted, has never said much about her political leanings but her roles in shows like Euphoria – and the fact that her breakout role was in The Handmaid's Tale – seem to have led a lot of her young, progressive fans to assume she's liberal.

"You guys this is wild," Sweeney tweeted in [response to the furore](#). "An innocent celebration for my mom's milestone 60th birthday has turned into

an absurd political statement, which was not the intention. Please stop making assumptions.”

The anger directed towards Sweeney did feel a little over the top. After all, nobody chooses their family. However, her response to the outrage also felt disingenuous. When you wear a Blue Lives Matter shirt, you’re not making a fashion statement, you’re making a political statement. As a lot of [commentators](#) pointed out, Sweeney ignoring the political nature of some of the photos and accusing people of politicizing an innocent event felt a lot like gaslighting.

Again, nobody chooses their family. But when you’re an adult, you choose how you react to your family’s politics. Lawrence told Vogue that she has tried to “forgive my dad and my family and try to understand: it’s different. The information they are getting is different. Their life is different.” Still, she admitted, she can’t pretend their politics don’t matter. “I’ve tried to get over it and I really can’t. I can’t.”

Sweeney, meanwhile, seems to have chosen to act as if politics don’t really matter, that civility is more important than civil rights. And she’s not alone in this approach. After Trump won the presidency in 2016, a lot of outlets published [advice](#) on how to survive Thanksgiving with a politically divided family. Much of that advice was along the lines of “agree to disagree!” Vogue even suggested a game where anyone who brought up politics was fined \$20.

You can acknowledge the fact that your parents supporting radically different ideas from you about a woman’s right to choose, for example, is not the same as them supporting a different sports team. You don’t have to disown your parents for their views, but if you don’t confront them in some way, then you are complicit.

Maybe Lawrence should take young Sweeney aside at the next Hollywood award show and talk to her a bit about how it’s no longer possible to be passive about politics.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2022/sep/07/sydney-sweeney-jennifer-lawrence-family-politics-rightwing-trump>.

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[**Vaccine equity**](#)[**Global health**](#)

New malaria vaccine comes a step closer as experts say it's 'the best yet'

Latest trials on the R21 delight its creators who hope it can be approved next year but comes with fears that UK is set to cut the global health investment that helped make it possible



Scientists at Kemri-Wellcome Trust in Kenya. The R21 vaccine is being trialled in Burkina Faso, Kenya, Mali and Tanzania. Photograph: Luis Tato/The Guardian

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[Lizzy Davies](#)

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The co-inventor of a vaccine that could eradicate malaria has said he hopes it could be approved by as early as next year after the latest trial results were successful.

Professor Adrian Hill, co-creator of the AstraZeneca Covid vaccine, said it was “the best [malaria] vaccine yet”. He has previously said he believes R21 could help to reduce deaths from the disease by 70% by 2030 and eradicate it by 2040.

But speaking as the success of the [R21 vaccine](#) tests were revealed, Hill, director of Oxford University’s Jenner Institute, said it would be tragic if Britain cut funding just as scientists were poised to make “a real impact” against malaria. He has implored the new British prime minister Liz Truss not to squander cutting-edge UK innovation by “turning off the taps” on global health funding.

Results from testing in [Burkina Faso](#) showed that R21 – already shown to be 77% effective after the initial doses – maintains its high efficacy after a

single booster jab.

Q&A

Malaria vaccines

Show



For about a century, scientists have been trying to find an effective vaccine against malaria. It has not been easy. There have been about 140 vaccine candidates and, so far, only one – GSK’s RTS,S – has been approved for widespread use. From next year, it is hoped, there will be another, named R21, courtesy of Oxford University.

In contrast to a relatively simple virus such as Covid-19, the malaria parasite is highly complex and, crucially, much bigger. “With malaria there are thousands of potential targets,” says Katie Ewer, professor of vaccine immunology at Oxford’s Jenner Institute.

So how does the Oxford vaccine work? Ordinarily, once a mosquito has bitten someone, the malaria parasite travels from their skin through the lymphatic system to the blood and finally to their liver, where it causes the infection that makes them ill.

Many previous vaccines have tried to target the parasite when it is in the blood, but by then, says Ewer, "that's a very, very tall order." What R21 does is target the parasite early in its lifecycle, just after a person has been bitten by a mosquito and before they get sick.

"R21 is trying to block the parasites before they get to your liver and set off infection," says Ewer. "And that's the mechanism for how it works.

"By targeting the earlier stage of the lifecycle," she adds, "there are fewer parasites for the vaccine to mop up, and there's less diversity in the parasite at that stage as well."

Lizzy Davies

Photograph: Konstantin Nechaev/<https://www.alamy.com>

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Researchers hope that the vaccine could be approved by the World [Health Organization](#) next year, assuming a larger ongoing trial throws up no unexpected problems.

But Hill also cautioned that getting the vaccine into the arms of tens of millions of African children who most need it would be a challenge without funding.

The body that provides more than half of all financing for the world's malaria programmes, the Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and [Malaria](#), has warned that unless it receives significantly more money from leading donor countries such as the UK at its pledging conference this month, it will not be able to get the fight against those diseases back on track after the Covid pandemic.

The UK has not yet said what it will pledge in New York, but the fund is thought to have asked for about £1.8bn. As foreign secretary, Truss outlined [a strategy](#) for overseas aid marked by an overall spending reduction and a retreat from the funding of multilateral organisations like the Global Fund.

“It’s incredibly important that the Global Fund is properly refunded. What they do is absolutely amazing,” said Hill. “I hope the new prime minister will be very keen to recognise the importance of doing what the UK [the fund’s third-biggest donor] has done so well in the past.”

Another British-made malaria vaccine with more modest efficacy levels, [GSK’s RTS,S](#), approved by the WHO last year, is poised to be more widely deployed from next year. “The two leading vaccines in the world for malaria are [from] a UK-headquartered company and a UK university,” Hill said.

“The UK is good at this stuff … It would be tragic if suddenly, as new tools become available, and we can have a real impact – and that’s not hard to see now by getting these [vaccines] out there – if we were to just turn off the taps on funding. And there is a risk of that.”

Gareth Jenkins, director of advocacy at Malaria No More UK, echoed Hill’s appeal, saying that “for new British inventions to achieve their potential, British leadership must continue”, starting at the Global Fund conference, to be hosted by the US president, Joe Biden.

“This will be the new PM’s first foreign policy test – for the sake of millions of children’s lives, global health security and British relations with its closest ally, it’s a test she cannot fail,” he added.

Scientists have been trying to find a good vaccine against malaria for about a century, with the first clinical trial taking place in the 1940s. The disease kills hundreds of thousands of people every year, mostly children under five in sub-Saharan Africa.

R21, the first malaria vaccine to meet a WHO efficacy target of 75%, is licensed to the Serum Institute of India. It is ready to manufacture at least 200m doses annually from next year if the jab is given the green light after results from the wider trial, expected later this year.

Prof Halidou Tinto, regional director of the health sciences research institute (IRSS) in Nanoro, and the Burkina Faso trial principal investigator, said that while production was not expected to be an issue, the big challenge for poor

African countries was how to fund the vaccine's rollout. "This may be ... the issue that could delay the deployment," he said.

The trial in Burkina Faso involved more than 400 children aged between five and 17 months getting three doses of the vaccine in 2019, followed by a single booster shot 12 months later, largely before the peak of the malaria season.

The results, published in the Lancet Infectious Diseases, show that in those children given a booster shot with a higher dose of an immunity-boosting adjuvant the vaccine proved 80% effective. That figure fell to 70% in those who were given a booster with a lower dose of the adjuvant.

No serious side-effects were noted, researchers said.

A spokesperson for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office said: "As the third largest donor to the Global Fund the UK has invested £4.1bn to date to fight Aids, tuberculosis, and malaria around the world. We will continue to support its vitally important work."

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[Vietnam](#)

Vietnam karaoke bar fire kills at least 32 people

Blaze engulfed bar near Ho Chi Minh City, trapping people inside and forcing some to jump from the second-floor building



The death toll from a fire at a karaoke bar in southern Vietnam has risen to 32, state media said Wednesday. Photograph: Vietnam News Agency Handout/EPA

Agence France-Presse

Wed 7 Sep 2022 21.10 EDT

The death toll from a fire that tore through a karaoke bar in southern [Vietnam](#) has risen to 32, state media have said.

The blaze engulfed the second floor of the building on Tuesday night, trapping customers and staff as dense smoke filled the staircase and blocked

the emergency exit, reports said.

Many crowded on to a balcony to escape the flames, which spread quickly in the wooden interior, while others were forced to jump from the building, state media reported on Wednesday.

Vietnam's prime minister, Pham Minh Chinh, on Wednesday ordered a further inspection of high-risk venues, especially karaoke bars.

Photos showed plumes of smoke billowing out of the bar – located in a crowded residential neighbourhood in Thuan An city, north of commercial hub Ho Chi Minh City – as firefighters on cranes tried to extinguish the blaze.

Cong An Nhan Dan newspaper, the official mouthpiece of the Public Security Ministry, said the death toll had risen to 32, with 17 men and 15 women killed.

Mai Hung Dung, a top official with the ruling Communist party in Binh Duong province where the bar is located, earlier put the death toll at 23, with 11 injured. He told AFP officials were still searching for more victims.

State media reported that eight people were found dead in the toilet.

The initial cause of the fire was said to be an electrical short circuit, according to a report by Binh Duong authorities cited by state media.

Witness Nguyen Sang, who lives near the karaoke bar, told the VnExpress news site that when fire trucks arrived at the scene a receptionist said there were 40 people stuck inside.

“Many people ran outside through the main entrance, but many others could not stand the heat and they jumped down, breaking their hands and legs,” Sang said.

Rescue workers searched through the night for anyone trapped in the 30-room bar, according to state media.

The bar's fire prevention regulations had been checked prior to the blaze, police told state media.

In what was previously Vietnam's deadliest fire, 13 people died in a 2018 blaze in an apartment complex in Ho Chi Minh City.

In 2016, a fire at a karaoke facility in the capital Hanoi left 13 people dead, prompting a country-wide assessment of fire prevention measures at bars and clubs.

Last month, three firefighters died after trying to extinguish a fire at another karaoke bar in Hanoi.

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[Mar-a-Lago](#)

Mar-a-Lago a magnet for spies, officials warn after nuclear file reportedly found

Former intelligence chiefs say national security officials are ‘shaking their heads at what damage might have been done’



Trump at Mar-a-Lago in November 2018. ‘I’m sure Mar-a-Lago was targeted by Russia over the course of the last 18 or 20 months,’ John Brennan said. Photograph: Mandel Ngan/AFP/Getty

[Julian Borger](#) in Washington

Wed 7 Sep 2022 14.25 EDT Last modified on Thu 8 Sep 2022 11.18 EDT

Mar-a-Lago – the Palm Beach resort and residence where Donald Trump [reportedly stored nuclear secrets](#) among a trove of highly classified documents for 18 months since leaving the White House – is a magnet for foreign spies, former intelligence officials have warned.

The [Washington Post](#) reported that a document describing an unspecified foreign government's defences, including its nuclear capabilities, was one of the many highly secret papers Trump took away from the White House when he left office in January 2021.

There were also documents marked SAP, for Special-Access Programmes, which are often about US intelligence operations and whose circulation is severely restricted, even among administration officials with top security clearance.

Potentially most disturbing of all, there were papers stamped HCS, Humint Control Systems, involving human intelligence gathered from agents in enemy countries, whose lives would be in danger if their identities were compromised.

The [Office of the Director of National Intelligence](#) is conducting a damage assessment review which is focused on the sensitivity of the documents, but US officials said it is the job of FBI counter-intelligence to assess who may have gained access to them.

That is a wide field. The home of a former president with a history of being enthralled by foreign autocrats, distrustful of US security services, and boastful about his knowledge of secrets, is an obvious foreign intelligence target.

"I know that national security professionals inside government, my former colleagues, [they] are shaking their heads at what damage might have been done," John Brennan, former CIA director, [told MSNBC](#).

"I'm sure [Mar-a-Lago](#) was being targeted by Russian intelligence and other intelligence services over the course of the last 18 or 20 months, and if they were able to get individuals into that facility, and access those rooms where those documents were and made copies of those documents, that's what they would do."

Last month, the [Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project](#) reported that a Russian-speaking immigrant from Ukraine was able to mingle with

the former president's family and friends at Mar-a-Lago, posing as Anna de Rothschild, presenting herself as being an heiress of the banking dynasty.

Inna Yashchyshyn, the daughter of a truck driver who moved to Canada, regaled those around her with tales of vineyards and estates and growing up in Monaco, and even met the former president in person, getting herself photographed with him on a golfing green.

There is no evidence that Yashchyshyn was a spy, but the episode underlined how easy it is to get into Mar-a-Lago. During Trump's presidency, two Chinese women were caught trespassing there on separate occasions.

One of them, Yujing Zhang, [was in possession of](#) four mobile phones, a laptop, an external hard drive, and a thumb drive later found to carry malware. In her hotel room, investigators found nine USB drives, five SIM cards and a "signal detector" device for spotting hidden microphones or cameras. She was found guilty of unlawfully entering a restricted building and making false statements to a federal officer, and [deported to China in 2021.](#)

The guests, invited or otherwise, are not the only security concern. In 2021, the Trump Organization sought 87 foreign workers for positions at Mar-a-Lago, with wages starting at \$11.96 an hour.

"Any competent foreign intelligence service, whether those belonging to China, those belonging to Iran, to Cuba, certainly including Russia are ... and were interested in gaining access to Mar-a-Lago," Peter Strzok, former deputy assistant director of counter-intelligence at the [FBI](#), told MSNBC.

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Seascape: the state of our oceansWhales

US lobster put on ‘red list’ to protect endangered North Atlantic right whales

The 1m lines from pots used to catch the crustaceans are one of the two main threats to the whales, of which fewer than 340 remain



A severely entangled North Atlantic right whale. The population must swim through a maze of fishing gear to get to feeding grounds after calving.
Photograph: Nature Picture Library/Alamy

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Thu 8 Sep 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 8 Sep 2022 05.01 EDT

Lobster nets and pots have become such a threat to the survival of critically endangered North Atlantic right whales that the crustaceans have been [“red-listed”](#) as seafood to avoid by a major fish sustainability guide.

Fewer than 340 of these whales exist today, including only 80 breeding females. The population is estimated to have [dwindled by 28%](#) over the past decade.

Seafood Watch, a sustainability guide for consumers and businesses issued by Monterey Bay Aquarium in California, has downgraded Atlantic lobster caught by pot and gillnet fisheries in the whales' range [to “avoid”](#), its lowest rating.

The new assessment reflects the lack of “timely, effective management” to mitigate “significant risks” of entanglement and promote recovery of the species. The US lobster fishery is worth about \$500m (£430m) a year.

Entanglement in the fishing gear used to catch lobster, crab and other species is one of the two leading threats to right whales (the other being ship strikes). The whales' migration route – from their calving grounds in Florida to feed in Canada – is littered with [more than 1m](#) vertical lines from pots and traps, with 622,000 of these in US waters.

When a whale is entangled in fishing gear, the ropes can become embedded in its skin, weighing it down and leaving it unable to swim or feed properly. More than 80% of right whales have been entangled in fishing gear at least once.



A lobster caught off Spruce Head, Maine, which is on the migration route of the North Atlantic right whale. Photograph: Robert F Bukaty/AP

In June, a court ruled that a US federal agency, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), [violated both the Endangered Species Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act](#) by failing to quickly reduce impacts of lobster fishing gear on the North Atlantic right whale.

Other fisheries added to the “red list” include all fishing for Jonah crab, and other trap, pot and gillnet fisheries. Gillnets are a wall of netting that hangs vertically in the water, while traps and pots also have vertical lines from the surface.

Oceana, a conservation pressure group, urged the US and Canadian governments to implement stronger measures to protect North Atlantic right whales. “It’s unfortunate that the government’s failure to update the safeguards to protect North Atlantic right whales is having such serious consequences on these [lobster] fisheries,” said Gib Brogan, Oceana’s campaign director.

Brogan said for the whale population to recover, the average number killed or injured by human activities must be fewer than one a year. “Every vertical fishing line and gillnet is a threat to the remaining whales, which face the risk of entanglement every day,” he said.

Strong fishing regulations were needed to avoid interactions and minimise the effects of interactions, he said. To give the species a fighting chance, the National Marine Fisheries Service (also known as NOAA Fisheries) should reduce the number of vertical lines and gillnets in the water and move to whale-safe fishing equipment, such as ropeless gear, Brogan said.



An entangled North Atlantic right whale dragging more than 100 metres of heavy fishing rope off the coast of Florida. Photograph: AP

“Ordering lobster or crab should not mean jeopardising the future of critically endangered North Atlantic right whales,” he said.

Last year, the Marine Stewardship Council [was criticised](#) by conservationists for certifying as “sustainable” fisheries within the right whales’ migration route.

A NOAA spokesperson said: “The US wild-caught American lobster fishery is sustainably managed and responsibly harvested under state and federal regulations. In addition, NOAA Fisheries is taking an integrated ‘[Road to Recovery](#)’ approach to protect, conserve and restore the endangered North Atlantic right whale species.”

In September 2021, NOAA Fisheries issued a regulation to reduce entanglement in the north-east lobster and Jonah crab fishery, that went into effect in May 2022. In July, it announced proposed changes to further protect right whales, including changes to vessel speed and guidance on the use of ropeless fishing gear.

In a statement, Fisheries and Oceans Canada said the Canadian government “continues to take strong action to protect endangered North Atlantic right whales and to help their population rebuild”.

Measures include closing fishing areas when whales were present, working with harvesters on whale-safe gear, such as lower breaking-strength rope. “So far this season, for the third year in a row, there were no reported deaths of North Atlantic right whales,” it said.

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[China](#)

Chengdu, Chinese city of 21m, has Covid lockdown extended indefinitely

No date given for end of extended lockdown in city that is a crucial supplier of Apple products



Staff at Sichuan Provincial People's Hospital test Covid samples at a mobile laboratory as authorities battle a coronavirus outbreak and extend a lockdown in Chengdu, Sichuan province, China. Photograph: Reuters

Guardian staff and agencies

Thu 8 Sep 2022 00.21 EDT Last modified on Thu 8 Sep 2022 06.42 EDT

Chengdu, the capital of the south-western Chinese province of Sichuan, has extended the coronavirus lockdown of most of its districts indefinitely as it hopes to stem further transmissions in the city of 21.2 million.

The mega city, which has most recently battled with heatwaves, power cuts and an earthquake, was locked down on 1 September after detecting a

number of cases, becoming the largest Chinese metropolis to be slapped with the curbs since Shanghai earlier this year.

The lockdown was expected to be lifted on Wednesday, but local government officials said “there are still risks of social spread in some areas,” according to Chengdu authorities.

Residents under lockdown in 16 districts, cities, counties and special zones out of the 23 under Chengdu’s jurisdiction remain under lockdown, the authorities said. They will be tested for the virus every day, authorities said late on Wednesday, without giving a date for when the lockdown would be lifted. A handful of districts were released from a full lockdown, but residents still have to undergo mass testing on Friday and Sunday.

Residents in districts no longer under a full lockdown are barred from going to other districts and are discouraged from leaving Chengdu for non-essential reasons.

The policies will be “dynamically adjusted according to the development of the epidemic,” the statement said.

The news of the extended lockdown sparked concerns that global supply chains could face further disruption. Chengdu houses a major factory for Apple suppliers Foxconn – producing iPads and MacBooks – and Jabil, which makes components for MacBooks. Both suppliers were already struggling with the power crisis sparked by [China's unprecedented heatwave](#).

On Thursday, the local government reported 116 new local cases, down from 121 a day ago. Of the cases reported, 57 were symptomatic and 59 were asymptomatic.

The mega city [locked down last week](#) as cases rose across several districts, allowing authorities to complete another round of mass testing. It said in an official notice that residents must “stay home in principle” to combat a new wave of infections.

Each household would be allowed to send one person out to buy groceries and essential goods a day, provided they have tested negative in the previous 24 hours, the notice said.

About 90% of flights at Chengdu's Shuangliu Airport were cancelled on Monday.

China this year has been battling to contain the highly transmissible Omicron variant, imposing various degrees of lockdown on cities to stop its spread.

Shanghai, locked down for two months in April and May, was one of the more prominent cities that were affected by China's so-called "dynamic zero-Covid policy", where infections are to be stamped out when they emerge.

The flare-ups in recent months come in a year when President Xi Jinping is widely expected to secure a precedent-breaking third term as China's leader at a once-in-five-years [congress of the ruling Communist party](#) in mid-October.

In the run-up to the congress and also to the week-long National Day holidays at the start of October, more and more cities have been urging residents to refrain from non-essential trips out of town in view of the Covid outbreaks, which have been reported in every region and province in recent weeks.

With Reuters

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Headlines

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[Climate crisis](#)

World on brink of five ‘disastrous’ climate tipping points, study finds

Giant ice sheets, ocean currents and permafrost regions may already have passed point of irreversible change



The collapse of the Greenland ice cap is one of the tipping points that may already have been passed. Photograph: Ulrik Pedersen/Getty Images

[Damian Carrington](#) Environment editor

[@dpcarrington](#)

Thu 8 Sep 2022 14.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 8 Sep 2022 15.46 EDT

The climate crisis has driven the world to the brink of multiple “disastrous” tipping points, according to a major study.

It shows [five dangerous tipping points](#) may already have been passed due to the 1.1C of global heating caused by humanity to date.

These include the [collapse of Greenland's ice cap](#), eventually producing a huge sea level rise, the [collapse of a key current](#) in the north Atlantic, disrupting rain upon which billions of people depend for food, and an abrupt [melting of carbon-rich permafrost](#).

At 1.5C of heating, the minimum rise now expected, four of the five tipping points move from being possible to likely, the analysis said. Also at 1.5C, an additional five tipping points become possible, including [changes to vast northern forests](#) and the loss of [almost all mountain glaciers](#).

In total, the researchers found evidence for 16 tipping points, with the final six requiring global heating of at least 2C to be triggered, according to the scientists' estimations. The tipping points would take effect on timescales varying from a few years to centuries.

"The Earth may have left a 'safe' climate state beyond 1C global warming," the researchers concluded, with the whole of human civilisation having developed in temperatures below this level. Passing one tipping point is often [likely to help trigger others](#), producing cascades. But this is still being studied and was not included, meaning the analysis may present the minimum danger.

Prof Johan Rockström, the director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, who was part of the study team, said: "The world is heading towards 2-3C of global warming.

[Graphic](#)

"This sets Earth on course to cross multiple dangerous tipping points that will be disastrous for people across the world. To maintain liveable conditions on Earth and enable stable societies, we must do everything possible to prevent crossing tipping points."

Dr David Armstrong McKay at the University of Exeter, a lead author of the study, said: "It's really worrying. There are grounds for grief, but there are also still grounds for hope.

“The study really underpins why the Paris agreement goal of 1.5C is so important and must be fought for.

“We’re not saying that, because we’re probably going to hit some tipping points, everything is lost and it’s game over. Every fraction of a degree that we stop beyond 1.5C reduces the likelihood of hitting more tipping points.”

Recent research has shown signs of [destabilisation in the Amazon](#) rainforest, the loss of which would have “profound” implications for the global climate and biodiversity, as well as the [Greenland ice sheet](#) and the [Gulf Stream currents](#) that scientists call the Atlantic meridional overturning circulation (Amoc).

A recent report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change said the risk of triggering climate tipping points becomes high with 2C of global heating.

The analysis, [published in the journal Science](#), assessed more than 200 previous studies on past tipping points, climate observations and modelling studies. A tipping point is when a temperature threshold is passed, leading to unstoppable change in a climate system, even if global heating ends.

The nine global tipping points identified are: the collapse of the [Greenland](#), west Antarctic and two parts of the east Antarctic ice sheets, the partial and total collapse of Amoc, Amazon dieback, permafrost collapse and winter sea ice loss in the Arctic.

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The assessment of the Amazon tipping point did not include the effects of deforestation. “The combination of the warming and the deforestation could bring that a lot sooner,” said Armstrong McKay.

A further seven tipping points would have severe regional effects, including the [die-off of tropical coral reefs](#) and changes to the west African monsoon. Other potential tipping points still being studied include the [loss of ocean oxygen](#) and major shifts in the Indian summer monsoon.

The scientists define crossing a tipping point as “possible” when its minimum temperature threshold is passed and “likely” beyond the central threshold estimate.

Prof Niklas Boers, at the Technical University of Munich, said: “The review is a timely update on the Earth’s potential tipping elements, and the threat of tipping events under further warming is real.”

He added that much more research was needed to narrow down the critical temperature thresholds, with current estimates remaining highly uncertain.

Prof Thomas Stocker, at the University of Bern, said: “The science on tipping points is far from done – it has barely begun – and much better models are needed to address the question [of] what warming level is critical for which tipping point.”

A special IPCC [report on climate tipping points](#) was proposed in May by the Swiss government.

Prof Tim Lenton at the University of Exeter, a co-author of the analysis, said: “Since I first assessed tipping points in 2008, the list has grown and our assessment of the risk they pose has increased dramatically.

“Our new work provides compelling evidence that the world must radically accelerate decarbonising the economy. To achieve that, we need to trigger [positive social tipping points](#).”

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Environment

Southern Water to use debt collectors against customers boycotting payment

Company will use bailiffs if those protesting against continuing raw sewage discharges continue to hold back payment of bills



Southern was fined £90m in 2021 for dumping billions of litres of raw sewage into the sea around Whitstable and the Hampshire coast.
Photograph: Sophia Evans/The Observer

[Sandra Laville](#)

Thu 8 Sep 2022 14.37 EDT Last modified on Thu 8 Sep 2022 16.05 EDT

Southern [Water](#) is threatening to use debt collection agencies against customers involved in a payment boycott in protest against continuing raw sewage discharges.

The water company, which was given the [lowest one star rating for performance by the Environment Agency](#), has informed boycotters that it

will be using bailiffs if they continue to hold back bill payments.

One customer was told in an email this week: “For customers who are unwilling to pay, we will have no option but to pursue the debts incurred and these charges will be passed to our debt collection team. Additional fees could be applied to your account and your credit rating may be affected.

“While we strive to resolve all complaints to our customer’s satisfaction, our complaints procedure has been exhausted in relation to storm overflows and payments for services. We’ll not correspond further on this matter.”

The threat marks a hardening of attitude by the company, [which earlier this year offered](#) customers discounts for the part of their bill which covers treatment of wastewater.

The boycott is being taken in protest at what the customers say is Southern’s [failure to carry out an essential part of their role](#), to treat sewage before releasing it.

Southern was fined £90m in 2021 for dumping billions of litres of raw sewage into the sea around Whitstable and the Hampshire coast.

Mr Justice Jeremy Johnson, sentencing the privatised water company at Canterbury crown court, said the offences showed a shocking and wholesale disregard for the environment. The water company is still under a criminal investigation over the discharges by the Environment Agency.

The threat to use debt collection agencies comes as beaches across the Southern water area were under a pollution risk warning after heavy rainfall. This summer, [beaches in east Sussex were closed after sewage discharges](#) by Southern, which the water company said were caused by a failure at a pumping station.

In its correspondence, Southern admitted its poor performance. “We’re not getting it right, and we know we still have a lot more to do.” It said customer bills were crucial for the company to be able to make the investments needed to deliver environmental benefits, better customer service and boost local economies.

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The boycotter who has been most recently threatened with debt collection action told Southern they were refusing to pay the wastewater part of their bill while the company was “still pumping raw sewage into our county rivers and streams”. They said the company had erected signs asking local people to be pollution spotters; something the customer said raised concerns over Southern’s ability to monitor its own detection systems.

Southern Water said in a statement: “We are determined to deliver environmental and operational improvements for our customers and have committed to spend £2bn between 2020 and 2025 to achieve this.

“The bills customers pay us are crucial for us to be able to make the investments we need to deliver these improvements as well as boost local economies. Every penny of profit is being reinvested into the business to improve performance ... For customers who are unwilling to pay, we will have no option but to pursue the debts incurred and these charges will be passed on to our debt collection team and additional fees could be applied.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/sep/08/southern-water-to-use-debt-collectors-against-customers-boycotting-payment>

Energy industry

Energy ministers to thrash out EU approach to gas and electricity crisis

Talks expected to be complex, with some member states strongly against proposed price cap on Russian gas



Because Russia now only supplies 9% of the EU's gas imports, the European Commission believes it can manage the risk of a total shutdown.
Photograph: Nikolay Doychinov/AFP/Getty Images

[Jennifer Rankin](#) in Brussels

Thu 8 Sep 2022 19.01 EDT

EU energy ministers will gather for emergency talks in Brussels on Friday to thrash out common measures in an effort to counter a gas and electricity price crisis that threatens to make energy bills unaffordable for households and businesses and tip [Europe into recession](#).

The [European Commission](#) president, Ursula von der Leyen, has set out a five-point plan, which includes a price cap on Russian gas that is likely to draw strong opposition from some member states.

Her [proposals](#) also include a windfall tax on oil and gas profits; an energy savings drive; and a cap on the cost of low-carbon electricity. They were published the day before Britain's new prime minister, [Liz Truss, unveiled a £150bn freeze on energy bills](#).

A senior diplomat said there was no majority in favour of capping Russian gas, a measure designed to limit Kremlin revenues used to finance the war in Ukraine.

Vladimir Putin has dismissed the idea as stupid and threatened to completely cut energy supplies to [Europe](#) if the plan goes ahead. Because Russia now only supplies 9% of the EU's gas imports, down from 40% before the war, the European Commission believes it can manage the risk of a total shutdown.

But a trio of EU member states that import a large amount Russian gas from Russia – Austria, Hungary and Slovakia – oppose the idea. Hungary, which is highly dependent on gas from Russia recently signed [a contract with the Russian state energy firm Gazprom for extra supplies](#), argues the price cap is a sanction and should only be decided by unanimity, giving Budapest veto power over the decision.

On the other hand, a dozen other countries, including France, Italy and Poland, support a cap, but argue it should apply to all imported forms of the fuel, including liquified natural gas (LNG). A former top civil servant at the European Commission's directorate-general for energy, Philip Lowe, told the Guardian he supported that position.

“If the objective is to protect European businesses and households from the current high gas prices [and not just impose a further sanction on Russia] a wholesale price cap needs to be applied to any gas regardless of its origin,” said Sir Philip Lowe, now a partner at the Oxera economics consultancy.

“The market for gas, whether transported as LNG or by pipeline, is increasingly part of one global market and world demand for gas is growing, so capping prices in only one segment of the market won’t be enough,” Lowe added.

Germany is undecided, but fears the policy risks spoiling EU unity; the Netherlands has voiced reluctance over any price cap, arguing it contradicts the EU’s goal of boosting supplies of tanker gas.

When it comes to gas, “Europe has two problems: quantity and price”, said Dr Simone Tagliapietra, a senior fellow at the Bruegel thinktank. “We need to tackle the second problem without making the first worse. That is the difficult trade-off policymakers are facing. And if we put a cap on all gas we might risk to compromise the first point, which is the ability to secure the volumes in the winter.”

There is more consensus about other parts of the European Commission’s plan, such as windfall taxes on oil and gas companies that have reaped large profits from turbulence in the energy market. Unlike the UK [where Truss has ruled out new windfall taxes](#), France, Germany, Italy and Spain are among EU countries that have promised or introduced levies on extraordinary profits to fund their support programmes for struggling households.

EU governments are also supportive of an efficiency drive to reduce demand for electricity, although many capitals think the targets should be voluntary, rather than mandatory, as favoured by Brussels. Across Europe energy savings campaigns are gaining momentum: this week French citizens have been urged to turn down heating and air conditioning, while Italians were asked to turn off the hob once pasta water starts boiling.

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Several governments are anxious not to dilute EU climate goals: Germany, Spain and the Nordic states are vying to protect the European emissions trading system (ETS), the bloc's flagship scheme to cap industrial pollution. As energy prices have risen, Poland has resumed its long-standing campaign to cap the price of ETS permits, which opponents fear blunts the signal to cut pollution.

Also gaining broad support are plans to tweak EU state aid rules and market regulations, amid growing concern that utility companies could be forced into insolvency due to a lack of cash. Earlier this week [Finland and Sweden announced plans to offer billions of euros in liquidity guarantees](#). Utility companies trading electricity futures are facing growing demands from banks to deposit more cash (margin requirement) as a safety net. Finland's government said that without €10bn (£8.7bn) of liquidity support the sector risked "a kind of a Lehman Brothers", referring to the bankruptcy of the US investment bank in 2008 that was widely seen as triggering the financial crisis.

On Thursday, the UK signalled it was set to follow suit, with a £40bn liquidity facility for energy companies underpinned by the Bank of England.

The European Commission is expected to publish formal legal proposals on the energy plan next Wednesday when Von der Leyen gives an annual speech outlining her policy programme for the year ahead.

Diplomats predicted the discussions would be complex, as EU member states have very different energy mixes and varying exposure to a potential Russian gas shutdown.

"What is easily implementable in country A could be impossible to implement in country B," one senior diplomat said. "But there is an openness from everyone to look at [these proposals], which is different from two or three months ago."

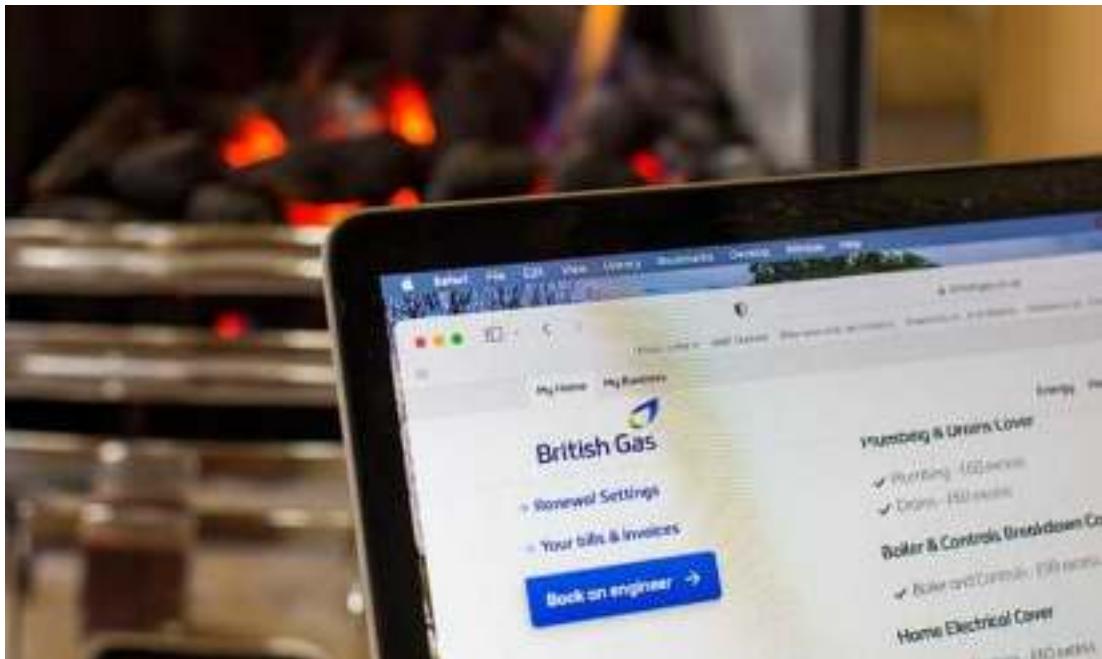
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Energy industry

Bank of England to lend UK energy companies as much as £40bn

Bailout fund provided amid soaring market prices and fears of another wave of collapses



Reports this week said British Gas owner Centrica was in talks with banks to secure extra cash as Vladimir Putin continues to choke off Europe's supply of gas. Photograph: Windmill Images/Alamy

*Jasper Jolly
@jjpjolly*

Thu 8 Sep 2022 13.41 EDT Last modified on Thu 8 Sep 2022 15.46 EDT

The Bank of England will lend UK energy companies as much as £40bn to deal with soaring market prices amid fears of another wave of energy company collapses.

Prime minister Liz Truss, on her third day in office, said she wanted to make sure energy companies have the cash they need to buy energy if prices jump. Reports this week said British Gas owner Centrica was in talks with banks to secure extra cash as Vladimir Putin continues to choke off Europe's supply of gas.

The bailout fund for energy companies was announced alongside [a suspension of the energy price cap, which Truss replaced with an “energy price guarantee”](#) to freeze household energy bills for two years. The government will also offer “equivalent support” for six months for businesses – most of whom have not received any financial aid to address the energy crisis prompted by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

Companies who use the Bank of England’s energy markets financing scheme will have to sign up to a “wider set of conditions”, the Treasury said. During the coronavirus pandemic support schemes some companies were banned from paying dividends after receiving loans.

Amid warnings energy markets were facing a “Lehman” moment, when a liquidity crunch precipitated the global banking crisis, the government said the scheme would provide “last resort” financing. The money will essentially guarantee that energy suppliers can pay for any power they commit to buying in the wholesale markets, as well as letting them insure themselves to protect against price rises.

Surging prices have prompted ballooning calls for collateral for energy trades, forcing even the largest suppliers to turn to their banks to increase their overdrafts. The governments of Sweden and Finland stepped in with similar measures at the weekend, with the Finnish economy minister saying: “This has had the ingredients for a kind of a Lehman Brothers of energy industry.”

Since the start of the energy crisis more than 30 suppliers have collapsed. That has left energy customers concentrated with bigger firms, whose collapse would probably cost the taxpayer billions of pounds. Some analysts believe that the largest collapse so far, of Bulb, [could cost more than £4bn](#).

Officials are scrambling to draw up details of the scheme, but the government on Thursday said it may only be able to reveal a start date by the end of October. It is understood that further details of the scheme will be published next week.

Tim Speed, an energy specialist at law firm, Shakespeare Martineau said: “A £40bn liquidity fund provides some comfort for energy suppliers, but the support needs to start with immediate effect to stabilise the market. Further supplier casualties will end up costing consumers more.”

In an indication of the hurried design of Truss’s plan, the government said it would also not be able to provide details until next week of how financial support will be delivered to households or businesses. Nevertheless, business leaders welcomed the scale of the ambition displayed in a package estimated to cost as much as £100bn for the first year alone.

Rain Newtown-Smith, chief economist at the CBI, the UK’s largest business lobby group, welcomed “bold and decisive action” that will “limit some of the damaging hardship faced by families this winter and for the wider economy”. “Big spending now needs big plans to recapture sustainable economic growth,” she added.

As well as support measures over the next few months, Truss also promised to rewrite the rules governing how customers buy electricity and gas – throwing the future of regulator Ofgem into doubt. Those policies included:

- A review of the UK’s energy regulation that promises to deliver “fundamental reforms to the structure and regulation”
- An energy supply taskforce, led by Madelaine McTernan, who currently heads the government’s vaccines taskforce, that will seek to agree long-term contracts for energy supply at steady prices
- A review of the UK’s 2050 net zero target to ensure it is “not placing undue burdens on businesses or consumers”

McTernan, a banker who held senior roles at Credit Suisse and Lehman Brothers before entering government in 2017, will also look to strike better

deals with solar, wind and nuclear power generators, who have seen their incomes rise because the price of electricity is pegged to the price of gas. Truss announced the government would be adopting an industry proposal to replace current contracts for renewable energy with a contracts for difference regime, which caps returns and should deliver a lower fixed price, over a longer term.

Economists said the package was likely to soften the impact of the long recession forecast for the UK as the energy crisis caused inflation to soar. The plan is expected to match – and in many cases exceed – the actions of other countries facing similar predicaments. It was reported on Thursday that Germany plans to give discounts to households and businesses on a certain amount of power in its [€65bn plan](#).

Martin McTague, national chair of the Federation of Small Businesses, said the promise of bills support for the first time during the crisis was “a huge relief for millions of small businesses”. However, he said Truss offered “not enough information, yet, for them to plan”.

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McTague also cautioned against a “cliff-edge after six months” if, as planned, the government withdraws support for companies. The government should have a “broad, realistic and fair” definition of which sectors are “vulnerable”, he said.

The business support is expected to focus on subsidies for wholesale gas prices. The government has promised to keep prices lower for all businesses

for six months, and will consider how to cut back support to certain sectors in a review in three months' time.

Households will see costs frozen at an average of £2,500 a year, a measure that is expected to support consumer spending. The government said it would also help reduce inflation, curbing the headline rate – which reached 10.1% in July – by four or five percentage points.

Chris O'Shea, chief executive of Centrica, the largest UK domestic energy supplier, said it was a “bold customer support package” that “will bring immediate relief to hard pressed households”.

Paul Dales of Capital Economics, a consultancy, said the package would “reduce inflation and limit the size of the recession”, but that it would also lead to higher interest rates and higher government debt.

Energy companies called for the government to reduce the use of fossil fuels.

Michael Lewis, chief executive of supplier E.ON UK, said the UK needed to make more “cheap, clean electricity” and “reduce our fossil fuel use”. However, he said he was “disappointed not to see a greater commitment to energy efficiency as a long-term solution to the current crisis, and as the foundation stone of that cleaner, greener future.”

Keith Anderson, chief executive of ScottishPower, called for “a three-pronged attack to tackle the issue at source by weaning the country off fossil fuels, doubling down on cheap, clean renewables and, importantly, decoupling electricity prices from gas.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/sep/08/bank-of-england-to-lend-uk-energy-companies-as-much-as-40bn>

2022.09.09 - Spotlight

- 'I fell in love with two men – it was unbearable!' Juliette Binoche on love triangles and 'little boy' Gérard Depardieu
- You be the judge Do I have to tell my girlfriend every detail about my friend's stag do?
- Mogwai's Stuart Braithwaite It's even easier for weirdos to find each other now than in the 90s
- Stuart Braithwaite on Iggy Pop 'It was hard to believe the music was made by humans'
- 'A leader of the world' South-east Asian countries open to Putin pivot

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‘I fell in love with two men – it was unbearable!’: Juliette Binoche on love triangles and ‘little boy’ Gérard Depardieu

[Ryan Gilbey](#)



Juliette Binoche ... 'I was in love with two men in my 20s. It was unbearable.' Photograph: Charlie de Keersmaecker/Camera Press/Figaro

The French screen star opens up about her life mirroring the plot of new film Both Sides of the Blade and putting male cinema icons in their place

Fri 9 Sep 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 9 Sep 2022 07.23 EDT

Broaching personal matters in an interview can be tricky. Laying the groundwork, not appearing prurient, choosing your words carefully so as not to spook your subject – all these elements are crucial. They are also completely unnecessary in the case of [Juliette Binoche](#). We are fewer than five minutes into our Zoom call and already the 58-year-old actor is leaning forward in her seat in an office in Paris and trawling through intimate memories. "I fell in love with two men in my 20s," she says, matter of factly. "It was unbearable. Quite unbearable."

This is apropos [Both Sides of the Blade](#), her third film with the sensual, uncompromising director [Claire Denis](#). Binoche plays Sara, a radio talkshow host torn between two brooding men: her boyfriend, Jean (Vincent Lindon), an ex-con and former rugby player, and her erstwhile lover, François (Grégoire Colin). Sara and Jean have an apparently harmonious relationship, but the magnetism of François, and the past, proves impossible to resist. "Here we go again," Sara tells herself. "Love, fear, sleepless nights. The phone at my bedside. Getting wet."

All it takes for Binoche to connect this situation to her own past is one preliminary question about whether she comprehended Sara's behaviour. How frank of her to go straight for the intimate revelations. How French.

"It's an impossible triangle because everybody feels hurt," she says. "Some people are able to do it. I was not. It was a destructive situation, and you need courage. So yes, I totally understood the damage it can cause. For each of us, it was painful, and you can't stop it because that's how it is. It's as if you have to be in front of a dragon and you've just got to face it, you know?" Why couldn't she choose between the two men in her life? "We love in different ways, if I may say," she replies. "It's about reaching a need

inside you. When you're in the middle of it, you don't understand why it's happening."



Binoche with Vincent Lindon in Both Sides of the Blade.

I think of the advice given to the 14-year-old Binoche by her mother's artist friend when she couldn't decide whether to pursue acting or painting. "Juliette: choose to do everything!" she told her. In that instance, she did. She still paints, and her work can even be seen in some of her movies: the raging, rhapsodic 1991 love story *Les Amants du Pont-Neuf*, directed by her then-partner [Leos Carax](#), in which she plays a homeless artist, or [Words & Pictures](#), from 2013, where she stars opposite Clive Owen as an art teacher whose rheumatoid arthritis forces her to find new ways to paint.

A love triangle, though, is not the same as a career. How did she resolve that situation? "I separated out of guilt from one of the men, and then it just stopped with the other one after a while. I think because I had to destroy the relationship somehow. There was something that I pushed away from me, probably. I don't know; it's not as rational as that. We all have polarities. We can be in love and then the loved one has become your enemy." The idea is reflected, she says, in the new film's English title, (*Avec amour et acharnement* in its original French – literally With Love and Fury). "It could mean the polarity between female and male. I know it's a title Claire loved.

‘Blade’ is such a strong word: it can kill, but in the Chinese tradition you are a master when you know how to cut well with a blade.”

Even as Sara is planning assignations with François, she is persuading Jean that there is nothing afoot, that she and him are made for each other. Why put them both through this torture? “She must,” says Binoche decisively. “She is facing a need in herself, a sexual call, like a wave of heat, perhaps of love. It must be gone through. She must understand what it is. If she doesn’t do that, she would be putting herself in parentheses, or … in the fridge! It’s what makes her human and truthful.”

I don’t think you try to put yourself into difficult situations, but creation is about going to a new place

She sounds dazed with admiration. “Allowing herself to go through that is amazing because many of us would say: ‘No, it’s too destructive,’ or, ‘I’m going to lose what I have already’. You become conservative before you even start. But when such a big wave is coming, it’s hard not to say yes to it, I think. She is asking to have that freedom to be herself, not knowing what the result will be. That’s so brave. And terrible! I know how painful and dangerous it can be.”

The risk-taking extends to choosing roles, too. “I don’t think you try to put yourself into difficult situations,” she says. “But creation is about going to a new place. Facing difficulty. I try not to repeat myself because it feels like you’re going to *die!*” She laughs, rolling her eyes at her dramatic choice of language.

In her 40-year career, more conventional films such as Chocolat and The Horseman on the Roof tend to be outnumbered by riskier enterprises, from her three urgent, restless films with Carax (Mauvais Sang and The Night Is Young are the others) to her dry-eyed study of grief in Three Colours Blue (“No tears, never any tears,” the director Krzysztof Kieślowski told her) and her tender, Oscar-winning performance as a nurse in wartime Italy in The English Patient.

If anything, she has become more adventurous with age. Look at her mysteriously mutable work in Abbas Kiarostami's puzzling [Certified Copy](#), for which she won the best actress prize at Cannes, and Olivier Assayas's [Clouds of Sils Maria](#), where she and Kristen Stewart have a hypnotic rapport as, respectively, a revered actor and the PA on whom she depends. There are her two jangling thrillers for Michael Haneke ([Hidden](#) and [Code Unknown](#)), as well as Bruno Dumont's twisted, oddball comedy [Slack Bay](#), her first foray into slapstick. All this and [Antigone on stage for Ivo van Hove](#).



With Ralph Fiennes in *The English Patient*, for which Binoche won the Oscar for best supporting actress in 1996. Photograph: Tiger Moth Productions/Allstar

Perhaps it is the nonchalance with which she moves between those innovative projects and mainstream detours such as *Ghost in the Shell*, *Godzilla* and the forthcoming *Paradise Highway* (in which she plays a bandana-wearing long-distance trucker named Sally) that has left her with less of a daredevil reputation than, say, Isabelle Huppert. Or simply the fact that she seems not to have put her neck on the line as definitively as Huppert did with *Elle* or *The Piano Teacher*.

Both Sides of the Blade, which reveals Binoche at her most intense and unreadable, may be the film to change that. If any director could facilitate

such a transformation it would be Denis, who has already cast her as an artist seeking love in *Let the Sunshine In*, and in *High Life* as a crazed doctor engaged in reproductive experiments with death-row prisoners deep in space. “Douching is for amateurs!” she declares in one scene; in another, Robert Pattinson christens her “the shaman of sperm”.

Binoche admires her director’s curious, inquisitive approach. “It’s the way Claire looks for the shot,” she says. “She chooses it with her feelings, rather than thinking ‘wide shot, closeup’. It’s not logical. That I like.” Denis said in 2017 that Binoche is “sexier than any young girl on the red carpet”. Can the actor feel that when she is being directed by her? “Well, if I feel her love then I feel sexy. You feel more confident. You want to push yourself forward.”

Her director’s forthright nature seems to embolden her. The most outre scenes in *High Life* (2018) involve “[the box](#)”, a sexy Tardis inside which carnal pleasure is dispensed, a bit like the Orgasmatron from *Sleeper*. “It was so mad!” gasps Binoche. “How can you even think of that in a script? But we did it with humour and love and care, I would say, and freedom. You have to trust and go for it.” Another scene required her to carry a sperm sample. “I asked Claire, ‘But how am I going to hold it?’” Her voice sounds shrill and panicky. “She said: ‘Like this.’” She presents her hands serenely, palms upwards. “And I thought: ‘Ah, of course. This is such a fantasy of hers!’” She stops just short of giving herself a face-palm, perhaps still mindful of her imaginary cargo.

Shooting with the grave, grizzled Vincent Lindon in *Both Sides of the Blade* wasn’t half as much fun. “With Vincent, it was not always easy. As actors, we are quite different. But I bet Claire knew that.” She wags a playful finger at the webcam. “I don’t think she was naive!” What was the problem? “I felt Vincent was insecure. And because of that, he was trying to control the situation. Some women would retreat, but I felt as the character I had to confront him. I don’t know Vincent. But I know we had to confront each other and that was not easy for either of us.”

At least it wasn’t her first time putting a titan of French cinema in his place. Shortly after Binoche won her prize at Cannes in 2010, she was rudely disparaged in the press by Gérard Depardieu, who [asked](#): “Please can you

explain to me what the mystery of Juliette Binoche is meant to be?” before concluding that “she has nothing – absolutely nothing”.

Did he apologise? “Hmm,” she says ruefully. “About three months after he made those declarations, I bumped into him in the street and I said: ‘Gérard – why were you so mean to me?’ He said: ‘Oh forget about it, I say stupid things. Don’t take it personally.’ I told him: ‘OK but at the end of the day, I had to deal with it. And it’s really not cool.’ He said: ‘Well, I’m just upset with the directors you’re working with.’”



With Kristen Stewart in *Clouds of Sils Maria*. Photograph: Cinema/Allstar

Her mouth is agape now. “I asked him: ‘What are you talking about?’ He said: ‘Oh, Leos Carax and Michael Haneke. You’re working with these perverse directors.’ Then he corrected himself: ‘Well, OK, Michael did *The White Ribbon*, and that was quite good ...’” She looks confused, incredulous and exasperated all at once: the precise expression of someone expecting an apology only to be met with meaningless waffle. She raises a hand as if to say: Enough! “I said: ‘OK, OK – goodbye.’ Then as I walked off, I realised: ‘Perverse directors? He worked with [Maurice Pialat](#) and [Bertrand Blier](#)! What is he talking about?’”

She has no illusions about what prompted the outburst. “I think he was feeling jealous because I’d just received the award in Cannes. He was hurt because I had made him deal with too many things.” It was especially bruising because Depardieu had been one of her first points of contact in the industry. As an aspiring performer, she had visited the set of his historical drama Danton in 1982, three years before her breakthrough role at the age of 20 in Jean-Luc Godard’s Hail Mary.

Gérard was feeling jealous ... he was hurt because I had made him deal with too many things

“I was 17 and still at school,” she recalls. “My father’s friend was working on Danton. Gérard came to me and said: ‘What are you doing here?’ I told him: ‘I’m just observing, I want to be an actress.’ He said: ‘Work on your classics.’ So he was such an important figure in my life. And then all these years later he ... how do you say?” She’s miming a left hook to her own chin. Punch? “Yes! He punched a fist in my face. And it injured me.”

Denis brought the two actors together in the glorious final scene of Let the Sunshine In, with Depardieu as a fortune teller urging Binoche on to greater romantic exploration. “We had a very nice time,” she smiles. Then her mood turns serious. “You have to forgive. Love is stronger and it transforms everything. That is just a fact. And to stay in love makes me happier than to stay with anger or frustration. Even though Gérard has had a huge career, there’s still a little boy inside. And we must all take care of our little ones.” Trust her to see both sides of the blade.

Both Sides of the Blade is in cinemas and on Curzon Home Cinema now. Read the review [here](#).

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2022/sep/09/i-fell-in-love-with-two-men-it-was-unbearable-juliette-binoche-on-love-triangles-and-little-boy-gerard-depardieu>

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You be the judge: do I have to tell my girlfriend every detail about my friend's stag do?



Illustration: Ilse Weisfelt/The Guardian

He thinks she's controlling; she's worried he'll go off the rails in Ibiza. Best man or bad boyfriend? You decide

- [Find out how to get a disagreement settled or become a You be the judge juror](#)



Interviews by [Georgina Lawton](#)
[@georginalawton](#)

Fri 9 Sep 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 9 Sep 2022 21.00 EDT

The prosecution: Luke

I am not going to behave like a teenager on this holiday. Raye should have more trust in me

My partner Raye is a bit iffy about me going on an upcoming boys' holiday to Ibiza. It's a stag do and she's worried I'll go off the rails.

I've been on stags with the guys before and they do get a bit wild. Last year, in Greece, one friend ended up in hospital after he drunkenly climbed up a lamp-post and fell off.

Now Raye is being a bit controlling. I'm surprised, as we're generally really open with each other. She's never been suspicious about my holidays before:

she's not the type. On this trip I'm the best man. Raye thinks I'm going to be chief mischief-maker but it's actually the opposite. I'll be busy arranging things so won't be as free as the others.

Raye thinks I'm going to be chief mischief-maker but it's actually the opposite

She has recently demanded to know all the details for this trip. She said: "It's a stag do – I know how things can get out of hand." She wants to know where I'm staying, what activities I've planned. She also wants regular calls.

I said to Raye: "I'll be sober to keep everyone in check. Ibiza won't even be fun for me." But she's still anxious. We've been together since we were 16, now we're almost 30. We've lived together for eight years and things are really good.

I think Raye's nerves might come from the time when, on a holiday to Ibiza with the lads shortly after she and I got together, I kissed another girl. I was drunk. I came back and told her immediately, as I felt awful. In my defence, I was very young and stupid, but I shouldn't have done it.

We nearly broke up, but Raye forgave me. It was a one-off. I've been away with the same boys several times since, but never back to Ibiza. Maybe Raye thinks I'm returning to the scene of the crime. But I want to marry her; nothing in me wants to cheat again.

I think deep down she knows this. Trust hasn't been an issue since that one silly mistake, but suddenly it's a problem. Raye needs to relax and remember where we are in our relationship. I'd never do anything to jeopardise what we have. Just because I'm going on a stag do to Ibiza, doesn't mean I'm going to revert back to the immature teenager I once was.

The defence: Raye

Luke can be quite easily swayed, so I want to know more about his holiday plans. It's only fair

Luke and I usually have a great relationship. I don't have a problem with him going away – it's just this particular group of lads on stag-dos.

Last time, when Luke's friend ended up in hospital in Greece, I called him to see what was going on and he was so drunk with his friends in A&E. I thought: "Oh my God, this is the state you get yourselves into when the girlfriends aren't around." It was funny but also concerning.

I'm sounding like a boring Becky, but I do think these lads are a bit of a liability when they are together. Our friend group is quite tight – there are about six couples. When the boys are away, the girls gossip about what they're up to on WhatsApp. We're like: "Have you spoken to them today?" or "Did you see that Instagram story?" Only because we know what they're like. I don't think anyone's cheated in recent years, but you never know.

I do think these lads are a bit of a liability when they are together

When Luke and I were 18 years old, he came back from a trip to Ibiza and told me he'd kissed someone when he was drunk on a night out. We broke up for a few months, but I took him back because I love him.

I accept that he's changed since then – it was more than 10 years ago now – but part of me does worry now that he's going back to Ibiza. I usually don't have a problem with his weekends away, but this is different.

Luke is the best man so he's going to feel pressure to plan some wild activities. He can be easily swayed at times and will want to impress the others. Of course I haven't said he can't go, but I have asked for a bit more detail about his plans. He says I'm being excessive, but it's only fair.

I trust him, but I want to know where he and his friends are staying and if they're going to strip clubs. I won't ban him from going or try to dictate his schedule but I want to know what he's doing. It will make me feel more secure. If Luke doesn't want to tell me anything, I'll probably get in a bit of a huff. He says I'm overreacting, but he needs to cut me some slack. Any partner who has once been cheated on would react the same way as me.

The jury of Guardian readers

Should Raye back off on the stag do scrutiny?

Raye is not guilty. Luke acknowledges that several elements of the stag do might cause her some unease. Given that one of these factors is his previous indiscretion (albeit a long time ago) he could be a bit more understanding of her anxieties.

Mark, 39

Raye is being overly paranoid – Luke’s drunken kiss from 12 years ago is a weak justification for her suspicious attitude. If she truly forgave him, why is the same distrust creeping in now? I suggest Raye takes a breather and trusts that Luke can be trusted to have fun.

Jess, 25

I can understand Luke’s need to spend time with his friends, even though they sometimes act like teenagers, but I also share Raye’s concerns. Raye has not vetoed Luke’s participation on the stag – she has asked to be informed of the planned activities. That is not unreasonable.

David, 75

Raye seems convinced that something very bad will happen. But Luke and his friends are adults and responsible for their own mishaps. Demanding check-up calls risks eroding trust rather than building it.

Katie, 31

Precedent is playing out before Luke and he should compromise to make Raye feel less (justifiably) anxious about this trip. He also shouldn’t claim that he will stay completely sober – being open and honest, which is what Raye needs, will help both parties.

Tom, 30

You be the judge

So now you can be the judge. In our online poll below, tell us: should Luke have to tell all the details of his friend’s stag do to Raye?

Last week's result

We asked whether [Hamish should make coffee for Steve in the mornings.](#)

36% of you said no – Hamish is not guilty

64% of you said yes – Hamish is guilty

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Mogwai

Interview

Mogwai's Stuart Braithwaite: 'It's even easier for weirdos to find each other now than in the 90s'

Emily Mackay

The guitarist recalls how Arab Strap gave Scottish musicians a sense of national pride, the excess of his band's early years and why he's still fighting for independence

Read an exclusive [extract of Stuart Braithwaite's autobiography](#): 'We had Iggy Pop on our side'



Stuart Braithwaite: 'Raking over the pain wasn't the easiest thing.'

Photograph: Jim Dyson/Getty Images



Fri 9 Sep 2022 05.00 EDT

The thing that surprises you most, reading Mogwai guitarist Stuart Braithwaite's memoir, is that anyone involved can remember anything at all. Such was the full-body commitment with which the participants of the 90s [Glasgow](#) music scene he documents threw themselves into during the last days of real music industry money, that the whole era should, by rights, be one big blackout.

The subtitle of his book *Spaceships Over Glasgow* is [Mogwai](#), Mayhem and Misspent Youth, and from early days experimenting with sniffing Tipp-Ex solvent while listening to the 13th Floor Elevators, the madness rarely lets up. On Mogwai's first foreign tour, to Norway in 1997, they partake of the ferry bar so enthusiastically – snorting the booze for extra intoxication – that for a few hours they are genuinely not sure whether one of them has fallen overboard. Musical milestones whiz by in a drunken blur, relationships suffer and minds fray at the edges. At one particularly dark moment, Braithwaite responds to his breakup with his teenage sweetheart, Adele Bethel (later of Sons and Daughters), with a months-long psychedelic bender and manages to convince himself his right hand is demonically possessed.

While Braithwaite, 46, feels no shame in recounting Mogwai's feral days eating baby food on tour, "raking over some things that happened that are painful wasn't the easiest thing", he says. "Like, really thinking about losing my dad or getting divorced ... I'm not the kind of person that talks about myself at all, so it was weird. But then you think about the good things that happened after it or before."



Stuart Braithwaite: 'I'm not the kind of person that talks about myself.'
Photograph: Tommy Ga-Ken Wan

Some of the best memories recount his teenage initiation into music growing up in the Clyde valley: a lost world of taping songs from the radio, skiving school to queue at record shops for gig tickets, and staying up for live performances on late-night TV. Most entrancingly, it conjures a sensation familiar to anyone who has stood close to the front at a Mogwai gig: the physical rush, the consuming force with which bands can swallow you whole. At 13, Braithwaite saw the Cure for the first time: "I'd never heard anything so loud in my life, but it wasn't just volume, there was a clarity to it as well," he writes. "I felt transformed."

A couple of years later, having witnessed Nirvana at Reading in 1991, he realised with joy that Kurt Cobain was a fan of Scottish bands such as the Vaselines and Teenage Fanclub. How did the support of Cobain, the

figurehead of ambition in alternative music at the time, affect the Glasgow scene that followed? “It really was quite important,” he says. “Because there were two camps. There was the ‘move to London and try to sell millions of records’ camp, and then there was the Pastels, Teenage Fanclub camp, and it was the ‘stay in Glasgow and be like the Pastels’ worldview that won. I think representation really matters. When I did start making my own music, I wasn’t thinking: ‘Oh, I can never do this’, because I’d seen people like me already do it.”

The dark grandeur of the bands of Braithwaite’s gothic youth plus the vaulting guitar noise and dynamic assault of US indie rock, post-hardcore and grunge fed into the sound of Mogwai, the band he formed with bassist Dominic Aitchison and drummer Martin Bulloch in 1995 (guitarist John Cummings, who left the band in 2015, and multi-instrumentalist Barry Burns joined later; former Teenage Fanclub member Brendan O’Hare also played with them for a short period in the late 90s). Their largely instrumental music, by turns aggressively loud and heartbreakingly delicate, became central to the disparate, chaotic gang of bands based mainly around the Glasgow venue the 13th Note – whose bookers included Alex Huntley, later Alex Kapranos of Franz Ferdinand, and author David Keenan – and the record label Chemikal Underground, managed by the Delgados and home to the likes of Bis and Arab Strap as well as Mogwai.

The explosion of talent served as a countercurrent to the very English vision of mainstream 90s indie. Britpop seemed to Braithwaite, he writes, “the complete antithesis of everything we cared for. It lacked imagination, beauty and scope.” He rarely lost an opportunity to let people know it, from Mogwai’s [“blur: are shite”](#) T-shirts to Braithwaite’s declaration in their first NME interview that they were on “a crusade against the kind of person who chooses to be in a band not because they think people deserve to hear their music but because they want their face to be on the cover of magazines”.



Mogwai in 2001 ... (from left) John Cummings, Martin Bulloch, Stuart Braithwaite, Dominic Aitchison and guitarist Barry Burns. Photograph: Andy Willsher/Redferns

In the book, Braithwaite describes Arab Strap's 1996 debut album, *The Week Never Starts Round Here*, as "probably the first time I'd heard something that properly reflected my experience of growing up in Scotland". In coming years, bands such as the Twilight Sad, Glasvegas and Frightened Rabbit became more confident in their identity; before then, Braithwaite says, "even in [Scotland](#), people would just think the Proclaimers were absolutely hilarious, because they sang in a Scottish accent ... you wonder what was going on in the national psyche, that people were embarrassed to sing in the way that they spoke."

Raised in a pro-independence family – a rarer thing in the 90s than now – Braithwaite lent his voice and his music to the yes campaign in the run-up to the 2014 Scottish referendum, and is unwavering now that a second vote is never far from the headlines. "I hope all Scots are looking at the Tory PM leadership contest closely," [he tweeted in July](#). "Do we really want these people to be running our country? ... We have an out. Let's make sure we take it."

Independence wasn't a priority for him or his peers in the music-focused 90s, he says, whereas now "I think I can probably count on two fingers the musicians I know who aren't pro-independence up here. When you realise the democratic deficit in Scotland and the fact that we've been ruled by Tories, despite not having voted Tory since before we were born, it kinda sinks in. Definitely the arguments against seem a lot flimsier than they did in 2014."

Mogwai are also committed to independence in a wider sense. Never signed to a major, they have released their albums through their own label, Rock Action, since 2010, and established their own studio, Castle of Doom, in 2005. "I would advise everyone to try to have as much control over what they do as they can in every walk of life," says Braithwaite. "It's good to know when you've made a terrible mistake that it's your own terrible mistake."

And while [the recent return of Arab Strap](#) and the Delgados to the musical fray is cause for great celebration, Mogwai have never stopped: their most recent album, last year's Mercury-nominated *As the Love Continues*, was their first to top the UK charts; in July they released a soundtrack for the Apple TV+ [crime drama Black Bird](#), and are already working on another, as yet unannounced. And music is still thriving in Glasgow. "It's got to the point where a lot of people move here because of the music," says Braithwaite. "And the community aspect is maybe even stronger now because of the internet – it's even easier for weirdos to find each other than it was back then."

Mogwai's weirdo bond remains strong, and Aitchison and Bulloch have read the whole book and approved, says Braithwaite. "Although they got it before it went anywhere near an editor, so they were like: 'Someone is gonna have a look at this, aren't they?' Martin helped me probably more than the internet, I was phoning him all the time. He keeps joking that he's gonna bring out his own book called *The Truth*."



Mogwai in 2006. Photograph: Nigel Crane/Redferns

The band have just finished a run of festival dates, and Braithwaite, bolstered by the discipline of writing the book, intends, next year, to “try to write a ridiculous amount of music”. Looking further afield, he still keeps alive another childhood dream, one referenced in the book’s title: that of life on other planets. His late father, whose gentle, free-thinking presence comes through strongly in the book, was an amateur astronomer and Scotland’s only telescope-maker, and taught his son to stargaze. In a strange coincidence, the young Braithwaite and Aitchison first caught sight of Arab Strap’s Aidan Moffat and Malcolm Middleton at a public meeting in Bonnybridge, near Falkirk, called to address the town’s mid-90s spate of UFO sightings. In the book, he ponders the possibility of hiring someone, as Jimi Hendrix did, to watch out during Mogwai gigs for alien craft drawn to the music. So, does he still believe?

“Oh, more than ever!” he says. “Through my life, I went through periods of doubt, but [the New York Times UFO expose](#) from a few years ago threw me straight back in. I mean, I don’t actually know what they are, but there’s definitely weird things flying about, 100%.”

While we await confirmation of intelligent life beyond the solar system *Spaceships Over Glasgow* will provide comfort and inspiration to all those

souls abducted by music who, like Braithwaite, have never stopped watching the skies.

Read an exclusive extract of *Spaceships Over Glasgow* at theguardian.com/music

Spaceships Over Glasgow is published by White Rabbit (£20) on 29 September. To support the Guardian and Observer order your copy at guardianbookshop.com. Delivery charges may apply.

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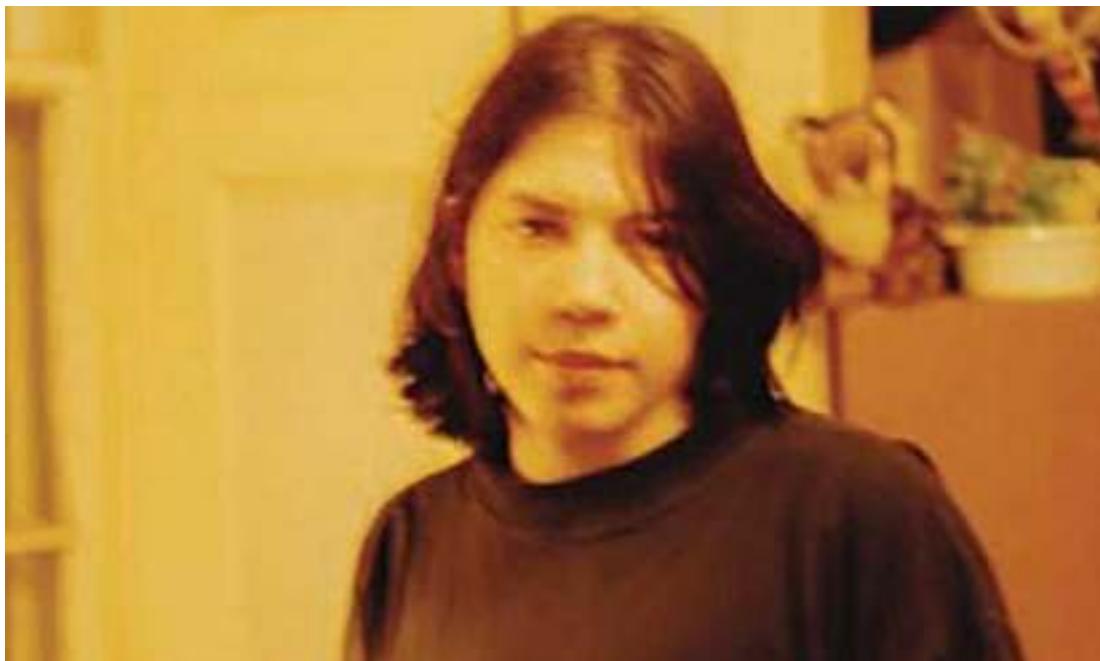
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Mogwai

Mogwai's Stuart Braithwaite on Iggy Pop: 'It was hard to believe the music was made by humans'

The Scottish musician recalls a wild and high night in early 1991 watching Iggy, in this frank extract from his memoir *Spaceships Over Glasgow*

[Stuart Braithwaite interviewed](#): 'It's even easier for weirdos to find each other now than in the 90s'



'I loved the sound of it and knew I required as much of it as possible in my life' ... Stuart Braithwaite as a teenager.

[Stuart Braithwaite](#)

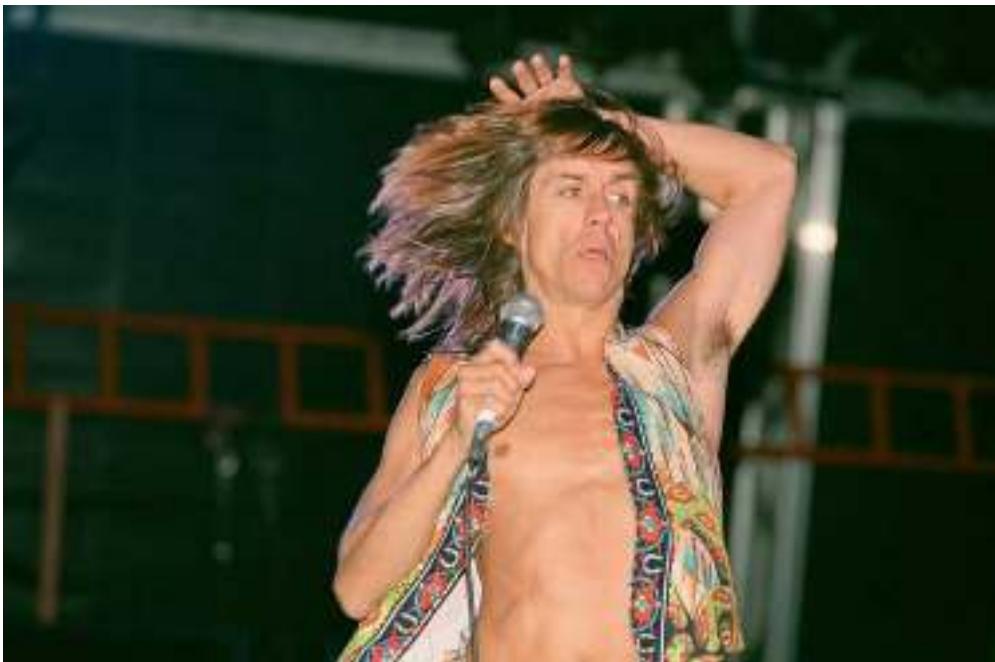
Fri 9 Sep 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 9 Sep 2022 12.46 EDT

Seeing my first gig, the [Jesus and Mary Chain](#), had a catalytic effect. My gig obsession was snowballing. As I perused the listings, there was one that I

could not miss under any circumstance. The king of punk, Iggy Pop, in January 1991.

Hearing Iggy's first band, the Stooges, had been a life-changing moment for me. Their self-titled album was pretty much my bible. It was druggy, dumb and completely primal. I'd never heard anything quite like it and even though that band had pretty much fallen apart by the time I was born, I grew to love the [three Stooges albums](#) as much as any music I'd heard. It was my guitar teacher, Harry, who played them to me first. He played Raw Power and it floored me: "Raw Power has a healing hand / Raw Power can destroy a man!" I hadn't the faintest idea what this Raw Power was (and still don't) but I loved the sound of it and knew I required as much of it as possible in my life. Iggy was the living embodiment of that complete don't-give-a-fuck attitude. The wailing guitars and primal rhythms made so much sense to me. I was enraptured by its intensity and ferocity. It was perfect.

I had a VHS video of Iggy playing live and I watched it over and over. His performance was unlike anything or anyone I'd seen before. He was like a man possessed, doing the weirdest dancing imaginable, getting naked and scratching himself until he bled. The spectacle was great but it was his voice and songs that really captured me. Songs like China Girl were gloriously romantic and railed against the injustices of the world. Iggy was so clearly lost in the performance.



Iggy Pop at the Reading festival in August 1991, the same year as the Barrowlands Stooges gig in Glasgow. Photograph: Trinity Mirror/Mirrorpix/Alamy

I had another video that featured Iggy, a compilation of performances from Factory Records boss Tony Wilson's So It Goes show. The performance from Iggy on this was even more mesmerising. It was live footage from the Manchester Apollo where he played The Passenger. It was completely visceral.

One moment that really caught me was when he broke it down halfway through a semi-confessional speech, almost a sermon, and spoke about a girl he met who'd explained that possessions were immaterial and that everything belonged to everyone. I was starting to form a view of how I saw the world and hearing this message struck a chord with my burgeoning anti-authoritarianism. It was perfect – a pristine mix of the absurd and the profound. I adored the music so much that it was hard to believe it had been made by humans, never mind humans that were still alive.

As 1990 bled into 1991, there were a few changes in the world, and for me. Firstly, my mate Neale Smith and I had taken our hedonistic tendencies to another level. I can't recall which one of us realised that Tipp-Ex Thinner, used to eke out the famous white correction liquid, had another, far less

wholesome application. If you dropped some on your sleeve (or a sock) and inhaled it, you got a bit high. If you did it a few times, you got extremely high. The music we were listening to was very druggy, and this new activity went hand in hand with it, creating an undulating, throbbing sense of psychedelia. Music such as Loop, Spacemen 3 and the 13th Floor Elevators had transported me to a spiritual place that felt like a high. Now I really was. It brought me back to a childhood experience in hospital, seeing fractal patterns while my mind blasted the acid-squelched Doctor Who theme into my brain. The short-term downside was that it gave you a bastard of a headache. There was also the small fact that you were pretty much an apprentice glue sniffer and well on your way to being a total degenerate, but that didn't concern us. We had our little tribe and weren't paying any mind to what the rest of the world thought.

As little as we considered what the rest of the world might be thinking of us, the outside world itself was getting weirder and a lot darker. In early August 1990 Iraqi president Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, causing disquiet among neighbouring countries and their allies in the west. US president George Bush was making noises about intervening and the UK, as ever, was close behind. I wasn't overly interested in the news but I'd got a portable TV in my bedroom for Christmas and the BBC had started showing news all night. There was a sense of impending doom emanating from unfolding events. I'd stay up late and, when the normal TV shows or whatever weird film on Channel 4 ended, watch the now endless rolling news, feeling that something dark and unspeakably ominous was around the corner.

Listen to the Stooges' debut album, *The Stooges*

Having let his parents know that I'd been to a gig at the Barrowland Ballroom in Glasgow and returned home alive, Neale got their permission to go to the Iggy concert. This was a big deal: the first time Neale had been to a show, and what a debut. In the months leading up to it, we were immersed in all things Iggy. The Stooges' records soundtracked our weekends and we couldn't wait to see the man himself. We had got increasingly into the wave of rock bands coming out of Seattle, mainly on the Sub Pop label. Bands such as Mudhoney, Hole and most significantly, Nirvana. Neale had the [debut Nirvana record, Bleach](#), and we'd played it to death. Iggy seemed like

an elder statesman to those bands. The Stooges were year zero for the music we loved. Getting to see such a legend was a massive fucking deal.

We studiously prepared for the big night by making sure we had funds for our standard bottle of red label Thunderbird wine each. A [Real Cool Time](#) indeed. After school, Neale came to mine and we got a lift from my ever-patient dad to Hamilton for the train with my sister Victoria, who I'm sure was delighted at having now doubled her quota of daft 15-year-old boys to look after.

We were on a mission. Our pilgrimage to see the living embodiment of punk rock had to be as debauched as possible. Well, as debauched as you can get at 15 years old. We tanned our bottles on the train. Utterly buzzing on the wine and the night ahead, we met our pal Kevin McCrorie in the queue. He was as giddy as us at the prospect of seeing Iggy. The usual anxiety about the bouncers proved unfounded and we breezed in unchallenged. We missed the opening band, too busy in the downstairs bar catching up with pals and getting as "moroculous" (a word I think we'd invented for getting fucked up) as possible. It felt like every weirdo in Glasgow was there that night. Punks and goths as well as a lot of older folk who'd grown up with Iggy's music. There was a real feeling of community, a summoning of Scotland's misfits.



Iggy Pop at Reading in 1991. Photograph: Trinity Mirror/Mirrorpix/Alamy

In a state of heightened, inebriated excitement we ascended the final set of stairs to the venue. Being five-foot-fuck-all we got as near to the front as possible so that we could see the stage. The lights went down and Iggy came on, spinning like a Tasmanian devil and flailing as if he was suppressing a seizure. He screamed at the audience before ripping into Raw Power. When he sang the line, “Can you feel It?” he had the look and sound of someone expressing something incredibly sincere. It was a blistering start, and it didn’t calm down. Five Foot One from his New Values solo record followed, then Loose and Dirt, two songs from Funhouse. Dirt in particular was incredible: the drums playing at a quarter of the pace of the punchier songs and Iggy wailing, “I been dirt / And I don’t care”, a mantra for everyone who’d ever felt like a loser or felt looked down upon.

Iggy’s band were a bunch of rock dudes who wouldn’t have looked out of place in Guns N’ Roses. The record he was promoting – Brick by Brick – even featured Slash. They were shredding over all the songs but it didn’t matter. We were there to see Iggy. It was on a song from that record, [Neon Forest](#), that he altered a lyric to sing: “SCOTLAND TAKES DRUGS IN PSYCHIC DEFENCE” and the whole place went mental. After a decade of Thatcher’s rule, Scotland definitely felt ignored at best, but was in actuality persecuted. We had Iggy on our side. One of us. A soldier in the fight against the system designed to grind us down. The main set ended with [1969, a proto-slacker anthem from the first Stooges album](#) that I adored. “Last year I was 21 / I didn’t have a lot of fun / And now I’m going to be 22 / I say, oh my and a boo hoo.” As he left the stage the noise from the crowd was intense, rising to cacophonous levels as fans demanded more.

When he came back on to play I Wanna Be Your Dog the place went ballistic. I think it’s the perfect song. Simple, hypnotic, dumb and beautiful. By this point Iggy was practically naked and in a frenzy. He addressed the crowd and dedicated No Fun to Saddam Hussein. The rumbling of impending war had got louder over the weeks and Iggy knew that what was coming down the road would not be fun by any measure.

Iggy saved the best for last. Search and Destroy was incredible. With its blistering riff and war-themed lyrics, it felt like being blasted by a jet engine.

Iggy, a whirlwind of chaos energy, and the crowd going apeshit. It was an epic finale. I'd seen some great bands but this felt like my first true rock'n'roll show. A unique frontman laying everything on the stage, performing as if it was his last night on Earth.



Baptised ... Stuart Braithwaite performs with Mogwai at All Points East in Victoria Park, London, this year. Photograph: Jim Dyson/Getty Images

As we left the Barrowlands, Iggy's booming voice still rang in my ears. It felt like a baptism of sorts. Iggy was the oldest performer I'd seen (though the same age then as I am writing this – 45) but he had more energy than anyone I'd seen then, or since. He was the glue that ran from the 60s, when John Cale from the Velvet Underground recorded the first Stooges record, to the present day, when every exciting rock band around has hailed him as an influence.

I got home still buzzing with punk rock spirit and went to my room, by now a shrine to rock'n'roll and teenage rebellion. On the walls I'd painted song lyrics and covered the rest in the most random paraphernalia I could find. The mess was so all-encompassing that the floor was a rare sight. It was a fucking riot. I climbed into my pit of a bed, turned on the portable TV, grabbed a sock and the jar of thinner and got utterly wasted. High from the

intensity of the night and the solvents, I felt elevated – outside of my body, as if I was looking down at myself in bed.

In my haze, I heard something that brought me back down to earth with a thump. From the TV, the newswoman said that the forces of the US and their allies had started military action against Iraq. There were live images of the bombing. Night vision-style shots of what looked like fireworks flying through the air, then turning buildings and vehicle convoys to dust. This carnage masquerading as news was all announced in an excitable manner by the BBC anchors sitting safe in their studios. No Fun indeed. No fun at all.

This is an extract from *Spaceships Over Glasgow: Mogwai, Mayhem and Misspent Youth* by Stuart Braithwaite, which is published by White Rabbit (£20) on 29 September. To support the Guardian and Observer order your copy at guardianbookshop.com. Delivery charges may apply.

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Russia

‘A leader of the world’: south-east Asian countries open to Putin pivot

Only Singapore has imposed sanctions, while others have been receptive to Moscow’s offers of friendship

- [Russia-Ukraine war – latest updates](#)



Myanmar's Min Aung Hlaing and Russia's Vladimir Putin at the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok. Photograph: Tass/EPA



Rebecca Ratcliffe in Bangkok

Fri 9 Sep 2022 05.33 EDT Last modified on Fri 9 Sep 2022 13.58 EDT

The head of Myanmar's military junta beamed with joy as he shook hands with Vladimir Putin this week. "We would call you not just the leader of Russia but a leader of the world because you control and organise stability around the whole world," Min Aung Hlaing said.

His remarks came as Putin claimed in a defiant speech that European efforts to isolate Russia would fail: instead, [he would pivot to Asia](#).

Myanmar's military, which has also faced a [series of sanctions by western countries](#) in the aftermath of last year's coup, has been especially receptive to such offers of friendship.

Russian aircraft have given the military an "asymmetrical advantage" as it struggles to control resistance to its rule, says Hunter Marston, a researcher and analyst at the Australian National University in Canberra. He says this is "one of the only things allowing them to keep [back] the PDFs [people's defence forces, formed in opposition to the coup]. Otherwise they would be suffering more losses than they already are."

Airstrikes have bombarded populated areas, according to the UN's human rights office.

Myanmar plans to import Russian gas and fuel and has signed a roadmap for cooperation on nuclear energy with the Russian state-owned nuclear corporation, Rosatom.

Energy cooperation may deepen further, says Marston. "Russia has lost some of its drilling sites offshore in [Vietnam](#) due to Chinese pressure," he says, adding that it is possible Moscow may look to Myanmar for exploration after firms including Total have withdrawn from the country.

Across south-east Asia, responses to Russia's war in Ukraine vary, but it is largely seen as a regional war in Europe, says Frederick Kliem, a research fellow and lecturer at the S Rajaratnam School of International Studies in [Singapore](#).

"Countries in south-east Asia, and actually many countries around the world, are not buying into the notion that this is a sea change in international relations, and that Russia is the enemy," Kliem says. "They say, look, if there is cheap oil and cheap gas and good trade deals to be made with Russia at this point in time then of course we're going to do it, and who are you to tell us not to?"

Many point out that Russia does not have a monopoly on breaching international law, he adds.

Only Singapore has imposed sanctions on Russia – a decision possibly driven by its view that international law supports smaller states and that it should take a consistent stance in support of this, says Chong Ja Ian, an associate professor of political science at the National University of Singapore. Singapore's position as a financial hub and a belief that it needs to be particularly careful about secondary sanctions may also have been a factor, he adds.

Arms sales have traditionally been Russia's strongest suit in south-east Asia, says Kliem, but there is a focus on energy as countries eye cheaper deals to

protect consumers. Indonesia's state-owned oil and gas company Pertamina is in talks to purchase crude oil from Russia at below the market rate.

Countries in the region are clearly worried about inflation, especially increasing energy and food prices, Chong says. "These are areas that Russia may be able to provide some assistance, although these governments are likely to be careful about secondary sanctions too. The fact that Russian financial organisations are restricted from using the Swift system may complicate transactions with Russia, however."

Such barriers have affected trade. Tâm Sáng Huỳnh, a lecturer at Ho Chi Minh City University of Social Sciences and Humanities, says that despite talk of Russia seeking enhanced ties with Vietnam, there have been no significant developments. "Vietnam's exports to Russia have been hampered by the ongoing war, with logistics and payments being impacted," he says.

Meanwhile, US companies have shifted production to Vietnam, with Apple suppliers in talks to set up a production line in the country for the first time, he adds. Vietnam has sought to avoid taking sides on the war, in an attempt to balance relations with both powers.

It has relied heavily on Russia for crude oil and gas, and military equipment, but is seeking to diversify on the latter, Huỳnh says.

In a region dominated by competition between China and the US, Russia is considered by some to be a "helpful balancer", says Kliem, even if its influence is smaller. Trade deals with Russia may be welcomed by leaders in the region who are conscious that Moscow, unlike others, will not impose sanctions in response to concerns over authoritarianism or other rights issues.

Thailand announced in May that it would boost bilateral trade with Russia, with the aim of reaching \$10bn a year, as Moscow looks to buy more Thai rice, fruit, cars and car parts, as well as investing in technology. Thais have been invited to invest in Russia's food industry, it was [reported](#).

But these deals are not at all comparable with Russia's losses elsewhere, says Kliem. He says it is likely that it is "diplomatic recognition" that Putin

is seeking, rather than compensating for economic losses.

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2022.09.09 - Opinion

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[Opinion](#)[Queen Elizabeth II](#)

The loss of the Queen will test a divided Britain

[Martin Kettle](#)



A powerful unifying force has gone, leaving constitutional questions that will resonate for years to come



The Queen delivers her speech in the House of Lords during the state opening of Parliament on 5 May 2021. Photograph: Chris Jackson/PA

Fri 9 Sep 2022 01.00 EDT

The death of a monarch is an entirely foreseeable event, the solemn formalities hardwired into the rituals of dynastic succession. But it is also an event that is difficult, partly for the simple reason of good manners, to anticipate with any accuracy at any particular time.

With the [death at Balmoral](#) of Queen Elizabeth II, a prepared but nevertheless shocked nation finds itself at such a moment, and it is important that our troubled politics and our wounded civil society face up to it as calmly and sensibly as possible, because this event will resonate politically and constitutionally for years to come.

Elizabeth was on the throne for so many years that, through no fault of her own, she made this process difficult. She reigned longer than any other monarch in British history, and by a considerable margin. She is the only one to have reigned for more than 70 years, a span that is unlikely to be repeated in the foreseeable future. Until yesterday, she was the only monarch that the

vast majority of us had ever known – you have to be at least 75 to have had any memory of George VI's reign. This is a big, big event for Britain.

She presided over a system of doing monarchy that in some ways felt timeless, but which was in fact adaptive and distinctive. Her staying power and her skill at keeping her distance have bequeathed a model of monarchy that will not be easy for [Charles III](#) to replicate, especially if, as is distinctly possible, he fails to earn the breadth of respect that Elizabeth enjoyed.

The signs were suddenly ominous yesterday. It is unusual for Buckingham Palace, normally so tight-lipped and uncommunicative on such matters, to volunteer the kind of [frank statement](#) on the monarch's health problems that it put out. It is even more unusual for the scattered and sometimes warring members of the royal family to descend en masse to the monarch's bedside at Balmoral.

This is the moment, nevertheless, for which the new monarch has long prepared, and it will be marked by change at least as much as hallowed continuity. But it is a process of change in which the many institutions of British society, not just the palace, are entitled to have their say.

Even monarchy evolves, albeit slowly. It evolved under Elizabeth, as it evolved under George VI. It will certainly evolve further under Charles, who is determined to slim down the numbers of working royals and who is also certain to find himself ceasing to be head of state of many Commonwealth countries. Yet, outside the palace walls, a collective taboo seems to have evolved when it comes to discussing the future of British life without Elizabeth.

There was an egregious but revealing example of this habit as recently as January. During the Partygate furore, Keir Starmer stood up in the Commons and [drew a contrast](#) between the lax attention to Covid rules in Boris Johnson's Downing Street and the punctilious and poignant observance of those rules by the widowed Queen at the funeral of Prince Philip during the pandemic in 2021.

It was a contrast that millions had grasped for themselves, but it drew an immediate reprimand from the Commons Speaker, Lindsay Hoyle, who told

Starmer: “We normally would not, and quite rightly, mention the royal family. We do not get into discussions on the royal family.”

This is an infantile stance for a senior parliamentarian. Parliament may not be supposed to get into discussions on the royal family, but everyone else in the country does. So, of course, do the press, which knows that the royals – whether in the form of the exemplary Cambridges, the troubled Sussexes, the disgraced Andrew or the continuing allure of Diana – sell. It passes belief that parliament should have such a pointless self-denying ordinance on the system of constitutional monarchy on which its own supremacy rests.

The idea that Britain’s way of doing a monarchy is the only possible model is nonsense. Ours is the only European monarchy that is also the head of an established church. Partly for that reason, ours is the only one that has an elaborate coronation to mark a new reign. If Liz Truss had been a Swedish political leader, she would have travelled to see the speaker of the Riksdag this week to be appointed as prime minister, not the monarch. Sweden’s king has no role in summoning or dissolving parliament either, and he does not give royal assent to legislation.

These are among the many terms and conditions of constitutional monarchy that a grownup country might reasonably discuss, particularly at the end of a long reign such as Elizabeth’s. The list would certainly include the many forms of royal prerogative powers that are exercised by Britain’s prime minister, but which the Johnson era helped to make controversial.

Do not underestimate the upheaval in British life that this dynastic moment will trigger. Elizabeth II spent 70 years as a low-key but extremely effective unifying force in a nation that is visibly pulling itself apart. Her passing will remove that force, which her heirs cannot assume they will be able to replicate. In its way, this succession will be one of the biggest tests to face modern Britain. Politics needs to be involved.

- Martin Kettle is a Guardian columnist

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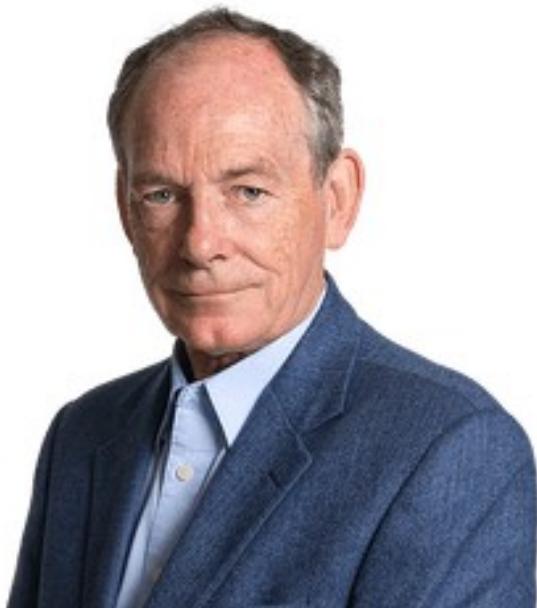
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Opinion**King Charles III**

King Charles III has views and passions, but his first job is to reform the monarchy's image

[Simon Jenkins](#)



He will be a very different monarch to his mother. He should use that to his and the nation's advantage



The then Prince of Wales under the 'Old Sycamore' in the walled gardens at Dumfries House in April. Photograph: Andrew Milligan/PA

Thu 8 Sep 2022 15.01 EDT Last modified on Fri 9 Sep 2022 12.35 EDT

King Charles intends to reign – he would say serve – precisely as did his mother. His entire life has been spent in the shadow of her performance, and he has been tutored at every turn in the role of the occupant of the throne. He knows that the nation has regarded the Queen as the apotheosis of constitutional monarchy. His is unlikely to be a long reign, and he will not want to betray his mother's legacy.

At that point, any similarity between King Charles and Queen Elizabeth may well end. The reason is simple. The job of monarch today may be formulaic, indeed near-robotic, but it is nonetheless conducted by human beings. Charles may execute the ceremonies required of him impeccably. He is practised in the tedium of public duties, and shares his mother's capacity to moderate ritual with humour. Maturity has also diluted the risks of misbehaviour and gossip that attended his youth and unhappy first marriage. But mother and son are very different personalities.

This may matter only in the margins of the constitution, in the dealings that a king has of constitutional necessity with his prime minister and with the

machinery of parliament. He is bound to respect the nonpartisan obligations of monarchy, enshrined in custom and practice at least since the Hanoverians. The days are gone when the monarch might exercise discretion in “choosing” or “inviting” a prime minister most likely to enjoy parliamentary support.

This terminology can still deliver crises. The last occurred in 1963, when the Conservative party lacked a formal procedure for selecting a leader and a number of candidates put themselves forward to succeed the sick Harold Macmillan. In the event, he was well enough to recommend Lord Home as his successor, but this did not save the Queen from seeming to approve a secretive and oligarchic transfer of power.

Subsequent tensions have usually involved hung parliaments, as in 1974 under Edward Heath and in 2010 under Gordon Brown. Both were resolved through negotiations with palace officials under conventions of custom and practice. A different crisis arose when Boris Johnson in 2019 tried to involve the monarch in an illegal proroguing of parliament, to be overturned not by the monarch but by the supreme court. In all these cases protocol kept the monarch aloof from controversy. But Charles may well feel entitled to play a more active role.

Different problems may well lie elsewhere, in the obvious fact that Charles is a public figure of strong opinions, on almost every subject under the sun. He makes no secret of his views on topics as diverse as climate change, agriculture, alternative medicine, conservation and modern architecture. As always, he insisted that his opinions were personal and not “monarchical”. But they were still opinions.

In 2014 Mike Bartlett’s play King Charles III portrayed Charles as refusing, on a point of conscience, to give royal assent to a bill passed by parliament ending press freedom. He claimed royal prerogative, a power customarily delegated to the prime minister. This presented the prime minister with a crisis: either pass an “illegal” bill or demand Charles’s abdication in favour of a more compliant William. In the play, the latter occurred. A similar crisis hit Belgium in 1990 when King Baudouin refused to sign a pro-choice bill and was allowed to abdicate for a day. Bartlett’s plot must at least have caused Charles a shiver of recognition.

The monarch holds a weekly audience with the prime minister in conditions of absolute confidentiality. Charles might reasonably regard this as an open opportunity to bombard a hapless premier with his reaction to events. He may be no more than conversing with the most powerful person in the land, but that in itself is a position of influence. Charles is a man of intellectual passion, a regal David Attenborough. Both men regard not just the British nation but Planet Earth as facing catastrophe and Charles may see that as overriding constitutional niceties.

The danger is the near certainty of leakage. It is of the palace being constantly besieged by accusations of political lobbying and interference. There will always be a body of opinion that feels the Queen was over-fastidious in “reigning until death” and should at some point have retired with dignity. Charles is not young and is not the Queen. He will be ever vulnerable to the appealing presence of his son William, high in profile and hovering in the wings.

Where the new monarch could unquestionably make a mark is in reforming the image of monarchy. Where Elizabeth was a stickler for tradition, Charles is known to want to relax and “informalise” the throne. He is rumoured to want to move out of Buckingham Palace, turning it into a royal office block and museum and keeping Clarence House as his London home. A popular gesture would be to merge the palace’s extensive private gardens with Green Park and form a verdant corridor from Whitehall to Kensington Palace.

Charles would also be well advised to dismantle much of the flummery that grew up round the concept of a royal family under his mother. There may need to be an heir to the throne, but an extended family need not enjoy – or more often endure – a publicity and lifestyle unknown to most royal families elsewhere in Europe. Turning her offspring and relations into a stage army of celebrities was a mistake, and one Charles could usefully discontinue.

The British monarchy is a curiosity of history. It has supplied the state and its imperial legacy, the Commonwealth, with a figurehead of remarkable stability. Its hereditary basis is defensible only in being elemental and in remaining scrupulously impotent. The monarchy is simply the expression in human form of national cohesion and supposed reverence. But it retains that

stability and reverence through avoiding controversy. Britain's new king is an ostentatious controversialist. At very least, his reign is unlikely to be dull.

- Simon Jenkins is a Guardian columnist

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Opinion[Liz Truss](#)

‘Handout’-hater Liz Truss frightens those of us struggling to improve our lives

[Sharron Spice](#)

Her freeze on energy bills doesn’t go far enough – and people fighting to stay afloat will end up paying for it later

- This article is part of [the heat or eat diaries](#): dispatches from the frontline of Britain’s cost of living emergency



Illustration by Eleanor Bannister.

Fri 9 Sep 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 9 Sep 2022 06.07 EDT

I watch [Liz Truss](#) and I see a woman wearing a Margaret Thatcher mask. But we are not in the 70s or 80s any more: we are in 2022. I watched the

Tory leadership contest. Not out of interest, but out of confusion and despair. It was frightening.

Tax cuts? What does that mean to people like me? They won't do anything to help us. In her [speech on Tuesday](#) she barely mentioned the high cost of living, and nothing to do with benefits. My food bills are OK at the moment, but I'm hoarding: tinned stuff that will last a long time in case money gets tight in winter.

On Thursday, she announced that [energy bills would be frozen](#) at about £2,500 a year until 2024. When the new price cap was announced, my energy bills were due to go up to £3,500, so this is better – but it's still expensive. How will we pay this back? I'm really worried. I have been very down. We are the ones who are going to suffer. She blamed the war in Ukraine for the high prices, but my electricity is from E.ON and their profits are outrageous: £3.47bn in the first six months of the year.

I've changed jobs since [my last column](#). I was working as a project support worker with adults in supported housing. Even though I had a contract, my manager gave me only one week's notice before my job ended. I've found something else now but it's just been interviews, interviews, interviews – you get used to it, but it's draining. I've started work on a pilot youth project, on a three- to six-month contract. It's short term but it could end up being longer.

I'm OK with the uncertainty. I've got three or four jobs anyway. I'm still working six days a week: I do other youth work, and have a Saturday job supervising reparation work with young people who are giving back to the community by picking up litter. I've also written a play about universal credit – we need urgent reform to the benefits system.

Truss frightens me. That word "[handouts](#)": she was talking to her Tory base. Universal credit isn't a handout, anyway, because you have to show commitment to work. I am updating my play and I will put it on at the end of September or early October at a theatre in east London.

At one of the job interviews I had, they wanted me to have a degree. Before Covid, I was halfway through a degree in youth justice with the Open University. But with Covid, I had three deaths in the family. My mum passed away in a care home. She had pneumonia, and then Covid finished her off. Then my stepdad fell down in his property, ended up in hospital, got Covid. Then my uncle: he died of complications with diabetes.

It was all in the space of a few months. It was too much. I didn't have the brain capacity to be studying, so I put the degree on pause. I have decided to go back to uni and do a part-time course, so I will be starting in October. It's an investment. Once I get that degree, I'll get a better-paid job.

Covid has shown me that you cannot take tomorrow for granted. Nothing is certain. And if things take off and more opportunities come then I won't be stuck in this nine-to-five. I will have time to write. I will have time to put on plays.

- Sharron Spice is in her 30s and lives in London. She tweets at [@mSharronSpice](https://twitter.com/mSharronSpice)
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[OpinionPakistan](#)

The west is ignoring Pakistan's super-floods. Heed this warning: tomorrow it will be you

[Fatima Bhutto](#)



Those who don't die from the floods risk death by starvation – yet you've probably heard little about the devastation



Victims of flooding from monsoon rains carry belongings salvaged from their flooded home in the Dadu district of Sindh province. Photograph: Fareed Khan/AP

Fri 9 Sep 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 9 Sep 2022 12.03 EDT

Today, [Pakistan](#), the world's fifth-most-populous country, is fighting for its survival. This summer, erratic monsoon rains battered the country from north to south – Sindh, the southernmost province, received 464% more rain over the last few weeks than the 30-year average for the period.

At the same time, Pakistan's glaciers are melting at a rate never seen before. These two consequences of the climate crisis have combined to create a monstrous super-flood that has ravaged the country.

Ninety per cent of crops in Sindh have been damaged; Faisal Edhi, who runs Pakistan's largest social welfare organisation, the Edhi Foundation, has warned that those who don't die from the floods risk death by starvation.

A famine is coming; the only question is how soon? Economic losses are estimated to be in excess of \$30bn, 50 million people have been internally displaced, there is the threat of a malaria epidemic as floodwater lies stagnant – satellite images have shown the shocking formation of a 100km-

wide inland lake in Sindh due to overflowing from the Indus River – and there is no doubt that a generation will be cast backwards as already meagre education and health services are violently disrupted. More than 400 children have died and with winter coming and millions left without shelter, many more will.

Our lives are dispensable for the world at large. What else can you feel when \$880m was raised for Notre Dame but a drowning country must beg for aid?

This is a tragedy of nightmarish proportions and yet if you live outside Pakistan, you probably haven't heard much about it. Given its near total lack of interest in the fate of Pakistan, it would seem that the rest of the world hasn't considered that this epic humanitarian crisis is a peek into the apocalyptic future that awaits us all.

No nation need have any special feelings towards Pakistan, but the horrors faced by the country today are a clear warning of the consequences of universal and rapacious climate breakdown. Human beings have destroyed our one and only planet; what is happening in Pakistan today is proof of that.

Our voracious burning of fossil fuels, obnoxious disregard for the wild and natural world we inherited, and criminal consumption means that no country, no matter its wealth, will be immune from the consequences of global heating. Today it is Pakistan, tomorrow it will be California, France, Australia, the world.

While it has been touching to see how ordinary people from far away countries have shown solidarity with Pakistan, donating what they can to flood relief efforts, the silence from major international figures and western media at large has been dispiriting, if not unsurprising. The week the flood hit, there were more newspaper column inches devoted to a Finnish prime minister who likes to party than to the fact that a third of Pakistan was submerged.

This is not a question of disaster fatigue. In Europe, the same countries that pushed Syrian refugees out in rubber dinghies to die at sea have free Airbnb

housing and welcome booths for Ukrainians at their airports. And it's not that Pakistan is too dangerous to visit or deal with. Only recently, Bernard Henri Levy, the French pop intellectual, was strutting around Odessa and President Zelensky publicly thanked Ben Stiller and Angelina Jolie, "who, despite the danger, have visited us". (To be fair to Jolie, she did visit Pakistan after the 2005 earthquake.)



Temporary housing for flood victims in Sindh on Thursday. Photograph: Fareed Khan/AP

This is not our first disaster caused by the climate crisis. In 2010, Pakistan also suffered catastrophic flooding. At the time, the UN secretary general, Ban Ki-moon, said the scale of flooding Pakistan had endured was greater than anything he had ever seen before. "Make no mistake, this is a global disaster," Moon said. "Pakistan is facing a slow-motion tsunami. Its destructive powers will accumulate and grow with time."

Back then, 400,000 cusecs of water made their way down the length of the Indus – a record-breaking amount. This year, we are expecting 700,000 cusecs.

I remember being frantic back in 2010, trying desperately to raise attention to the disaster that was unfolding before our eyes. This was the same year

that Haiti suffered a tragic earthquake, but unlike Haiti there was little media attention for Pakistan, no televised concerts populated by Hollywood stars wearing branded T-shirts and raising money, no tweets by major international figures applauding the resilience of the Pakistan people. No one cared then, just as no one cares now.

The current UN secretary general, Antonio Guterres, has lamented that the world is “sleepwalking” through Pakistan’s devastating super-flood. If one takes climate change seriously, how can one be blind to Pakistan – a country that has already warmed a dreaded 2.2F?

In Jacobabad, Sindh, temperatures this summer reached 50 degrees Celsius (122F); it is “one of two cities on Earth that has passed heat and humidity thresholds that are hotter than the human body can handle”, as [Vice reported](#). But where are the hordes of humanitarian opportunists who flex their care for war zones in Vanity Fair interviews and on Twitter?

Forget solidarity: the global south will not survive this century without climate justice. You in the west are talking about paper straws, we in the global south are talking about reparations.

Our countries and our lives are dispensable for the world at large. We have always known this, but we are simmering with rage now. What else can you feel when \$880m was raised in a day and a half after the cathedral of Notre Dame suffered a fire in 2011 but an entire country of drowning poor must beg for climate aid and assistance?

It’s time that the world wakes up to the terrifying future we have created for ourselves. We have no chance of surviving otherwise.

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[Italy](#)

Cracks show over Russia as Italy's far-right alliance heads for election win

Giorgia Meloni, tipped to become PM, backs sanctions while Matteo Salvini says they are bringing Italy to its knees

- [Explainer: Who is running, who will win, and does it matter?](#)



Matteo Salvini and Giorgia Meloni, at a conference in Cernobbio, Como, on Sunday, are part of a coalition forecast to win the 25 September general election. Photograph: Matteo Bazzi/EPA

[Angela Giuffrida](#) in Rome

Fri 9 Sep 2022 00.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 9 Sep 2022 13.47 EDT

Giorgia Meloni and [Matteo Salvini](#), the far-right protagonists of a coalition on course to win Italy's general election this month, posed together in a warm embrace by the sea in Sicily last week in a show of unity.

Meloni, the Brothers of [Italy](#) chief who could become prime minister, and who in the past has likened the pair's relationship to that of Romeo and Juliet, said: "The photo is the best response to the inventions by the left of alleged divisions."

Just days later, cracks between her and Salvini, the leader of the League, were on display at a business conference in Cernobbio, off the shores of Lake Como, where they disagreed on one of the most important themes of the moment – sanctions against Russia over its invasion of [Ukraine](#).

Although both Brothers of Italy and the League have condemned the war, Salvini, who once heaped praise on Vladimir Putin, even signing a cooperation pact with the Russian president's United Russia party in 2017, said the sanctions were not working and were instead "bringing [Europe](#) and Italy to their knees".

Lasciamo alla sinistra divisioni, rabbia e polemiche. Uniti si vince ☺
pic.twitter.com/pAHLtJU1Tw

— Matteo Salvini (@matteosalvinimi) [August 29, 2022](#)

Meloni, meanwhile, argues that the sanctions are working, citing a significant slowdown in Russia's GDP growth prospects, and since the start of the war she has been resolute in her support for sending arms to Ukraine while reassuring the international community that she is pro-Europe and pro-Atlanticist.

Her stance is a marked change from her criticisms of the sanctions against the Kremlin as a result of its annexation of Crimea in 2014, which she described as having "massacred" Italian businesses. It is a somewhat surprising shift from the leader of a party whose supporters are mostly against the latest raft of penalties. And according to a poll this week, just over half of Italians oppose the measures, owing to the strong impact they are having on the cost of living.

But Meloni has the wind in her sails – Brothers of Italy, [a party with neofascist roots](#), is leading in opinion polls – and her approach appears to be

twofold: trying to woo voters while reassuring international observers.

“Slowly but surely she has understood that she could make it, and end up as prime minister,” said Sofia Ventura, a politics professor at the University of Bologna. “So she has taken a bet. She doesn’t want to frighten public opinion, and is aware that leading the country means having to show she’s 100% Atlanticist and European.”

Salvini, on the other hand, is endeavouring to revive support for the League, which has slumped to about 12% in polls, down from almost 40% in August 2019 when he collapsed his coalition government with the populist Five Star Movement in a failed attempt to force snap elections that could have made him prime minister.

“Salvini is seeing support crumbling from his hands and so it’s clear that he is playing a different game,” Ventura said.

The two parties are part of a coalition forecast to claim a comfortable victory [on 25 September](#). The third member is Forza Italia, the party of the three-time [former prime minister Silvio Berlusconi](#), who has also nurtured close ties with Putin’s Russia.

As a coalition, they have pledged to maintain support for Ukraine and stand firm alongside the EU and Nato. Michele Geraci, a former undersecretary at the ministry of economic development who has close ties to the League, believes this will be maintained once in power, albeit with a possible change in approach towards the sanctions.

“There really isn’t much difference between Meloni and Salvini – they have condemned the war in Ukraine and are both nationalist with a focus on the wellbeing of Italy,” he said. “They also both want sanctions that will bring an end to the war – this is the goal. There’s a lot of confusion over whether or not the sanctions are working. Salvini is slowly understanding that they aren’t, while Meloni hasn’t maybe understood that yet. After the election campaign, when they have time to properly assess the impact, maybe they will decide to either leave [the sanctions] or try to modify them.”

Before the war, Italy had long been friendly towards Russia, maintaining close economic and cultural links supported by factions within parties from across the political spectrum, some of whom continue to defend Putin.

The Five Star Movement, which set the wheels in motion for the collapse of Mario Draghi's government in July, has condemned the war but is vehemently against sending arms to Ukraine and increased military spending. TV talkshows have hosted pro-Putin commentators.

"Since the end of the cold war, Italy did not perceive Russia as a major threat," said Carolina De Stefano, a professor of Russian history and politics at Luiss University in Rome. She noted that the League and the Five Star Movement had promised to reduce Crimea-related sanctions when they formed a government in 2018, but in the end no changes were made.

"There has been an evolution in Italy-Russia relations and since February the Italian position has changed and in a really stable way," she said. "There'll be no turning back, and I see no possibility of Italy taking an opposite direction to the European one beyond the slogans."

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/09/cracks-show-in-meloni-salvini-alliance-over-russia-sanctions-italy>.

Rights and freedomTajikistan

Tajikistan ‘rounding up and deporting Afghan refugees’

UN refugee agency urges authorities to end forced deportations as families say they are too scared to leave their homes



A Tajik soldier watches the border area across the Panj River in the Wakhan Corridor, a narrow strip of land separating Afghanistan from its neighbours.
Photograph: Pascal Mannaerts/Alamy

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Ruchi Kumar and Hikmat Noori

Fri 9 Sep 2022 08.03 EDTFirst published on Fri 9 Sep 2022 01.30 EDT

The Tajikistan authorities are rounding up Afghan refugees and forcing them to cross the border back into [Afghanistan](#), despite some having been granted asylum in other countries.

According to reports from Tajikistan's [10,000-strong Afghan refugee community](#), people are being picked up off the street and houses raided in a spate of recent round-ups of Afghan families, who have been sheltering in the country since the Taliban seized power in August 2021.

The UN's refugee agency, UNHCR, confirmed that 80 Afghan refugees and asylum seekers had been deported from [Tajikistan](#) since 16 August.

The UNHCR has appealed to the Tajikistan authorities to stop the forced deportations. It is not clear what the motivation or policy is behind them; until a few weeks ago the Tajikistan government was cooperating with the UNHCR to shelter and resettle Afghans fleeing the Taliban authorities.

The UNHCR said it could not "establish a single pattern, whether it is because of the legal status, their profiles, violation of the rule of stay, or

other. It is a mixture of indiscriminate and targeted arrests and deportation”.

Elizabeth Tan, UNHCR’s director of international protection, said: “We are asking Tajikistan to stop detaining and deporting refugees, an action that clearly puts lives at risk.

“Forced return of refugees is against the law and runs contrary to the principle of non-refoulement, a cornerstone of international refugee law,” she said, referring to the legal tenet that forbids a country receiving asylum seekers from returning them to somewhere they would be at risk of persecution.

The UN documented a case of five Afghans forced back on 23 August. They included “a family comprising three children and their mother, [and] were returned to Afghanistan through the Panji Poyon border checkpoint in southern Tajikistan, despite UNHCR’s interventions to halt the deportations”, the UN agency stated.

Afghans in Tajikistan who spoke to the Guardian say that the numbers being forced back over the land border into Afghanistan is running into the hundreds, with forced deportations increasing over the past fortnight. They said that many Afghan refugees were being sent back without passports or identity documents and left to fend for themselves, with no way of getting to a place of safety.

For nearly a week, no one in Samira’s family has dared to step out of their flat in a small town in northern Tajikistan. Her children have not been to school and they have not felt safe enough to get groceries or medical supplies.



Refugees leaving Afghanistan cross the border into Tajikistan. Photograph: Jack Picone/Alamy

All around them, they say, other members of the Afghan refugee community are being detained and forcibly deported back to their home country without clear reason or justification.

“We are living with a lot of fear that we might be detained by the police and deported at any minute,” said Samira*, a former security official who escaped Afghanistan after repeated attempts on her life.

“We will be arrested by the Taliban the moment we enter Afghanistan. I spent years fighting them, they will seek their revenge.”

“Even those with proper documents and ongoing asylum cases in western countries are being picked from the streets and dropped off at the border between Afghanistan and Tajikistan ... which is why we stopped going outside,” said Ejaz*, Samira’s husband.

“With one of the families we know, the husband was deported without even being allowed to appeal against the decision or see his wife and kids. The family had a flight scheduled for 12 September to Canada, where they were emigrating. But now the husband is back in Afghanistan, while the wife and two kids are struggling to survive here.”

Maryam, a former Afghan media personality who fled to Turkey to escape the Taliban, is frantic with worry for the rest of her family, who are refugees in Tajikistan. They have locked themselves inside their home and are living in terror.

“They told me that it started with Afghans being rounded up from the streets, so they stopped leaving their homes. But then they [authorities] started raiding homes and picked up people from their places of work,” she said.

“I am afraid to talk to them on the phone or to check in with friends. Everyone is afraid they will be tracked and deported.”

While Samira and her family are also in the final stages of emigrating to Canada, she is racked with dread over the deportations. Her concern is mainly for her children, who have already experienced immense trauma. “The refugee life has been hard on children. They deserved a better future,” she said.

The Tajikistan authorities have been contacted for comment.

** Names have been changed to protect their identity*

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/sep/09/tajikistan-rounding-up-and-deporting-afghan-refugees>

Queen Elizabeth II

World leaders pay tribute after death of Queen Elizabeth II

Messages flood in at end of British monarch's 70-year reign

- [Queen Elizabeth dies – latest updates](#)



Queen Elizabeth greets Canadian prime minister Justin Trudeau at Buckingham Palace in 2018. Photograph: WPA/Getty Images

[Sam Jones](#)

[@swajones](#)

Thu 8 Sep 2022 16.04 EDT Last modified on Fri 9 Sep 2022 01.14 EDT

Presidents, prime ministers, monarchs and leaders around the world have paid tribute to the life and service of [Queen Elizabeth II](#), many of them reflecting on a 70-year reign that encompassed some of the most turbulent and decisive moments in modern British and world history.

As Thursday wore on and news of the Queen's ill-health eventually gave way to news of her death, global figures spoke of what she had meant to them and their countries.

Among the most frequently invoked words were "duty", "steadfast" and "constant", but mention was also made of her sense of humour, and of her life and role as a mother and grandmother as well as a monarch.

The US president, [Joe Biden](#), and the first lady, Jill Biden, said: "Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II was more than a monarch. She defined an era."



Queen Elizabeth with US President Joe Biden in the Grand Corridor during their meeting at Windsor in 2021. Photograph: WPA/Getty Images

In a world of constant change, they added, she had been "a steady presence and a source of comfort and pride for generations of Britons, including many who have never known their country without her".

The Bidens also noted that the Queen – "a stateswoman of unmatched dignity and constancy" – had "endured the dangers and deprivations of a world war alongside the British people and rallied them during the devastation of a global pandemic to look to better days ahead".

‘The Queen loved France, which loved her back’

Minutes after the Queen’s death was announced, **France**’s president, [Emmanuel Macron](#), posted a simple picture of the Queen on his Twitter account, unaccompanied by any words.

pic.twitter.com/d8K50rXji5

— Emmanuel Macron (@EmmanuelMacron) [September 8, 2022](#)

In a subsequent message, he wrote: “Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II embodied the British nation’s continuity and unity for over 70 years. I remember her as a friend of France, a kind-hearted queen who has left a lasting impression on her country and her century.

“No foreign sovereign has climbed the stairs of the Élysée Palace more often than she, who honoured France with six state visits and met each of its presidents. For her, French was not a mere relic of Norman ancestry that persisted in so many customs, but an intimate, cherished language. The Queen of sixteen kingdoms loved France, which loved her back.”

Russia’s president, Vladimir Putin extended his condolences to King Charles for the “irreparable loss” of his mother, saying the Queen had “rightfully enjoyed the love and respect of her subjects, as well as authority on the world stage”.

He added: “I wish you courage and resilience in the face of this difficult, irreparable loss. May I ask you to pass on sincere condolences and support to members of the royal family and the entire people of Great Britain.”

President Xi Jinping of **China** expressed his “sincere sympathies to the British government and people” in a statement released through state media.

“Xi Jinping, representing the Chinese government and the Chinese people, as well as in his own name, expresses deep condolences,” the statement said. “Her passing is a great loss to the British people.”

Ireland's president, Michael D Higgins, described the late monarch as "a remarkable friend of Ireland" as he offered his condolences to the royal family.

"Her Majesty served the British people with exceptional dignity," he said. "Her personal commitment to her role and extraordinary sense of duty were the hallmarks of her period as Queen, which will hold a unique place in British history."

Higgins also paid tribute to Elizabeth II for "laying a firm basis for an authentic and ethical understanding between our countries", and for refusing to "shy away from the shadows of the past" when she visited the country in 2011.

Canada's prime minister, [Justin Trudeau](#), called the Queen "a constant presence in our lives" and said his compatriots would always "remember and cherish Her Majesty's wisdom, compassion, and warmth".

'She was one of my favourite people': Justin Trudeau pays emotional tribute to the Queen – video

Narendra Modi, **India**'s prime minister, said she would be remembered as "a stalwart of our times" who had "personified dignity and decency in public life".

The president of **Pakistan**, Arif Alvi, offered his "sincere condolences to the royal family, the government, and the people of Great Britain on the sad demise of Queen Elizabeth II, the second longest-reigning monarch in the history of Great Britain".

Bangladesh's prime minister, Sheikh Hasina, offered Britain's royal family "heartfelt and deep sympathies", her spokesperson said. The leader of the former British colony "offered her deep condolences and expressed her sorrow at the death of Queen Elizabeth II".

The Bangladeshi president, M Abdul Hamid, the ceremonial head of state, "expressed profound shock and sorrow" and "conveyed deepest sympathy" to the royal family, the state-run BSS news agency said.

Turkey's president, [Recep Tayyip Erdogan](#), said he was saddened to learn of Queen Elizabeth's death and sent his deepest condolences to the royal family and the people and government of the UK.

New Zealand's prime minister, [Jacinda Ardern](#), said flags would fly at half-mast and arrangements would be made for a state memorial service.

"I know that I speak for people across New Zealand in offering our deepest sympathy to members of the royal family at the passing of the Queen," said Ardern.

"To us she was a much-admired and respected monarch, to them she was a mother and grandmother."



Queen Elizabeth greets Jacinda Ardern, New Zealand's prime minister, in the Blue Drawing Room at Buckingham Palace in 2018. Photograph: WPA/Getty Images

Jamaica's prime minister, Andrew Holness, expressed his "great and profound sadness", adding: "We join our brothers and sisters in the Commonwealth in mourning her passing, and pray for the comfort of the members of her family, and the people of the United Kingdom, as they grieve the loss of their beloved Queen and matriarch."

Holness noted that ever since she was crowned in 1953, Queen Elizabeth II visited the island every decade until 2002. “Undoubtedly, she formed a special bond with the people of Jamaica during her reign,” he said. “We are saddened that we will not see her light again, but we will remember her historic reign.”

António Guterres, the **United Nations** secretary general, said he had been deeply saddened by the Queen’s death.

“She was a good friend to the UN and a reassuring presence through decades of change,” he said. “Her unwavering, lifelong dedication will be long remembered.”

He also said the Queen had been “a reassuring presence throughout decades of sweeping change” that had included the decolonisation of Africa and Asia and the evolution of the Commonwealth.

‘Absolute protagonist of world history’

Italy’s prime minister, [Mario Draghi](#), expressed his condolences, describing the Queen as “the absolute protagonist of world history for the past 70 years” and a woman who had represented the UK and the Commonwealth with fairness, balance, wisdom and respect.

“She guaranteed stability in times of crisis and has been able to keep the value of tradition alive in a society in constant and profound evolution,” he added.

Pedro Sánchez, the **Spanish** prime minister, paid tribute to “figure of global significance, a witness and author of British and European history”, while the **Dutch** prime minister, Mark Rutte, remembered a monarch who had “combined a strong sense of duty and unflinching resolve with a light touch and a sense of humour”.

The **Ukrainian** president, [Volodymyr Zelenskiy](#), spoke of his “deep sadness” at the news, saying the UK and the Commonwealth had suffered an “irreparable loss” and offered his thoughts and prayers.

In a letter to King Charles III, the head of the **European Commission**, [Ursula von der Leyen](#), expressed “sincere condolences on behalf of the European Union”. She added: “Her reign defined the history of your nation and our continent. She symbolised the best of the United Kingdom, its people and its values. She meant so much to so many and, on a personal note, has been an inspiration throughout my life.”

South Africa’s President Cyril Ramaphosa expressed his “profound and sincere condolences” in a statement addressed to the new king, Charles III.

“Her Majesty was an extraordinary and world-renowned public figure who lived a remarkable life. Her life and legacy will be fondly remembered by many around the world,” Ramaphosa said. “The Queen’s commitment and dedication during her 70 years on the throne remains a noble and virtuous example”.

The president of **Ghana**, Nana Akufo-Addo, said the Queen had brought “elegance, style and sheer joy” to her duties” and kept the Commonwealth “sturdy and true”.

Fumio Kishida, the **Japanese** PM, said of Elizabeth II: “She played a significant role in creating world peace and prosperity,” adding her death was a “big loss” to the international community.

Argentina, which fought and lost a bitter war with Britain over the Falkland Islands in 1982, expressed its “regret”. The foreign ministry said the government offered its sorrow and “accompanies the British people and her family in this moment of grief”.

Singapore’s prime minister, Lee Hsien Loong, said: “She performed her duties with devotion, grace, and humility. Her contributions to the United Kingdom, the Commonwealth, and indeed to the world will be recorded in history, and she will always be remembered fondly as a great world leader.”

‘Steadfast and wise’

Other European monarchies offered their sympathies and shared their memories.

The royal house of Norway said it was “deeply saddened at the news”, while the Dutch king, Willem-Alexander, said the “steadfast and wise” Queen had dedicated her long life to serving the British people.

“We feel a strong bond with the United Kingdom and its royal family, and we share their sorrow at this time,” he added.

King Philippe and Queen Mathilde of the **Belgians** said: “We will always keep fond memories of this great lady, who throughout her reign, showed dignity, courage and devotion … The United Kingdom has lost an exceptional monarch who left a deep mark on history.”

King Felipe of **Spain** said in a message addressed to King Charles III: “Deeply saddened by the sorrowful news of the passing away of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, your beloved Mother, I would like to offer Your Majesty and the British people, on my behalf and on behalf of the Spanish Government and people, our most heartfelt condolences.

“Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth has undoubtedly witnessed, written and shaped many of the most relevant chapters in the history of our world during the last seven decades. Her sense of duty, commitment and a whole life devoted to serving the people of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland set an example for all of us and will remain as a solid and valuable legacy for future generations. Queen Letizia and I send Your Majesty and the whole Family our love and prayers. You are all in our hearts and thoughts. We will miss Her dearly.”

The Queen’s death also elicited tributes from former world leaders. **Barack and Michelle Obama** celebrated a reign “defined by grace, elegance, and a tireless work ethic, defying the odds and expectations placed on women of her generation”.



Barack Obama speaks with Queen Elizabeth during a state banquet at Buckingham Palace. Photograph: Lewis Whyld/AFP/Getty Images

Obama's successor, **Donald Trump**, said the monarch's "historic and remarkable reign left a tremendous legacy of peace and prosperity for Great Britain", while the former US president **George W Bush** called the late queen "a woman of great intellect, charm, and wit", and said Americans had always appreciated her "strong and steadfast friendship".

As night fell across Europe on Thursday, the mayor of Paris, Anne Hidalgo, announced the lights of the Eiffel Tower would be switched off in tribute to the Queen.

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Revealed: Ginni Thomas's links to anti-abortion groups who lobbied to overturn Roe



Ginni Thomas with Clarence Thomas, her husband, at the White House in September 2019. The findings raise concerns about a possible conflict of interest at the highest levels of the US judiciary. Photograph: Erin Scott/Reuters

Analysis of ‘amicus briefs’ shows how closely Clarence Thomas’s wife was entwined with rightwing effort to reverse 1973 ruling

[Ed Pilkington in New York](#)

@edpilkington

Fri 9 Sep 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 9 Sep 2022 03.02 EDT

Ginni Thomas, the self-styled “culture warrior” and extreme rightwing activist, has links to more than half of the anti-abortion groups and individuals who lobbied her husband Clarence Thomas and his fellow [US supreme court](#) justices ahead of their historic decision to eradicate a woman’s right to terminate a pregnancy.

A new analysis of the written legal arguments, or “amicus briefs”, used to lobby the justices as they deliberated over abortion underlines the extent to which Clarence Thomas’s wife was intertwined with this vast pressure campaign.

The survey found that 51% of the parties who filed amicus briefs calling for an end to a federal abortion right have political connections to Ginni Thomas, raising concerns about a possible conflict of interest at the highest levels of the US judiciary.

The six-to-three rightwing majority of the court, supercharged by Donald Trump’s three appointed conservative justices, in June overthrew the constitutional right to an abortion. Clarence Thomas was among the six who [voted for the hotly contested ruling](#), Dobbs v Jackson.

The ruling was one of the most consequential in the supreme court’s 233-year history. It has triggered the lightning spread of partial or total abortion bans across Republican-controlled states, affecting [almost one in three women](#) aged 15 to 44.

The Dobbs case, brought by Mississippi which sought to ban abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy, attracted an almost unprecedented 130 amicus briefs

from both sides of the legal argument. Of those, 74 were filed in favour of overturning the right to an abortion, enshrined in 1973 in Roe v Wade.

In turn, the new analysis shows that 38 of the 74 anti-abortion amicus briefs – 51% – were produced by entities and individuals with links to Ginni Thomas. They included rightwing groups, religious interests, prominent conservative individuals and lawyers.

“The Thomases are normalizing the prospect of too close an association between the supreme court and those who litigate before it,” said Melissa Murray, a law professor at New York University and co-host of the [Strict Scrutiny podcast](#). “This isn’t the first time that Mrs Thomas has had dealings with those who come before the court and seek her husband’s vote.”

The revelation that there is substantial overlap between Ginni Thomas and the anti-abortion lobbying effort focused on her husband and the other conservative justices will intensify the growing sense of unease surrounding her hyper-energetic conservative activism. In recent years she has placed herself in the thick of some of the most bitterly contested political controversies that have come – or could come – before the court.

Earlier this year, the New Yorker published an investigation into the mounting evidence of possible conflicts of interest under [the headline](#): ‘Is Ginni Thomas a threat to the supreme court?’

Thomas has been dubbed a “[radical insurrectionist](#)” for her role in backing Trump’s attempt to subvert the 2020 presidential election. Yet her husband has refused to recuse himself from cases relating to the insurrection, including one in January in which he became the only justice to dissent in an 8-1 decision over allowing hundreds of documents held by the National Archives to be reviewed by the House committee investigating the January 6 storming of the US Capitol.

Five weeks after that decision, it was revealed that leading up to January 6 Ginni Thomas exchanged [29 text messages](#) with Trump’s White House chief of staff, Mark Meadows, urging him to block Joe Biden’s victory. It is very possible that those text messages were among the documents that the

committee had been seeking, with Clarence Thomas the sole justice opposing disclosure.

The January 6 committee has said it wants to interview Ginni Thomas over her anti-democratic antics around the 2020 election. Last week the [Washington Post revealed](#) that she applied pressure on lawmakers in Wisconsin to block Biden's win, having previously [done the same in Arizona](#).

The analysis of the amicus briefs was carried out by Advance Democracy Inc, a non-partisan organization specializing in public-interest research and investigations. It shared its findings with the Guardian.

They show an intricate web of connections between many of the most influential groups and figures on the conservative hard right, with Ginni Thomas at the centre of it. Several of the links run through [her consultancy](#), Liberty Consulting, which she set up in 2010 and which brags that it can "give access to any door in Washington".

Another [major route](#) is through the [Council for National Policy](#) (CNP), a secretive Christian conservative networking group that the [New York Times](#) described as a "little-known club of a few hundred of the most powerful conservatives in the country". The binding mission of the members is "limited government, strong national defense, and support for traditional western values".

Ginni Thomas is listed as a board director of the lobbying arm of the group, CNP Action, in a [2020 tax filing](#) obtained by the [investigative watchdog Documented](#). In [a speech to a CNP event](#) in 2019 she described her role within the conservative movement as that of "a convenor – I find the talent and I put them in the room and have them talk to one another".

A leaked [CNP directory](#) from this year lists as Thomas's fellow members several prominent conservatives involved in filing amicus briefs to the supreme court in the abortion case. They include Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of the anti-abortion group Susan B Anthony List, who led a discussion at a CNP conference in February titled: After Roe, Then What?



A pro-choice protest outside the supreme court. Photograph: Anna Moneymaker/Getty Images

Leonard Leo, the founder of the rightwing Federalist Society, with which Clarence Thomas is intimately associated, sits on the board of the Ethics and Public Policy Center, which filed an amicus brief. Leo was arguably the [key strategist](#) behind Trump's packing of the supreme court to obtain its current supermajority; he shares CNP membership with Ginni Thomas and is a close collaborator of hers.

Other CNP members who have been involved in filing amicus briefs in the abortion case include: Jay Sekulow, Trump's former lawyer at his first impeachment trial, who is chief counsel for the American Center for Law & Justice; David Nammo of the Christian Legal Society; Tony Perkins, president of the anti-abortion Family Research Council; Margaret Hartshorn, chair of Heartbeat International; and many more.

There are several other overlapping connections to the amicus briefs through separate networks such as Groundswell, a conservative advocacy group of which Ginni Thomas [described herself as chairman](#) in 2019. Groundswell was formed in 2013 to foment "a 30-front war seeking to fundamentally transform the nation".

John Eastman, the conservative lawyer who is heavily implicated in the effort to block certification of Biden's presidential victory, filed an amicus brief in the abortion case on behalf of the Claremont Institute's center for constitutional jurisprudence, of which he was founding director. Eastman acted as law clerk to Justice Thomas in 1996 and has been described by the [New York Times](#) as a "close friend" of Clarence and Ginni.

Thomas herself has denied any conflict of interest between her activism and her husband's jurisprudence. She told the Washington Free Beacon earlier this year: "We have our own separate careers, and our own ideas and opinions too. Clarence doesn't discuss his work with me, and I don't involve him in my work."

Whether that is true is perhaps a moot point, given that the mere appearance of conflict of interest can in itself damage an institution's reputation. Already, the supreme court is [viewed unfavourably](#) by 44% of the American people according to a Pew Research Center poll, with only 16% thinking they do an excellent or good job keeping their personal political views out of their decisions.

"The supreme court is unlike any other branch because it only has its legitimacy to make the public adhere to what it does. Lose that and the court loses the kind of institutional pull that makes the law come together and bind us," Murray said.

Unlike all other federal judges in lower appeals and district courts who are [obliged to recuse themselves](#) in cases of potential conflict of interest involving their spouses, the nine justices of the supreme court are entirely unfettered by any code of judicial ethics. They in effect police themselves.

Every year Clarence Thomas has to file a [financial disclosure](#), but the detail given is minimal. He lists under his spouse's income "Liberty Consulting, Inc – salary and benefits", but does not reveal her clients or her board positions on groups such as CNP or Groundswell.

The lack of controls have led to a rising chorus [calling for reform](#). "At the very least the justices need to adopt a formal code of conduct that they commit to following," said Gabe Roth, executive director of the non-partisan

group [Fix the Court](#). “That code would take on board potential conflicts of interests involving their spouses.”

Ginni Thomas’s ties with groups responsible for the whirlwind lobbying campaign over abortion could have serious ramifications in future cases that come before the court. Clarence Thomas made it clear in his [concurring opinion](#) in Dobbs that he intends to use exactly the same arguments that were deployed in overthrowing Roe v Wade to challenge the constitutional right to same-sex marriage, same-sex relations and contraception.

Many of the interests to which Ginni Thomas was connected who filed anti-abortion amicus briefs have a parallel track record of anti-LGBT agitating. The founder of CNP, Tim LaHaye, was an evangelical Christian minister and a virulent homophobe.

His 1978 book The Unhappy Gays depicted gay people as “militant, organized” and “vile”. “Homosexuality is a blight on humanity,” he wrote. “Many parents would prefer the death of their child to his adopting the unhappy wretchedness of homosexuality.”

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Northern Ireland

Irish and Northern Irish leaders hail Queen's contribution to peace

Loyalists and unionists grieve as politicians remember late monarch's historic 2011 visit to Ireland

- [Britain mourns death of Queen Elizabeth – latest updates](#)



A worker cleans a mural of the Queen above a row of flowers off Shankill Road in west Belfast. Photograph: Paul McErlane/The Guardian

Rory Carroll in Belfast

@rorycarroll72

Fri 9 Sep 2022 11.55 EDTFirst published on Fri 9 Sep 2022 04.24 EDT

Political leaders across Ireland and [Northern Ireland](#) have hailed the Queen's role in applying balm to centuries of conflict between nationalism and unionism as one of the most consequential uses of her symbolic power.

Grief was most viscerally expressed in loyalist and unionist areas of Northern [Ireland](#), where murals of the late monarch turned into shrines and gathering points for people to share memories.

Joy Crawford, 51, after laying a bouquet off Shankill Road in Belfast, said: “She meant everything, she was like a second mum. It’s very sad. We’re not going to see her smile again.” Crawford’s commitment to the crown remained undimmed. “It won’t change what I am. I’ll always be British,” she said.

Crawford wore a waistcoat adorned with pictures of the Queen. Beside the mural, which showed a young Queen, a new image appeared overnight showing her in her later years, alongside an epitaph reading: “The people’s Queen is dead, 1926–2022.”

Julie Beckett, 55, said she felt devastated. “I don’t think we’ve processed it. You always imagined she’d be here for ever. She was doing her duty right up to the very end,” she said.

Others laid wreaths outside Hillsborough Castle, a royal residence in County Down. “Ma’am, you served us all graciously. Thank you. Rest easy,” said a note in the name of Neil and Karen McGran. Gladys Reid, 67, said the emotion came in waves. “I was making a cup of tea this morning and the tears just came,” she said.



Gladys and John Reid pay their respects to the Queen at Hillsborough Castle. Photograph: Paul McErlane/The Guardian

Her husband, John, 66, a retired Royal Air Force police officer, said her death was numbing. “She was my commander-in-chief. We were always toasting the Queen,” he said.

Politicians on both sides of the border recalled her landmark [visit to Dublin](#) in 2011, when the Irish people gave her a rapturous welcome, as well as her [handshake in 2012](#) with Martin McGuinness, the IRA leader turned deputy first minister.

Both occasions represented high-water marks in relations between Britain and Ireland, and turned the crown, once synonymous with imperial power and the antithesis of republicanism, into a vehicle for reconciliation.

Sir Jeffrey Donaldson, the leader of the Democratic Unionist party, said people across Northern Ireland were deeply sorrowful: “This is just the saddest news and our hearts are breaking. There is no doubt Her Majesty the Queen played a very important role in helping to build reconciliation. Her visit to Dublin was a cathartic moment in the history of British-Irish relations.”

The Queen's death comes at a fraught time for unionists and loyalists, who have been rattled by the post-Brexit [Irish Sea border](#) and calls for a [referendum on Irish unity](#). Many considered the Queen a symbol and safeguard of their British identity.

Mary Lou McDonald, the leader of Sinn Féin, saluted the late monarch as an advocate for peace. "The Queen saw and was part of very big changes. It is a very big loss," she told RTÉ.

The taoiseach, Micheál Martin, said the 2011 state visit to the Republic of Ireland, when the Queen spoke Irish and [laid a wreath](#) for Irish rebels, helped normalise relations. "That visit was a great success, largely because of the many gracious gestures and warm remarks made by the Queen," he said. She led by quiet and dignified example, he added.

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Leo Varadkar, Ireland's deputy prime minister, said the visit had a profound impact. "It was a high point in British-Irish relations and she made that possible," he added.



Sinn Féin's Michelle O'Neill, first minister designate, signs a book of condolence. Photograph: Paul Faith/AFP/Getty Images

The Queen's promotion of reconciliation, notably the handshake with McGuinness – an image that went around the world – resonated all the more given the IRA's [murder of her cousin](#) Lord Mountbatten in 1979.

Not everyone was mourning. On the Falls Road in west Belfast, a nationalist and Catholic area, some people shrugged.

"I can't watch the news any more. It means nothing to me," said Sean Duffy. "Fair play to the lady, she lived a long life. But what did she do for the working class?"

Another member of the Duffy family, who withheld his first name, said he danced a jig upon hearing the news of her death. "I was just being an idiot. I didn't mean any harm," he added.

The Facebook page of a pub in a nationalist area briefly advertised a party to celebrate the death of "Lizzy". It was taken down but screengrabs were shared in loyalist areas, prompting condemnation.

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British Gas owner plans to cap profits to cut energy bills

Exclusive: Centrica chief tells the Guardian he is keen for it to sign up to new contracts with government on electricity generation



Last month British Gas announced it will donate 10% of its profits to help its poorer customers manage rising gas and electricity bills. Photograph: Rui Vieira/PA

[Alex Lawson](#) Energy correspondent

Sat 10 Sep 2022 01.00 EDT

British Gas owner [Centrica](#) plans to voluntarily cap booming profits in an effort to cut household bills and defuse outrage over them, the Guardian can reveal.

The chief executive, Chris O’Shea, said he is keen for Centrica to become the “first company” to sign up to new, renegotiated contracts with the government on its electricity generation, amid controversy over windfall gains.

As part of Liz Truss’s £150bn energy bills freeze, renewable and nuclear power generators will be asked to supply electricity below current market rates – but the new prime minister has refused to impose a windfall tax on them.

Ministers plan to “negotiate” with generators on older wind, solar and nuclear contracts, which have benefited from windfall gains as the price of gas has soared, to persuade them to switch to newer, less lucrative deals, which lock in lower prices in return for guaranteed long-term income.

As well as being the UK’s biggest supplier of gas and electricity to households via British Gas, Centrica is also a big generator via its 20% stake in Britain’s nuclear power stations.

O’Shea said Centrica is willing to switch the five nuclear plants to the new-style contracts. He said he was even prepared to draw up long-term contracts with the government for Centrica’s North Sea gas fields, which are not covered by the initiative and have already been subject to the windfall tax announced earlier this year by the then chancellor, Rishi Sunak. North Sea oil and gas extraction does not currently receive subsidies.

O’Shea said he had discussed the idea, backed by industry body [Energy UK](#), with the government and talks are ongoing. “We are in this business for the long term. We’re not in this business to maximise our profit this year,” he said.

Energy firms have supported the “contracts for difference” (CfD) proposals, which give investors certainty over the levels of returns they can receive, potentially years after the energy crisis has abated.



Chris O'Shea said Centrica was ‘in this business for the long-term’.
Photograph: Gary Calton/The Observer

However, the Resolution Foundation has warned that the policy risked “delaying but locking in” windfall gains. There are concerns that the government negotiating team, led by the former head of the vaccines taskforce, Madelaine McTernan, is in a weak position as it will need to convince generators to forgo high short-term prices.

O’Shea declined to say what proportion of its profits he was prepared to relinquish or how much the company hopes to receive from government. He told the Guardian: “Sometimes if you go to the government and propose you take a lower price they look at you like there must be something else in it for you.

“We are obviously in this business to create value for all of our stakeholders, customers, country [and] colleagues. But it’s not about maximising this year’s profits; it’s about having a long-term sustainable business.

“We supply more than 8m homes and businesses in the UK with energy – if they can’t afford their energy, we don’t have a sustainable business. And so when you think about this holistically … if we put something like a CfD regime in place for existing assets then, God forbid, if this ever happens

again and we see prices go where they go, there's an automatic adjustment mechanism.”

O’Shea said the “risky” nature of commodity markets can hang over investments. “If you put a floor on the price that can be achieved, you eliminate a huge amount of the risks,” he added.

Centrica holds its 20% stake in Britain’s nuclear fleet through a joint venture with France’s EDF, which is also understood to be supportive of the proposals.

The scale of the windfall from surging gas prices was underlined in July when Centrica [reported first-half operating profits of £1.3bn](#) and handed £59m to shareholders. The company said it had seen an 11% gain in volumes of nuclear power generated in the first half of 2022. It said the price achieved for nuclear power had risen from £46.5 a megawatt hour in 2021 to £110.4/MWh.

The company posted a surge in half-year profits from the division containing its exploration and production, and nuclear operations – reaching £906m, up from £75m.

O’Shea said that alternative suggestions to cap wholesale gas prices could “distort the market massively and have perverse consequences”.

Asked if he was backing the CfD proposal to fend off a potential windfall tax, O’Shea responded: “A windfall tax by its nature is a one-off. It doesn’t fix the structure of the market. We’re trying to solve the same issue in a way that’s sustainable.”

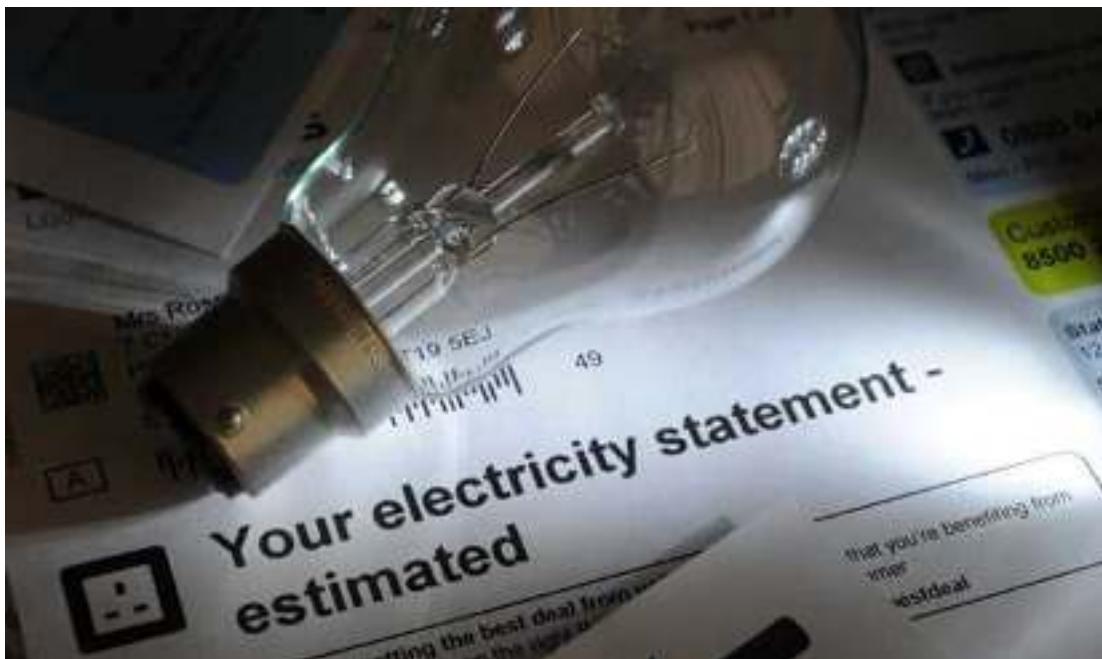
Last month British Gas announced it [will donate 10% of its profits to help its poorer customers manage rising gas and electricity bills](#) for the “duration of the energy crisis”.

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Energy bills

Mourning period will not delay energy bill freeze, says No 10

Government says it can finalise £100bn policy before 1 October energy price rise in spite of parliament closure



The government plans to freeze average energy bills at £2,500 a year.
Photograph: Rosemary Roberts/Alamy

Rowena Mason Deputy political editor

Fri 9 Sep 2022 12.25 EDT Last modified on Fri 9 Sep 2022 13.58 EDT

Liz Truss's plans to legislate for a £100bn package of help with energy bills will not be affected by 10 days of national mourning for the Queen, despite parliament being cancelled for the next week, Downing Street has said.

The government is postponing most business until after the Queen's funeral, but Truss's team needs to implement the package before the energy price rise that is due to come into force on 1 October.

Parliament is unlikely to return until after the Queen's funeral, with the earliest possible dates being 19 or 20 September. However, it is due to break up again on 22 September for its party conference recess, and Truss is supposed to be in New York for the UN general assembly for part of that week.

On Friday, Downing Street said plans would be put in place to ensure the support package was made available in time, and suggested that legislation would not be needed for the £2,500 cap on average bills to be put in place.

"The public should be reassured that the energy price guarantee will be in place for households from 1 October, as planned," Truss's official spokesperson said.

"We're implementing that guarantee initially through private contracts with suppliers rather than through legislation, so this mourning period doesn't impact that introduction.

"We're working urgently now on the wider aspects of the policy to ensure it can be delivered. As it stands, we do not believe the mourning period would impact on delivery of the policy, neither do we think it requires any sort of legislative moments during the mourning period.

"We will be working with the Speaker to introduce any legislation that is required for as soon as possible after the mourning period concludes."

With ministers holding back from outlining further details during the mourning period, energy suppliers are expected to contact customers before 1 October to explain how the announcement affects them.

Truss also announced an immediate lifting of the fracking ban in England this week, despite the Conservative manifesto promising not to do so unless it was scientifically proven to be safe amid concerns over earthquakes.

However, a British Geological Survey review into the safety of extracting shale gas was postponed from its scheduled publication on Thursday. Downing Street said this would now not be published until after the

mourning period. A No 10 spokesperson said it would come “as soon as that period has concluded”.

The party conference season has already been affected by the national mourning, as the Trades Union Congress conference due to take place in Brighton next week has been postponed.

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The Liberal Democrats conference is also hanging in the balance as that is scheduled for the week afterwards, potentially clashing with the Queen’s funeral, which is likely to be on Sunday 18 or Monday 19 September. Party sources suggested it was unlikely to be delayed until another time but could be curtailed or cancelled.

The Labour conference, which is due to start on Sunday 25 September in Liverpool, is thought to be very likely to go ahead.

One Tory source put the chances of the Conservative party conference going ahead in Birmingham from Sunday 2 October at 85-90%, with a decision “in the next few days”.

Conversations between the whips of the parties have taken place on the possibility of cancellation of the entire season, with one source saying the Tories seemed keenest on the idea of postponement, but that there had been no agreement and ultimately the main two parties were expected to proceed.

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[Ukraine war liveUkraine](#)

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Metropolitan police

New Met chief boosts ‘Line of Duty’ unit to root out prejudice and corruption

Exclusive: Mark Rowley has 100-day plan to turn force around after it was placed into special measures



Mark Rowley in 2017. Photograph: Justin Tallis/AFP/Getty Images

Vikram Dodd *Police and crime correspondent*

Sat 10 Sep 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 10 Sep 2022 05.37 EDT

[The new Metropolitan police commissioner](#) is recruiting scores of new investigators to root out prejudiced and corrupt officers, the *Guardian* has learned.

Mark Rowley starts on Monday and will launch a 100-day plan to turn Britain’s biggest force around after it became mired in repeated crises and

was humiliatingly judged to be so poor it was placed into special measures by the official inspectorate.

He replaces [Cressida Dick](#), who was ousted in February with the Met facing demands from government and the London mayor to radically reform and drop its defensiveness.

Rowley aims to increase the proportion of crimes the Met solves and boost the number of officers in local neighbourhoods to build relations. He is seeking to lift public confidence, which crashed in the last five years under Dick.

The big drive against prejudiced and corrupt officers will see a boost of more than 30% in the number of investigators in the Met's own "Line of Duty unit", known as the directorate of professional standards (DPS).

Scandals that rocked the Met and public trust in it include a serving officer kidnapping, raping and murdering Sarah Everard in March 2021.

There have been scandals over vile hate messages exchanged between officers on social media platforms, some bragging about violence against women, some overtly racist and in one case swapping images taken by officers at the scene where two sisters lay murdered.

Rowley's plans will see more than 130 new investigators recruited into DPS, with more covert work planned and its technical capabilities improved. It will also have faster and more comprehensive access to intelligence systems.

As well as catching more wrongdoing, senior officers in the new Met regime hope the extra investigators will dramatically slash the time it takes to bring discipline hearings against officers suspected of offences.

The plans involve more rigorous monitoring of work phones and computers for signs of wrongdoing. Rowley has decided against, for now, extending that to random checks on personal devices.

The extra officers investigating wrongdoing risk a flurry of cases generating damaging headlines, but the calculation among the new Met leadership is

they want to demonstrate a new determination to clamp down on toxic cultures blighting the force. One insider said: “It will get worse before it gets better.”

Rowley replaces Cressida Dick whose five-year term as commissioner ended with her resignation after she alienated both the [Home Office](#) and, crucially, London mayor Sadiq Khan. The London mayor lost faith she could enact reforms quickly or radically enough, but a report last week found he had effectively constructively dismissed Dick.

In truth pledging rapid reforms were a crucial promise anyone hoping to succeed Dick as Met commissioner had to make and act on.

The advert for Met commissioner published by both the Conservative-run Home Office and Labour mayor of [London](#), demanded the “rooting out unacceptable behaviour at all levels, including misogyny, racism and homophobia”.

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The advert, reflecting the view in the Home Office and City Hall, called for reform of the “institutional culture”, and [the restoration of “public confidence”](#) and “legitimacy” in Britain’s biggest force.

The findings of the inquiries into the Met and its culture, one ordered by the force itself and the other by government, will be delayed because of legal reasons.

Outgoing home secretary Priti Patel, who after consulting Khan appointed Rowley, sent an open letter this weekend demanding radical changes from the new commissioner, who is paid £293,000 a year.

Patel called for “extensive reform” and demanded Rowley “promote better leadership and higher standards at every level throughout the force”.

Patel added: “Londoners need to be assured that improvements are being made immediately and will have an impact. I expect the MPS, under your leadership, clearly to demonstrate that it will learn from the appalling mistakes of the past and move the culture away from the organisational defensiveness that has hindered progress and damaged public trust.”

Rowley, 57, a former head of counter-terrorism, left the Met in 2018 and returns after time in the private sector. He has vowed to be “ruthless in removing those who are corrupting our integrity”.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/sep/10/new-met-chief-boasts-line-of-duty-unit-to-root-out-prejudice-and-corruption-mark-rowley>.

2022.09.10 - Spotlight

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‘I’m not a shaman – I just want to help people’: shoe designer Patrick Cox on his psychedelic toad awakening

[Hadley Freeman](#)



Patrick Cox with his dog Titus at his home in Ibiza. T-shirt, from the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies. Photograph: Karl Grant/The Guardian

The celebrity shoemaker was a fixture of the 90s London scene, then after the collapse of his business – and his mental health – he found salvation from a very unlikely source ...



[@HadleyFreeman](#)

Sat 10 Sep 2022 05.00 EDT

‘This morning in my garden I picked literally *kilos* of tomatoes. *What am I supposed to do with kilos of tomatoes?!*’ asks [Patrick Cox](#), once one of the most famous shoemakers in the world, as he drives me to his home in Ibiza, which he shares with his beloved pit bull, Titus. “It’s got solar panels and a well. So I’m pretty much completely off grid, which is the dream.”

Once, this would have been Cox’s nightmare. “Getting up at 5am to do the gardening? When I was 30, I’d have been like: ‘What the fuck is wrong with you?!’” he says, and makes one of his bend-forward-at-the-belly big laughs. Back in the 90s and early 2000s, Cox, now 59, was shoemaker to the moneyed – through his high-end Patrick Cox line – and the masses, with his cheaper, mega-selling brand Wannabe, whose chunky loafers became the

defining footwear of the era. Spindly stilettos by Manolo Blahnik might have made more appearances on *Sex and the City*, but at their peak Wannabe loafers sold 1m pairs a year. Cox's handsome, impish face was frequently photographed at all the A-list parties. He was Elizabeth Hurley's plus-one on the red carpet, best friends with Elton John and David Furnish. "I was the last one every night to hang up my disco shoes," he says. He wasn't nicknamed [Party Pat](#) by Janet Jackson for nothing.



Patrick Cox in his Toronto store in 1992. At their peak, his Wannabe loafers sold 1m pairs a year. Photograph: Getty Images

Then suddenly, he seemed to disappear. Out of the blue, he emailed me this summer and wrote that he's working on a documentary about his new life as a toad facilitator. "A toad *what*!?" Cox himself would have once replied. A toad facilitator is someone who helps people while they smoke toad poison, also known as 5-MeO-DMT, the strongest hallucinogen known to man.

"I know, it's such a cliche: 'Patrick moves to Ibiza and becomes a shaman.' But I am not a shaman and never will be. I just want to be part of something that is helping people," he says.

Helping them to smoke toad poison?

"I am aware of how ridiculous it can seem, but I don't care."

I always had this voice in my head that I wasn't good enough. But this isn't some sob story. I had an amazing time. Until it stopped

It's my first day in Ibiza and Cox has kindly picked me up from the airport to spare me the taxi queue. When I last saw him, 15 years ago, he was wearing a smart suit. Despite being Canadian, Cox always dressed like the nattiest of Englishmen. Today, he's wearing a button-down shirt with a magic mushroom print and loose, tie-dyed trousers. "Welcome to the Toad-mobile!" he says as we climb into his bright green Jeep. Instead of his once-signature brogues, he is wearing a pair of multicoloured slip-ons made out of, he says, "old carpets". Did he change his wardrobe when he changed his career? "Ha! My friends ask that, but I've had a lot of these clothes for 20 years. I'm just putting them together in a different way now," he says with the cackle that punctuates most of his sentences.

Cox lost his eponymous shoe line in 2007 due to various business shenanigans. "We went into kind of, like, this bankruptcy state. It gets very technical," he explains. Suffice to say, there was overexpansion, a new CEO and an investor who ended up taking over the company. "Then I got hit by a car and spent six weeks in hospital. It was bad, bad, bad," he says. He'd already lost Wannabe a few years earlier when the Italian factory where the shoes were made "ended up being taken over by the mafia. I didn't go back to that part of Italy for a few years, let's just say, ha ha ha!" In his small but very pretty home in Ibiza, there are occasional mementoes from the glory days: photos of old friends such as Kylie Minogue and Natalie Imbruglia; pictures in the bathroom of him with [Elton John](#), Elizabeth Hurley and ... the Queen. "That was from some event called something like Canadians of Note, when Canadians who had made a contribution to the country were invited to the Palace. David Furnish and I were like: 'Who besides us will be there?!'" he says. (A lot of Canadians who work in the foreign service turned out to be the answer.)



Cox at home in Ibiza, where he moved in 2017. Photograph: Karl Grant/The Guardian

But in the main, his home feels blissfully far from the frenetic London world he once lived in and loved. Cox moved to Ibiza in 2017, and he has resisted the usual decor clichés of the island: instead of wind chimes, he has 18th-century plaster casts of ancient Greek friezes on the walls. “I bought them in the south of France with Elton,” he says. “For the first time, I managed to get something before Elton got them, because shopping with him is *insane*. You see something you like and he’s already bought six of them.”

Outside, Titus sleeps in the sun. Despite Cox’s previous aversion to gardening, he has a garden that verges on Eden-like behind his house, with orange and lemon trees, and rows of artichokes, courgettes, onions, carrots. It looks like absolute paradise, I tell him. “Well, if you’d come in 2018 you’d have found me lying on the floor where you’re standing now. I was crying, beyond depressed, I couldn’t even stand up. I was completely desperate,” he says, then takes a pause. “Let’s sit down, because this will take a while.” And for the next several days, we sit on his terrace and we talk.

Cox was born in Edmonton, Alberta, and his childhood was complicated. His father worked as a teacher overseas, and by the time Cox was eight he

had lived in Nigeria, Chad and Cameroon, with moves back to Canada in between each posting. In 1971, Cox's mother left his father, and when she landed back in Alberta with her two young sons, she discovered her husband had cut off all their financial support. Cox went from living in relative luxury in the southern hemisphere to being a latchkey kid in a two-room basement in western Canada, and he wouldn't see his father for another decade. His mother struggled to cope. (He is now on good terms with her and has made efforts to re-establish a relationship with his father.) He left home as soon as he could at 17 – a gay, disco-loving, fashion-obsessed teenager already looking for the party. He moved to Toronto, and from there to London to study shoe design in 1983.



With Boy George in 1987. Photograph: Getty Images

His progress through the British fashion world is like a snapshot of the 1980s London style scene in all its ramshackle glory. He first worked for Vivienne Westwood, after meeting some of her employees in the bathroom of a club. He made moccasins by hand for the influential label BodyMap, and then worked for John Galliano after they bonded at the now-legendary 80s nightclub Taboo over a shared love of Madonna. ("We did the whole Like a Virgin routine, and John was always Madonna and I was always one of the backing boys.") He launched his own label when he was in his mid-20s, and it did pretty well, selling around 3,000 pairs a season. But when he

started Wannabe in the mid-90s, he went stratospheric. Before he had to work in his own stores to keep them going, but now he had to hire doormen to keep the crowds at bay. “I knew Elton because he came to my store and bought more shoes than anyone I’ve ever met in my life. Elizabeth came to my store. And these people are still my best, best friends,” he says.

If you were even vaguely interested in style in the late 90s and early 00s, Cox seemed ubiquitous: he helped to fund the magazine *Wallpaper**, which was created by his then boyfriend Tyler Brûlé; he had stores around the world, adverts in every magazine. He was friends with everyone because he was fun to be around, and he still is: in all our time together, we drink nothing stronger than water, but he never runs out of energy, always full of “OK, now *this* is *really* off the record” anecdotes. I can’t even imagine what he was like when he was still, as he puts it, “partying”.

Does he mean “partying” in the euphemistic sense?

“Yeah, yeah, cocaine, drinking – let’s blow that euphemism apart,” he says. But despite his success he was riddled with self-doubt: “I always had this voice in my head that I wasn’t good enough, that I didn’t know what I was doing. Even when I won accessories designer of the year twice [at the British Fashion Awards], I thought: ‘Well, they made a mistake.’”

Did that voice come from his parents?

“Yeah. Telling me that I wasn’t good enough. But look, this isn’t some sob story. I had an amazing time. Until it stopped.”

I felt I had to please everyone, to prove I wasn’t as worthless as I knew I was. Then it all collapsed. Who even was I now?

When Cox lost his labels, he had a breakdown. He became so agoraphobic he couldn’t leave his house in west London, and when his PA eventually dragged him to therapy, he clung desperately to the lamp-post in the road. “Ever since I was four, I felt like I had to please everyone, trying to prove to myself that I wasn’t as worthless as I knew I was. And then it all collapsed. Who even was I now?” he says. He had been single since breaking up with

Brûlé in 1997, “because how can you love someone when you can’t love yourself?” He went through [the Hoffman Process](#), an intensive seven days of therapy that participants are not allowed to discuss afterwards, but Cox sums it up as “you prosecute your parents”. They patched him up enough that afterwards he was able to dabble in some ventures: he opened a saucy bakery in London called Cox, Cookies & Cake (“As in cock, balls and fanny,” he explains helpfully), and designed shoes occasionally for other brands. But he had made enough money in fashion to not have to work very much at all, and in 2017 decided he needed another change, so he and his two bulldogs, Brutus and Caesar, moved to Ibiza – where he later got Titus. “It was great at first. But then this cunt called Patrick Cox followed me out here,” he says.



In 2019 with Elizabeth Hurley, who staged an intervention with Elton John and David Furnish when Cox hit his lowest point. Photograph: Getty Images

He went into a severe depression, triggered when Brutus suddenly died in Ibiza while Cox was back in London for Kylie Minogue’s 50th birthday. “So I had that extra self-flagellation of feeling like: so not only has my dog died, but it happened while I was in London at a pop star’s birthday, doing things I didn’t want to be doing any more. I mean, Kylie is a friend, not just some pop star, but yeah. I completely flipped out,” he says. He talked to friends about wanting to kill himself. “Elizabeth is so no-nonsense, so she was like:

‘Well, you are NOT doing that.’ Then unbeknownst to me, she called David and Elton and said: ‘I think we need to do an intervention.’”

By now, Elton John has a long record of swooping in and packing substance-addicted celebrities off to rehab, sometimes successfully (Eminem, Rufus Wainwright, Donatella Versace), sometimes less so (George Michael replied to [Elton’s offer of assistance](#) in an open letter: “Elton John needs to shut up and get on with his life”). Cox didn’t think drugs were his problem, but he was grateful for any help, so Elton sent in the cavalry, which in this case meant his private plane. “He knew I wouldn’t leave Ibiza without Caesar, especially after what had happened to Brutus, so he very kindly sent the plane for us,” he says, and he shows me photos on his phone of a nonplussed bulldog sitting in a private plane. When they landed in England, Elton’s bodyguard drove off with Caesar in a Bentley to stay with the pop star and his family, and Cox was packed off to rehab.

He pauses at this point and walks me around the side of his house. There, under a tree, is Caesar’s gravestone, the bulldog who went on more private planes than I ever will. Next to that is the one for Brutus. Cox is still single, and while he may struggle with accepting love from a partner, he has no such difficulties when it comes to his dogs, and he becomes a little tearful when talking about the ones that are gone. It is possibly no coincidence that it was when Caesar’s health started to fail in the summer of 2019 that Cox discovered what he always calls “toad”.

Rehab stopped Cox from killing himself, but he was too much of a cynic to buy into the [12-step programme](#). “I kept saying: ‘What is this, a Moonie cult? I understand you’ve saved millions of people’s lives, but you do have a huge failure rate. There must be something more,’” he says.

In the past decade, there has been an enormous amount of research into whether psychedelics can alleviate mental health conditions, especially depression, anxiety and PTSD. Of course for every medical study proving the psychological benefits of LSD, you can find an anecdote about someone losing their mind after a bad acid trip. But the theory that psychedelics can be beneficial has definitely gone mainstream. Cox had always been sceptical about the grand claims people make for psychedelics: “I thought it was

people just wanting to be high,” he says. But he tried microdosing LSD and was amazed at the instant impact on his mental state. But, he complained to a friend, it aggravated his stomach. “Maybe you should try some toad,” his friend replied.

Toad – or 5-MeO-DMT – is found in the poison of *Bufo alvarius*, a toad native to the Sonoran desert in Mexico. To extract it, the toads are “milked”, and the poison is then dried, and when it is smoked in a pipe the heat burns off the poison (so don’t go around licking toads, unless you want to be poisoned). The milking doesn’t hurt the toads, although it does potentially leave them defenceless against predators. But 5-MeO-DMT can also be made synthetically, and while some toad purists balk at that, Cox says the synthetic version is just as good as the natural version, but much stronger. Like all psychedelics, it is non-addictive, but it still comes with massive risks: a handful of people are known to [have died from smoking toad](#), and anyone with heart or kidney conditions, or a predisposition to psychosis or schizophrenia, should stay well away. It is extremely fast acting and very strong – up to six times stronger than the better-known and similarly named hallucinogen DMT, which is why it has become known as the “Mount Everest of psychedelics”, as one bestselling book about psychedelics put it. Fans of toad insist that, despite its reputation, it’s a lot easier to handle than other hallucinogens. Unlike mushrooms and LSD, its effects only last for about 15 minutes, and unlike ayahuasca, there is no vomiting and purging. They claim there is no hangover or comedown afterwards, but rather they feel clear-headed and calm. I heard about one 5-MeO-DMT fan who smokes it an hour before doing the afternoon school run, as if she were grabbing an extra latte.

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Some of his friends are sceptical: ‘They’re like: You call it doing the work and holding space, Patrick. But it’s called taking drugs’

There is no evidence that smoking toad poison was part of any ancient indigenous tradition. Instead, it is a late 20th-century discovery, and one that is now rocketing in popularity: [Mike Tyson](#), of all people, said smoking toad has helped him to be “more creative”. It is illegal to possess and distribute 5-MeO-DMT in the US and UK, and it is illegal to supply it in Spain, and in recent years [several people have been arrested](#) there for hosting toad ceremonies; in 2020, several people, including the porn actor Nacho Vidal, [were arrested](#) after a photographer died at a toad ceremony in Valencia. Vidal was later charged for reckless homicide – he maintains his innocence. But there are a growing number of “toad retreats”, on which the wealthy pay thousands of pounds to go to Central or South America – where toad is legal – to smoke it. It is likely that toad will go the same way ayahuasca has over the past decade – not mainstream exactly, but commodified and something a certain type of person likes to tick off their bucket list, along with bungee jumping in Australia and off-piste skiing in Japan. It is, allegedly, already popular among Silicon Valley titans.

In his 2018 book [How To Change Your Mind: the New Science of Psychedelics](#), the award-winning writer Michael Pollan says his experience of smoking toad was “just horrible”, but it also gave him “a sense of relief so vast and deep as to be cosmic”. Unlike with DMT, acid and mushrooms, you don’t have visions. “It’s an experiential drug. You don’t see things when you take it. You experience them,” says Cox. And he experienced them so deeply that when he came round after taking it he found that, for the first time in his life, “I didn’t hate myself any more. There was nothing wrong with me. I’d never known that before. And now I did.” [Studies have shown](#) that 5-MeO-DMT has a psychotherapeutic effect, with some people feeling “greater life satisfaction” after trying it.



Cox with his friends Elton John and David Furnish in 2015. Photograph: Getty Images

Cox smokes toad on average once a month “the way some people might go to church or mosque or synagogue”, he says. Because toad is not about getting high, but healing and “doing the work” – exploring what toad shows him. I assumed that being a “toad facilitator” was someone who sells toad poison – a drug dealer, in other words – but it turns out to be more like a drug doula: he “holds the space” for people who smoke it, a psychedelic term for sitting with someone who is smoking and making sure they feel safe. “Watching someone go through these huge transformations – there’s nothing better than that,” says Cox with feeling. He himself has gone through a huge transformation. His devotion to toad was so quick and full-hearted that he was chosen by Cesar Reyes, a very experienced toad facilitator, to be his apprentice (Reyes, 49, died last December from cancer; memories of him spark even more tears from Cox than references to Brutus and Caesar). He no longer drinks alcohol or does any drugs (other than toad) because, he says, they sever the feeling of connection he gets from toad. When he visited Elton John and Furnish in 2019, they told him they hadn’t seen him so happy in years, and he told them he had started smoking toad.

No one was a bigger cynic than me about psychedelics. Sometimes I hear what comes out of my mouth now and I’m like: Oh my God, shut

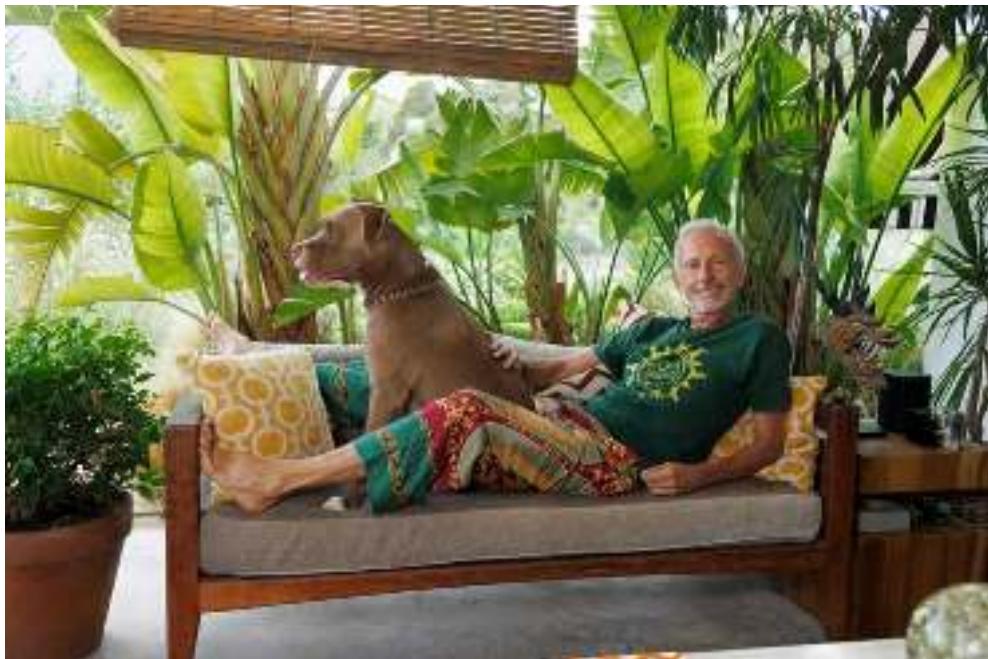
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“Well, I’m really glad we paid for you to go to rehab, Patrick, because it sounds like you’re doing a shitload of drugs,” the singer said drily.

“But then he said: ‘If you’re happy, who am I to judge’, which I thought was just beautiful,” Cox says.

Some of his other friends are a little more sceptical: “They’re like: ‘You call it ‘doing the work’ and ‘holding space’, Patrick. But it’s called taking drugs,’” he laughs, conceding the point a little.

Before I flew to Ibiza, my editor expressly warned me not to go gonzo and smoke 5-MeO-DMT. But, I tell Cox, even after hours of talking to him, I still have so many questions about toad. Like, doesn’t he think he’s simply substituted a more powerful drug for less satisfying ones? When he says that the world would be better off if everyone smoked toad, is it possible that he has given himself brain damage from all these psychedelics? Cox is spending this autumn filming his documentary, even going to Mexico to see the toads. His commitment to spreading the word is impressive, but is he ready to give up his reputation as a talented shoe designer to be known as the crazy toad guy? “No one was a bigger cynic than me about psychedelics, and sometimes I hear the stuff that comes out of my mouth now and I’m like: ‘Oh my God, shut *up*!’ But trying to explain toad to someone who has never taken it is like trying to explain sex to someone who has only ever watched it,” he says. Pretty convenient fob-off, the sceptical side of my brain says. The curious part says: “Well, let’s smoke some toad, then.”



Wearing his toad T-shirt with Titus. Photograph: Karl Grant/The Guardian

Firmly ignoring my editor's instruction, I find someone, who I'll call C, who has toad, and I ask Cox to come with me to see him and keep me safe – to hold the space. He replies firmly that I'll first have to answer some questions. After ascertaining whether I have any history of cardiac problems, depression or psychosis (none all round), he asks if I've had any alcohol or narcotics in the past three days, whether I'm on selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs, a common kind of antidepressant, which combined with toad can lead to the potentially fatal serotonin syndrome), and if I'm just doing this to get high. I answer in the negative to all, so he agrees. I hand over €200 of my own money to C and he tells me to sit on a mat on the ground and to breathe through my mouth. He weighs a small amount of toad poison on a scale and puts it in the bulb of a glass pipe. Cox sits beside me and murmurs a blessing, touching each of my shoulders and my back, while C heats the bulb. As the poison smokes in the bulb, C tells me to take a deep inhale on the glass pipe. I think: "Am I really putting my life and my mind in the hands of Patrick Cox?" And then I don't think anything at all.

I expected to see fractals, wavy lines, kaleidoscopic colours – the things you might see on an LSD or mushroom trip. Instead, I fall into a darkness that goes beyond blackness, and my mind dissolves. This is what toad fans describe as "ego death". Somewhere, a bell rings, and I fall deeper and fly

higher, and then I experience something that I – normally hyper verbal to a fault – cannot describe.

After an unknowable amount of time (14 minutes, it turns out) the blue sky appears in the darkness, fragment by fragment. Cox is holding my hand, telling me that I am safe. I feel terrified and ecstatic. I look at Cox, and as tears stream down my face, I hear myself say to him, in a voice that doesn't sound like mine: "Now I understand."

It's my last day with Cox and we are back on his terrace. He's as chipper as ever and I feel, well, great: clear-headed, calm and full of energy. Is this the toad or just the effect of a trip to Ibiza? Cox says all psychedelic experiences are affected by "the set and the setting", ie your mindset and where you're doing it. Certainly something has had a strong impact on me, because it no longer seems entirely ridiculous that I smoked toad poison with the man who used to make my loafers.

Cox knows he has the zeal of a convert, and he tries to dial it down a little. When he first got into toad, he grew his hair long, diving into the psychedelic look. Then a friend stood him in front of a mirror and said: "Would *you* fuck you?" "Point taken!" he hoots at the memory. (Whatever toad has done to him, it has not – thankfully – taken away his sense of humour.) His focus now is to teach people how to do toad safely, and to try to keep it accessible to anyone who wants it, not just the 1% crowd. I ask if he'll ever go back to fashion and he recoils; instead, he's thinking of opening an animal sanctuary. A part of him would like to be part of "the psychedelic community", he says, but the same cynical mindset that resisted rehab pulls him away from joining this group, too: "There's a lot in that world that I don't agree with. I'm not a new ageist and I'm not a conspiracy theorist," he says. Easier just to explore things on his own without putting a label on it, he says.

People think change is only possible when you're younger, and who you are when you're 30 is who you are for ever, which is crazy

When I told a friend in the fashion world about my interview with Cox, they asked if I thought he had lost his mind. I don't. I think he's happy to have

found a purpose – to feel needed – after being adrift for so long, and I think he's relieved to feel as if there's something greater out there when he'd grown so jaded with the little world he knew. I also think there is something beyond explanation about toad. For the week after I smoked it, I felt calmer and slept better than I had in years. The thought of smoking it every month, as Cox does, blows my mind almost as much as the toad did. But doing it once a year, a kind of psychedelic MOT? That doesn't sound totally crazy to me any more. It's entirely possible that Cox is at the forefront of a new understanding of psychology and neurology. It's also possible that he's another guy who went to Ibiza and dropped out, and those two things aren't mutually exclusive.

Cox doesn't plan to smoke toad for ever, because the goal is to be able to access the feelings without the drug. "People think change is only possible when you're younger, and who you are when you're 30, that's who you are for ever, which is crazy," he says. When he was 30, he was a famous shoe designer. Now he's almost 60 and he's a toad facilitator. I don't know if we would all benefit from smoking toad poison, as he says, but I do think people would be happier if they had the freedom – and the courage – to keep evolving, as he has done. To not cling on to one identity, but to keep exploring, and to not care if we look, maybe, a bit ridiculous.

It's my last day and Cox is wearing trousers with an image of Jesus on them and a T-shirt with a giant picture of a toad on it. It matches the charm on his necklace. I hug him goodbye and ask one last question: doesn't he worry, just a little, about losing his mind on toad?

"Of course not, because I'll be happy," he grins, and the golden toad around his neck glints in the sun.

Patrick Cox's documentary, *The Road to Toad*, is due to be released in spring 2023.

In the UK and Ireland, Samaritans can be contacted on 116 123, or email jo@samaritans.org or jo@samaritans.ie. In the US, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is 1-800-273-8255. In Australia, the crisis support service Lifeline is 13 11 14. Other international helplines can be found at befrienders.org

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‘Whoever said the language of love is universal never lived in Germany’: British singles on the awkward truth about dating abroad

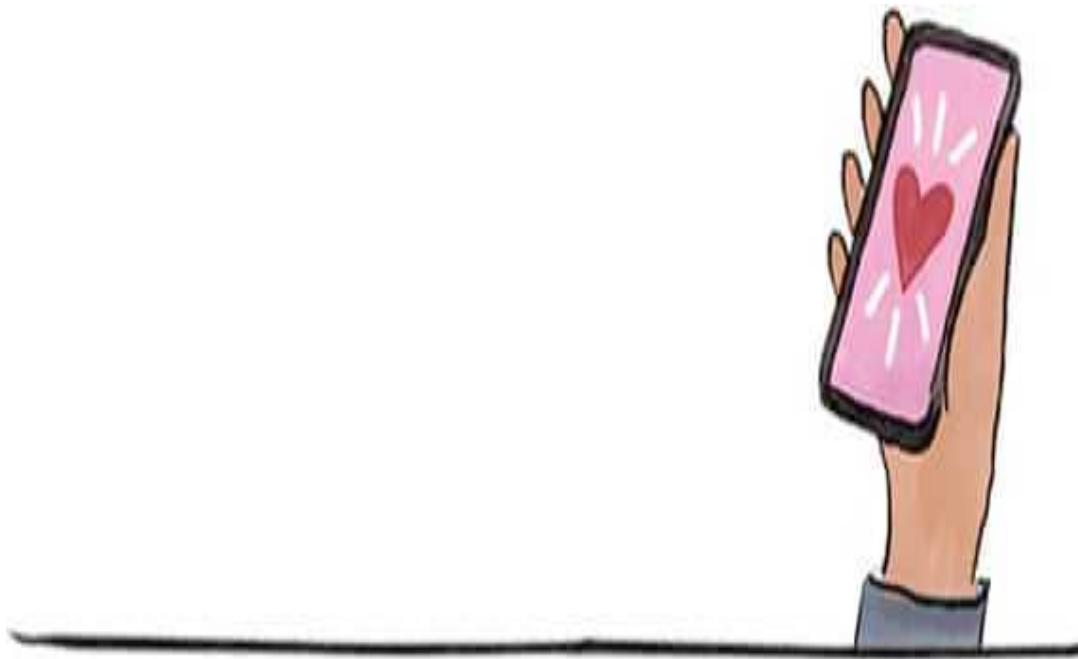


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As part of a global romance special, we asked six UK emigrants to share their stories of hooking up around the world, from Beirut to Berlin

- [Non-Brits on the boozy truth about dating in Britain](#)

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I have often seen the dreariest, most potato-like English men elevated to stud status

Adam Gabbatt, 36, New York City

Being a foreigner abroad doesn't necessarily make you interesting, but it does at least give you something to talk about. If, like me, you're a bit boring, you can still rely on someone at a party, or in a bar, or – once – in the shower at a swimming pool being curious about your origins. It can make you more desirable, too. When I was new to New York, an American woman overheard me in a deli asking for a blueberry "bun" rather than muffin. We chatted and she gave me her number. I lost it, but for the first time in my life I felt exotic.

In New York City, being British should be less interesting. Given the diversity of the city, and the alleged worldliness of its residents, there are a lot of New Yorkers who will claim to be above finding different nationalities interesting. But most of them are lying.

In New York City I have often seen the blandest, dreariest, most potato-like English men elevated to stud status (it's English people – typical – who benefit more than the Scottish, Welsh or Northern Irish). And they know it, too; there's a type of English man who has carved out a space for himself as being, well, English.

“Englishman in New York!” is his [Tinder](#) bio. There'll be a picture of him with a union flag or looking mock-bewildered in Times Square. Hang in enough bars and you'll hear English men on dates, often with women far too attractive for them, doing their best Hugh Grant impression and using words like “totty” and “crumpet”.

I've tried to avoid becoming the type of man whose entire personality revolves around being British, but my accent has almost certainly helped with my dating career, even if, as I'm from the north of England, Americans can find it difficult to place.

“Are you Australian? Are you from New Zealand?”

“Neither. I'm from Lancashire.”

“What's a Lancashire?”

When I introduced ‘my co-dater’ at a party, she shouted: ‘We're not dating!’ It turned out we were merely hanging out

The accusations of being from Australia are hard to come to terms with, and so is the fact that many Americans lack the self-deprecation of other nations. The reduced faux modesty on dates can be refreshing, but it takes a while to get used to. A few years ago I went on a date with a woman who was a fairly well-known – although I'd never heard of her – musician. About 20 minutes into our hang, she said, completely deadpan: “I'm kind of surprised you haven't heard of me.”

It took all my effort not to spray beer everywhere. Back home I'd have taken her comment for an excellent joke. But I got past it and we dated for more than a year.

It's not just the personalities that are different. In Britain you can end up going out with someone without really realising it. Hover around someone over a period of weeks. Get drunk together. Sleep together. Wake up with a girlfriend. Here the relationship is carefully defined, each stage with its own terminology and expected level of commitment. There's hooking up, hanging out, dating and "deleting the apps", like levels in some daft video game.

Hooking up, as far as I'm aware, means having sex, and only meeting to do so, usually at night. Hanging out is the next step. It's sort of the same thing, but sometimes you'll go to a movie beforehand, instead of a bar, and in the morning the person doesn't leave immediately, but might loiter for an hour or so.

Dating is a curious stage where you're not technically in a committed relationship but you're spending a lot of time together, including doing things in the day. At this point you may meet up to three of your love interest's friends. Deleting the apps can be done with or without the other person's consent.

The problem is, not everyone agrees on those definitions. I took someone to a friend's party and introduced her to a group as "my co-dater". She shouted, a little too loudly: "We're not dating!" It turned out we were merely hanging out.

The final challenge is commonly an uncomfortable conversation about exclusivity. The process involves talking openly and honestly about feelings and expectations, about concerns and jealousies and flaws.

Back home in England I once confirmed my relationship status by standing at a nightclub bar with a woman I was seeing and asking for "a blue WKD for my girlfriend". I looked at the woman hopefully, and she gave me a thumbs up. I had a girlfriend.

Here the conversation is much more intense: “What are your hopes and dreams? Where do you see yourself in five years? How do you feel about monogamy? What antidepressants do you take?” Ironically, given the clamour to date English men – however flawed, boring, doughy – it’s a style of dating, even a style of behaving, that many of us are entirely unprepared for.

Quick Guide

Get your coat: how to flirt in eight languages

Show

Italian

Se fossi un astronauta ti porterei sulla luna. Non lo sono, quindi ti accompagnerò a casa

If I were an astronaut I would take you to the moon. But as I’m not, I’ll walk you home instead

German

Ich habe meine Telefonnummer vergessen, kann ich deine haben?

I have lost my phone number. May I have yours?

Japanese

Kondo ocha shinai?

Shall we get tea next time?

Spanish

¿Te llamas Google? Porque eres todo lo que busco

Is your name Google? Because you are everything I’m looking for

Swahili

Una tabasumu nzuri

You have a beautiful smile

Arabic

Kalaamak ‘asal ‘ala qalbi

Your words are honey on my heart

Urdu

Tum jab pass hotey ho to yeh duniya khoobsoorat lagti hai
When you are near me the world feels beautiful

Yoruba

Ododo mi
My flower

Research: Sundus Abdi and Kitty Drake

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‘You’re being too British,’ my friend says. ‘If you want to have sex with them, just tell them’

Trish Lorenz, 50, Berlin

Last week I got a message on the Bumble dating app: “Which position do you prefer when riding a tandem?” For a moment I was confused. Perhaps it was one of these “quirky” starter questions the app sometimes throws up, I thought. Or a cheeky innuendo? I’ve spent most of my life in London, where banter and double entendre are integral to dating, but this is the first

suggestive message I've encountered while dating in Germany. I sent a slightly nudge-nudge, flirtatious reply.

I've lived in Berlin for two years now and, the city being what it is, I have dated architects, musicians, a film-maker, a DJ, a nurse and a fire-eating special needs teacher. They've all been friendly, mostly interesting, but the dates have been, well, a bit dull.

The stereotype that Germans are dour or humourless is completely wrong: I laugh with my friends here as hard and as often as I ever did in London. But where in Britain laughter is seen as an aphrodisiac, in Germany humour is low on the list when it comes to romance. Germans of both sexes prefer direct, earnest communication. As my German friends tell me: "Relationships are not a joke."

My very first date arrives by bike, having pedalled 50km to meet me. As an ice-breaker, I try a joke about his staying power, which is met with an assessment of his fitness-to-age ratio and the results of his recent health checkup. I change tack and ask where he lives, hoping for an insight into a town I've never visited. Instead, he shares details of his living arrangements and the emotional challenges of post-divorce childcare. He's genuine but it's very intense. When he asks about my relationship history, and I joke that no one has the time answering that question requires and try to change the subject to the weather, the date is effectively over.

Dating in Lisbon and Madrid was hot and steamy. But these men were fickle; the declarations came quickly but faded fast

It seems more promising when a DJ invites me to his apartment for our third date. Our first two have been walks across snow-covered parks during lockdown winter – we have long, interesting chats but no chance to indulge in anything more risque. This time I have hopes: flirtation, a few drinks, who knows where it might lead. When I arrive, he is baking a cake (Germans are crazily good bakers). It's delicious, but an evening of *kaffee und kuchen* saps all the frisson from the night.

Back on Bumble, a follow-up message: my match is confused by my flirtatious reply. It turns out he'd genuinely been curious about my tandem preference. Whoever said the language of love is universal never lived in Germany. Frustrated, I consult a German friend. "You're being too British," she says. "You need to be direct. If you want to have sex with them, just tell them."

"It doesn't work like that," I say. "I need them to help me want to have sex with them." I want them to make me laugh; I don't want their health records.

Wistfully I contemplate the previous five years, when I lived in Lisbon and Madrid. Dating was hot and steamy, filled with passion and flattery. "You are more beautiful than all the stars in the sky," one lover told me. But these men were also fickle; the declarations came quickly but faded as fast. Perhaps it just takes more time and sincerity to build a connection in Germany, I think. Maybe if I can embrace the earnestness early on, it can lead to a more authentic, deeper experience in the long run.

I decide to forgo British banter and Latin flirtation, and go for candour instead. I hit reply: "You'll never get me on a tandem. When it comes to cycling, I go it alone."

"OK," comes the reply. "Would you like to go for a ride on Saturday? Separate bikes!" The temptation to revert to suggestiveness is very hard to resist but I manage it. "Sounds good," I say.

Writing as Patricia Wolf, Trish Lorenz's debut novel, Outback, is published in November by Embla Books.



One of my dates has a boyfriend in Paris; another works for a terrorist organisation

Mark Valen, 42, Abidjan, Ivory Coast

“Hey, I just wanted to give you a tip for the next date. You should shave your beard. Ivorians don’t like men with big beards.” Dating as a gay man in Abidjan has been a learning experience. The beard comment came at the end of my first date with a translator. Up until then it had been fairly typical: we met on [Grindr](#), which is pretty established here, and entered a long “talking phase” which then moved to WhatsApp. After agreeing to eat at a barbecue restaurant, we met up to chat about our lives, what we are looking for, the usual dating patter.

I told him it was rude to comment on the appearance of someone you had only just met; he told me that I misunderstood him. Later an apology arrived by text, which I accepted before replying that I was not interested in seeing him again. In return, he explained why I was not as charming as I thought. *L’échapper belle* – dodged a bullet. Suffice to say there was no second date.

I’m Anglo-American, and since moving here in late 2019 to work as a journalist, I have found outspokenness is common. I have met lots of creative, interesting and dynamic people who are living their best lives in the

face of a state, families and churches that are not so accepting of homosexuality. But I've also found that gay first dates tend to be more full on because gay people are more open about difficult circumstances they face or have faced. Someone recently told me he is just looking for a local partner, because his boyfriend is in Paris; another that he is heartbroken because his ex's [prophetess](#) mother forced him to end the relationship. Another works for a group defined by many governments as a terrorist organisation. My dating life here has been a mix of the sensational and the mundane: sushi and a museum, Netflix and chill.

What Ivorians want from a relationship can be pretty explicit. A friend's WhatsApp status says what she cares about is money

Abidjan has a busy nightlife, and there are a few clubs that cater solely to the LGBTQ+ community. For foreigners, gay dating is more out in the open but there are often constraints for Ivorians. Most of the people I dated might be out to friends but not to family.

Many Ivorians, no matter their sexual orientation, enjoy sharing the rumour of the day or “reading” someone into the ground (read is slang for jokingly tearing a person apart with criticism). Like anywhere, they also juggle multiple partners, though the transactional side – what you want from someone or from a relationship – is often pretty explicit. Some Ivorians will even change their WhatsApp status to say as much: one feminist friend says she wants to share tasks and equality, another that what she cares about is the money.

Perhaps the greatest hurdle is that living (and dating) in Abidjan means operating in French. I speak French well, but it is a second language. I have also come to learn how small the circle of gay men is in Abidjan. When I shared that troubled first date story with my current – Ivorian – boyfriend, he simply asked: “Is the translator named Eric?” I replied, laughing: “Yes! Yes, he is!”



'I have a boyfriend,' she said. 'But yes, take my number'

Frank Andrews, 29, Paris

I would describe my time attempting to date online while living and studying in Paris from 2016-2020 as bruising. I had few matches and even fewer dates, my “young Brit on the run from Brexit” bio inexplicably getting me nowhere. I spoke French, but the short thing I had with a French girl I met at university petered out.

At night I lay in bed and swiped on Tinder and Bumble. It sounds dramatic, but waking up to no matches coloured my experience of the city. Paris can feel lonely and impenetrable, and something about the grand old city left me feeling I should be living some great, sophisticated revelry rather than traipsing home in the dark, eating an old pain au raisin.

Worse still, it seemed others were having a wild time. Maybe I would have felt the same without the apps, but the people ignoring my likes looked a lot like the people smoking cigarettes on rue de Buci. I didn’t know what was wrong with my profile. Was I too self-deprecating perhaps? Were there too few shared cultural references? Was Brexit a bit of a turnoff? Was it simply my pictures?

According to non-French friends still there, frustration on the apps is common and comes as a result of cultural differences. In Paris there is still some shame attached to the mechanical nature of online dating, particularly among those looking for relationships. By contrast, singles in the UK are often reliant on dating apps, whatever they're after. The Anglo-American culture of going on dates with strangers, where you drink and eat while sizing the other up, is also less prevalent – French people are more likely to approach someone in the street and then go for a drink.

At a theatre, I fumbled a ‘Bonjour’ to a girl waiting in the lobby. We went for a tentative meal ... then back to mine

There's also – at least compared with the UK – less of a culture of seeing several people at once. Though not always, proof of which came during one of my spiciest dating experiences. Predictably it started with a face-to-face encounter. During the intermission at a theatre, I fumbled a “Bonjour” to a girl waiting in the lobby. “I have a boyfriend,” she said before adding, in a comically French moment: “But yes, take my number.” We went for a tentative meal near République soon after, avoiding the subject of her relationship.

The date took a turn when we said goodbye at a Métro station – as we walked away we both stopped and turned back around. Neither of us wanted the night to end, we realised, so we went back to mine. We saw each other for a while, before and after her relationship ended. It didn't last, but in four years it was a rare moment of romance.



A power cut once trapped me in a date's lobby for hours

Daniel Hilton, 36, Beirut

At 27, life was not going to plan. I had no bed and no job. Any money I did make tutoring ancient history was ploughed into an increasingly untenable long-distance relationship with a girl in Stockholm.

Then a British friend living the life in Lebanon – or so it seemed – urged me to move there. Feeling lost, and with nothing keeping me here, I uprooted to Beirut in a week and quickly found work as a food writer at a magazine – a move that brought fresh professional and romantic possibilities.

Perhaps it was the newness of everything, perhaps it was the murderous July heat, but everything felt immediately thrilling – particularly dating. My first date in Beirut a couple of weeks after moving – a girl I met, rather old-fashioned, through friends – promised me she would show me around. I assumed she meant the redeveloped city centre, a flashy neoliberal jewel of French mandate-era sandstone facades and empty streets, but instead we wandered romantically around sidestreets, disturbing cats quietly eating out of bins. We saw each other for a few weeks until she moved abroad.

Cast your net wide enough and Israeli soldiers appear, gripping assault rifles, with glossy ponytails swept to one side

I had packed appallingly, prioritising my antique coin collection rather than clothes, so for my first few months in Lebanon I seemed to dress mostly in rags. Yet despite this, and the near-constant sunburn I waved away as a “terracotta” tan, people wanted to hang out with me. Romance now involved dinners of ice-cream and ashta (clotted cream) on narrow stairs under a riot of bougainvillaea. In Beirut, romantic getaways to pine-scented mountains or coastal orchards are accessible and affordable. Occasionally the state’s dysfunction intervened: a power cut once trapped me in a date’s lobby for hours (the doors were electric). I had forgotten her flat number and my phone was dead. I appealed to a passerby for help through a window. He said: “This is Lebanon – never forget where you are” before walking on.

Tinder washed up on Lebanon’s shores a few months after I did, but my first attempts were unsuccessful and I didn’t get past swipes. Many women seemed terrifyingly glamorous, some only had images of roses on their profiles, and if you cast your net wide enough to cross the border, Israeli soldiers began to appear, gripping assault rifles, with glossy ponytails swept to one side.

I did end up in a relationship without Tinder’s help, though: everyone was sort of jumbled up together in bars and at house parties, and there were always new people arriving in Beirut.

A year after I left, the economy collapsed. Many of my old haunts have closed, people struggle to keep the lights on, and many just don’t have the cash to enjoy themselves like they did.



Even the in-app racism lacks imagination

Georgina Lawton, 29, Lisbon

I moved to Lisbon in 2020 – single, with just my dog and a couple of suitcases – for a change of pace, a more relaxed, outdoor-focused lifestyle, and to work on my next book. I also hoped for a dating life filled with frenetic messaging, romantic strolls through winding streets and glasses of vinho verde by the river Tejo.

I moved when London was locked down and Lisbon was still open – there were no restrictions on bars and cafes. Despite this, the pace of dating was far slower. I was used to quick-fire questions and decisive dating plans, but in Lisbon the response time was languid, the digital flirting lacklustre. It was boring.

I made things harder for myself by being unable to speak Portuguese. Had I played myself entirely by moving here, I wondered after a few weeks of no luck. Tinder and Bumble are used here, a friend said, but the Portuguese don't rely on them to facilitate dates in the same way as Brits; people see them as a way to find casual sex. Hinge, popular in London, wasn't used much, and although in the UK black and brown women can be fetishised by white partners on dating apps, it had not happened to me for years. But

immediately after moving to Lisbon, I received messages calling me “exotic”, with men expressing disbelief I was born and raised in the UK. Even the in-app racism was lacking in imagination.

When I ran out of potential dating matches after a few weeks, I realised the pool was far smaller than I was used to

When I ran out of potential dating matches after a few weeks, I realised the pool was far smaller than I was used to. But Lisbon has a vibrant street-party culture, so I turned to nights out in order to meet people, with some success. I flirted the night away with men in Bairro Alto, Lisbon’s party district, and arranged dates over the thumping beat of Brazilian funk music.

But Lisbon is a very transient city. Men who were my type seemed few and far between, and if I did find one, they either didn’t speak English or didn’t live in the city. Portuguese culture in general was also more closed off than I expected. Men were shy about approaching women in public. Catcalling and street harassment are rare, but I found myself craving just a sprinkle of the forward, hypermasculine approach I was used to from men in bars back home – then questioned my feminism.

Eventually I started dating a Portuguese man I met on an app. It took us two months to meet up, by which point we had gone into lockdown so the dating I had fantasised about – strolls through the city while picking up pastéis de nata – was impossible. Instead we formed an intense bond in my apartment, cooking seafood and drinking wine on my sofa, relying on each other for company and cuddles as the world burned around us.

After lockdown our incompatibility became clearer: I wanted to explore the city together and he just wanted to continue seeing me at my place. I grew bored and realised I need to be with someone who understands the importance of planned date nights beyond my apartment. Friends told me Portuguese men could be quite tight with spending, and I had noticed as much.

So, over a glass of vinho verde in a picturesque square, I ended things. In response, he stormed off. As I watched him cut through the crowds, I felt

slightly relieved.

I don't know if I'll find what I'm looking for in Lisbon. But my life here is fuller and so much more peaceful than when I lived in London – and that's more important than partnership right now.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2022/sep/10/british-singles-on-the-awkward-truth-about-dating-abroad>

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[Yotam Ottolenghi recipes](#)[Food](#)

Yotam Ottolenghi's recipes for preserving summer fruit and vegetables



Yotam Ottolenghi's peppered chicken and pickled watermelon salad.
Photograph: Louise Hagger/The Guardian. Food styling: Emily Kydd. Prop styling: Jennifer Kay. Food assistant: Susanna Unsworth.

Preserve summer fruit and veg and, come autumn, you'll still be enjoying aubergines in a confit, figs on giant pancakes, and watermelon with peppered chicken

[Yotam Ottolenghi](#)

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Sat 10 Sep 2022 05.00 EDT

Pickling, salting, fermenting and curing are just a few of the many ways humankind has learned to extend a food's shelf life. I'm not one for goodbyes at the best of times, so happily this means I never really have to part with my favourite fruit and vegetables; instead, I get to enjoy them in a different guise. Whereas fresh produce needs very little doing to it, the art of preserving lends itself to bigger, louder, funkier flavours. The ingredients get to know each other in whatever controlled environment we've put them and, somehow, they transform into wonderfully intense spoonfuls of deliciousness. And that, I'd say, is a definite win.

Peppered chicken and pickled watermelon salad (pictured top)

This dish delivers on multiple fronts: salt and spice from the peppered chicken and sweet and sharp from the pickled watermelon. Store any excess pickle in a sterilised jar in the fridge for up to two weeks, and use to spoon on salads or grilled meat.

Prep 25 min

Pickle 12 hr

Cook 15 min

Serves 2 as a light meal

For the watermelon

1.3kg watermelon, rind removed, flesh cut into 2cm cubes (850g)

1 jalapeño chilli (10g), cut into 3mm-thick rounds (if you prefer less heat, remove and discard the pith and seeds)

170g caster sugar
125ml red-wine vinegar
2 camomile tea bags
2 tbsp mint leaves
Fine sea salt and black pepper

For the chicken

2 tsp mixed peppercorns – green, white, red and black, ideally, coarsely crushed in a mortar
½ tsp Sichuan peppercorns, coarsely crushed in a mortar (optional)
2 tbsp plain flour
1 tbsp vegetable oil
3 boneless and skinless chicken thighs
1 banana shallot, peeled and cut into thin rounds (40g)
45g watercress
1 lime, halved

Put the diced watermelon, jalapeño and sugar in a large, sterilised jar, give it a gentle shake to coat, then leave to macerate for 20 minutes. Add the vinegar, tea bags, mint, a teaspoon of salt and 175ml water and cover with a piece of greaseproof paper. Seal the jar and refrigerate overnight.

Now for the chicken. Combine all the ground peppercorns in a medium bowl, and set aside a quarter-teaspoon of the mix. Add the flour and a half-teaspoon of salt to the remaining ground peppercorns.

Put the oil in a medium frying pan on a high heat. Sandwich each chicken thigh between two sheets of greaseproof paper and use a rolling pin to bash it out to $\frac{1}{2}$ cm thick. Coat the chicken in the pepper-flour mixture, then lay them one by one in the hot pan and fry for three minutes on each side. Transfer the chicken to a board, sprinkle an eighth of a teaspoon of salt over them all, and leave to rest.

Return the frying pan to a medium-high heat and add 200ml of the watermelon pickling liquid; drain 175g of the pickle solids and set aside. Cook down the pickling liquid for five minutes, until it turns orange and syrupy and has reduced by four-fifths, then take off the heat.

Meanwhile, mix the shallot, watercress and the drained watermelon pickle, then transfer to a large plate with a lip. Cut each chicken thigh at an angle into four slices and arrange on top. Spoon over the reduced syrup, sprinkle on the reserved quarter-teaspoon of ground peppercorns and serve with the lime halves for squeezing over.

Confit fenugreek aubergines



Yotam Ottolenghi's confit fenugreek aubergines.

Confit is a great way to store baby aubergines so they can be enjoyed into autumn and winter. I like them with some soft cheese or yoghurt. The flavoursome spiced oil, incidentally, makes a great finishing touch for all sorts of roast vegetables and salads.

Prep 15 min

Cook 1 hr 40 min

Serves 4-6

750g baby aubergines – I used the round variety, but the long, skinny kind will also work

400ml olive oil, plus 2 tsp extra

Fine sea salt

11 garlic cloves, skin on
3 red chillies, cut in half lengthways
1½ tsp fenugreek seeds
1 tsp ground kashmiri chilli, or paprika
5 sprigs fresh oregano
5 sprigs fresh thyme
¼ tsp caster sugar

Cut a cross in the base of each aubergine, going down all the way through to the stem but not cutting right through (you want it still attached). Rub the aubergines all over with the two extra teaspoons of oil, then sprinkle over three-quarters of a teaspoon of salt, making sure some gets inside the cuts.

Set a griddle pan on a high heat and, once it's hot, grill the aubergines in two batches for two to three minutes, turning often, until the skins are nicely charred all over. You don't want the skin to be burnt or to cook the flesh too much; the aubergines should be slightly softened but still raw. Transfer the charred aubergines to a deep, 15cm x 20cm baking dish.

Heat the oven to 160C (140C fan)/315F/gas 2½. Pour the remaining 400ml oil into the aubergine dish, add the garlic, chillies, fenugreek seeds, kashmiri chilli, oregano, thyme, sugar and an eighth of a teaspoon of salt, cover tightly with foil and bake for 90 minutes, gently turning the aubergines with tongs every half-hour. By the end, they should be soft but still retain their shape.

Remove from the oven, uncover and leave to cool completely. Once cool, gently spoon the aubergines, aromatics and oil into a sterilised glass jar and seal with an airtight lid.

Serve warm or at room temperature as part of a meze platter. Once jarred, they will keep in the fridge for up to a month.

Dutch baby with fig preserve and soured cream



Yotam Ottolenghi's dutch baby with fig preserve and soured cream.

When figs are at their best, it's very hard not to eat them all immediately. Preserving them, however, will extend the joy they bring, especially when spooned on to a massive, yorkshire pudding-like pancake, AKA a dutch baby. Any leftover preserve will keep in the fridge for up to a month.

Prep 20 min

Cook 1 hr 30 min

Cool 2 hr

Serves 2-4

For the preserve

10 fresh black figs (430g), stems removed and cut in half lengthways

130g blackberries

175g caster sugar

2 fresh bay leaves

1 lemon – zest pared off in 6 fine strips, then juiced, to get $2\frac{1}{2}$ tbsp

For the batter

20g unsalted butter, melted, plus 15g extra butter at room temperature

120ml whole milk, at room temperature

100g plain flour

20g coarse polenta

3 large eggs, at room temperature

1½ tbsp caster sugar

¼ tsp salt, plus 1 pinch extra for the cream

For the cream

100ml double cream

2 tbsp icing sugar

3 tbsp soured cream

15g shelled pistachios, roughly chopped

First make the preserve. Put the first four ingredients in a medium saucepan, add 150ml water and the lemon zest, and bring to a boil. Turn down the heat to medium-low and simmer for 50 minutes, stirring occasionally, taking care not to crush the fruit. Once the liquid has reduced to a loose syrup, take off the heat, stir in the lemon juice, then spoon into a sterilised jar and leave to cool. Once cool, seal and refrigerate.

Put all the batter ingredients bar the extra 15g room temperature butter in a blender, blitz for 30 seconds, until smooth, then leave to rest for 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, put the double cream, a tablespoon of icing sugar and a pinch of salt in a stand mixer and whisk to soft peaks on high speed for 60 seconds. Stir in the soured cream and refrigerate.

Heat the oven to 240C (220C fan)/475F/gas 9 and put in a 22cm, high-sided, ovenproof frying pan to heat up for about 10 minutes. Carefully take out the hot pan, drop in the extra 15g butter and swirl it around so it melts and covers the base. Working quickly, pour in the batter, then return the pan to the oven and bake for 18 minutes, until puffed up and golden.

Remove, then spoon 175g fig preserve into the well in the centre. Spoon the cream mix alongside, dust with the final tablespoon of icing sugar, sprinkle over the nuts and serve while it's still hot.

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Movies

Interview

Emily in Paris's Lucas Bravo: 'People loved it or loved to hate it'

[Fiona Sturges](#)

The 'hot chef' sensation of Darren Star's romantic comedy has roles in two new films that offer the chance to show he's more than a heart-throb



Lucas Bravo. Photograph: Gustavo Papaleo/The Guardian

Sat 10 Sep 2022 04.00 EDT

Lucas Bravo, the French actor who shot to fame in 2020 playing Gabriel, AKA the "hot chef", in Netflix's [Emily in Paris](#), would like to put a few rumours to bed. The first concerns his bank balance. "I saw on the internet the other day that my net worth is \$1m," he says, with incredulity. "Imagine! There's this impression that you do just one project and have this visibility, and suddenly you have a house in the [Hollywood] hills and you're set for

life.” Another is that, prior to acting, his main job was modelling. Given the thirst that erupted on social media when he first appeared in *Emily in Paris*, this wouldn’t seem unlikely. “I am not a model,” he says firmly. “My parents did take me to an agency when I was 16, and I did one runway for Paul Smith, but the experience wasn’t for me. Fashion felt like a cold place and I was too sensitive for it.”

Bravo, 34, lives in Paris, though he is talking from a hotel in New York where, fresh from an appearance on a US chatshow, he is wearing a floral shirt. Set against the flowery wallpaper and matching floral curtains behind him, he has the appearance of having melted into the wall. “The shirt seemed like a good idea when it was given to me this morning but I didn’t know I was going to end up in this room,” he says, anxiously. “It’s, um, a lot of information.”

This month Bravo will appear in two movies: the first, [Ticket to Paradise](#), features George Clooney and Julia Roberts as warring exes, though when I ask him about it, he says explaining his role amounts to a massive spoiler, so he’s been sworn to secrecy. “This is why I’m not in the trailer,” he says, with a hint of sadness.



Lesley Manville and Lucas Bravo in Mrs. Harris Goes to Paris. Photograph: Liam Daniel/AP

He is, however, free to discuss the second project, [Mrs Harris Goes to Paris](#), a determinedly old-fashioned, feelgood film set in the 1950s and starring Lesley Manville as a newly widowed cleaner who longs to own a couture dress. Chasing her dream, she must win over Paris's snooty fashion mavens. Bravo plays André, a shy accountant who befriends her.

"I feel like this is the kind of lighthearted story we need right now," says Bravo. "It's about a woman operating out of love and trusting the universe. We often forget that this industry was invented for distraction and escapism, and that it's fun to step into a movie theatre, be transported, and just turn off our brains for an hour or two."

He adds that it's refreshing to see a woman in her 60s at the centre of the story: "Putting aside the misogyny of the time, you have to remember that, in the 1950s, people of that age were considered to be near the end of their lives. Of course, the dress is really a metaphor, but she also wants the dress for the sake of having it. I like that about her, that she wants it just for herself."

'You don't want to be stuck in a niche. But now I've done other jobs, I don't take things so seriously'

Bravo was delighted to have been cast not as "the boy next door", as he describes his role in Emily in Paris, but a bona fide nerd. "André is a clumsy, solitary individual," he notes. "He wears a suit and glasses, and is into numbers. He is oblivious to social interactions. He is the opposite of my Emily in Paris character and I love that contrast."

Emily in Paris may not have turned Bravo into a millionaire, but it has made him exceedingly famous. The first series was streamed by 58m households in its first month. "I am super grateful for what Emily in Paris brought me and to [series creator] Darren Star for giving me a shot," he says. "So wherever the writing goes, I am committed to it. I wouldn't be here talking to you without it."

What about [the critical mauling](#) it received on account of its portrayal of Parisians who chain smoke, drink wine for breakfast and let their tiny dogs crap on the streets? Bravo isn't bothered. "People loved it or loved to hate it," he says. "I defend it not just because it's my project, but cliches are often cliches because they are rooted in truth. Of course, they are amplified through the vision of Darren: everything is bigger and bubblier and more colourful. But it's his signature. It's pure escapism, a fantasy world."

What might seem like overnight success for Bravo is in fact the result of more than 10 years of graft. In his 20s, in between appearing in adverts and playing minor roles in French TV, he worked as a clothes shop assistant, waiter, bartender and supermarket shelf stacker. In that last job, he would arrive at 6am and spend two hours arranging biscuits on shelves.



Lily Collins and Lucas Bravo in *Emily in Paris*. Photograph: Stephanie Branchu/NETFLIX

When the role in *Emily in Paris* came along, Bravo was working as a real-life sous-chef. He says the newfound attention was discombobulating. "It took me probably two years to understand what it was. It is said that the moment you get famous is the moment you stop growing, as you start to see yourself through other people's eyes instead of going into your own

experiences. But now I feel at peace. I have strong anchors in my life with friends who I've known for decades, and with my family, so whatever happens outside of that doesn't mean much to me."

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Bravo has previously spoken of his discomfort at being called a heart-throb and defined by his looks. Does he still feel that way? "As an actor you want to be taken seriously and show your range," he says, after a pause. "You don't want to be stuck in a niche. So when this very bubbly dramedy first came out, with this boy-next-door character, part of me felt I was getting further from my objective, which is to play challenging roles. But that was my initial perception, and I think I projected this more than I experienced it. Now I've done other jobs, I've been able to not take things so seriously."

Bravo does come across as a serious soul and admits he is guilty of overthinking things. In a recent gap between filming commitments, he took himself on holiday. Where some people's idea of a break is to lie on a beach, Bravo's was to visit the north pole to watch scientists measuring the effects of global warming. "I've always had a strong connection to the environment," he says. "It's different when you're there and you can see it. We saw polar bears that were skinny because their hunting surface is diminishing. You can feel the distress when you're there on the ground."



Lucas Bravo in Mrs. Harris Goes to Paris. Photograph: Liam Daniel/AP

While he was in Queensland filming Ticket to Paradise he took some time out to see the landscape and immerse himself in nature. “It feels like everything is trying to bite you or poison you. But I was so impressed by how connected Australians are to nature. Not in a hipster way – they just know everything about their surroundings. I’ve always thought education should be revised, and that instead of making us learn dates of centuries-old battles, we should teach children to grow things, or how to heal themselves through natural recipes.”

Bravo’s fascination with film goes back to childhood. He would watch horror movies “because I wanted to see if I was strong enough to get through the movie alone. I watched Stephen King’s It when I was little and it traumatised me. My mother kept telling me: ‘Be careful what you feed your brain,’ and it took me a long time to understand what she meant. But I know now that film is like food for the brain. What you ingest defines your creativity and how you perceive and interact with the world.”

His father is Daniel Bravo, a well-known French footballer, which meant the family moved around a lot. By the time he was 14, Bravo had already lived in Nice, Lyon, Monaco, Marseille and Parma in Italy. He says it was tough to lose friends over and over again. “I was always surfing the wave of being

the new guy. In my social interactions, I was a bit extra, a bit too much. I always thought: ‘I have to give everything to be accepted and fit in with this new group.’”

Nonetheless, it made him adaptable, which stood him in good stead for his future career. Bravo shied away from acting at first: “I saw a lot of people trying to get into it and thought to myself, ‘Why would I be any better than them?’” Now he finds it therapeutic. “I love the research into a character, as that gives me the tools to research and understand myself,” he says. “It brings you back to a state of contemplation, which is the opposite of what this world is providing right now. That’s got to be good, right?”

Mrs Harris Goes to Paris is in cinemas from 30 September; *Ticket to Paradise* is in cinemas from 16 September.

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OpinionQueen Elizabeth II

They say the Queen was crowned in a different country. But some things in Britain never change

[Ian Jack](#)



Even then, when I was eight, the system seemed absurd. But somehow, scepticism and affection lived side by side



Illustration: Matt Kenyon/The Guardian

Sat 10 Sep 2022 03.00 EDT

In the six hours of television that had to be filled between the news of the Queen being comfortable and the Queen being dead, the BBC's Huw Edwards and Nicholas Witchell often reflected on how nobody could remember a time when she wasn't there unless they were more than 70 years old. I would put the age limit rather higher: 77 sounds about right. Her father died on 6 February 1952, the day before my seventh birthday. It would be wrong to say that I knew he was king or what a king did. It was [his death](#) that made me aware of him.

We lived in Lancashire then. I went to a school, Plodder Lane, where my teacher, Mr Boot, was having trouble making me understand that capital letters began sentences rather than every new line (though they seemed to do that in poetry). Plodder Lane, Mr Boot: Dickensian names such as these support the idea, often mentioned since her death, that the Queen was crowned in a different country. It was.

That day, on our way home from school, another boy pointed out a flag flying halfway down a flagpole. "It's because the King's dead," he said. The

flagpole stuck up from the roof of one of the town's several spinning mills – there were chimneys everywhere you looked. My dad worked in one of them. We had ration books and went on day trips by bus or train to the big seaside resorts; to complete the Lowry-esque cliche, a family in our street still went about bare-legged in clogs.

Were we loyal? I hardly think so. The monarchy seemed so invulnerable, so sacred and privileged, that it invited a private defiance from people who felt smothered by the obeisance shown it by the newspapers, the newsreels and the BBC. Dad scoffed at the memory of a neighbour in his boyhood who would talk about the dissolute King Edward VII as “good old Teddy”; Mum remembered how George VI and his wife were known by some in Scotland as “stuttering Georgie and grinning Lizzie”. But this was a kind of secret insolence rather than off-with-their-heads republicanism. It was the oppressiveness – the uniformity of public opinion – that bred dissent, not so much the absurdity of the system as the rigorous fawning that went with it.

The days after the King's death typified this oppression. Cinemas and theatres closed; nothing came out of the radio but solemn music. The only visual memory I have comes from the pages of the Illustrated London News, which an aunt sent from London. The photographs – or perhaps they were drawings – showed the inside of what looked like a church heavily draped in black. By the time the coronation came, 16 months later, we had moved to Scotland – or moved back, in my parents' case.

Life shifted from monochrome to Technicolor, and not only metaphorically. Films of the ceremony and that year's other triumph, the conquest of Everest by a British team (if not in the end by actual Britons), made a double bill at the local cinema, with their colour a big selling point. My new comic, the Eagle, had colour printing far more sophisticated than the Beano or the Rover could achieve; one of its centre spreads showed a cutaway of the ship, the SS Gothic, that would carry the new queen and her husband to Australia. And then there was the vibrant patriotism of the souvenirs – my snake-clasp belt striped in red, white and blue, gaudier than any other item of clothing I possessed.

We were encouraged to think of a new Elizabethan age, and in it the Queen cut rather a military figure, at least to my boyish eye. She rode straight-

backed on horses, wore medals and inspected sailors and troops. When a coastguard station on a promontory near our house suddenly acquired a small battery of guns, we imagined them firing on a Russian fleet. But in fact they were saluting guns, which boomed when the new royal yacht carried the Queen into the Firth of Forth, and never, so far as I remember, boomed again. It may have been on the same visit that she went down a Fife coalmine in a white boilersuit and came up again with not a mark on it. Proof, said people like Dad, that the royal family never encountered anything that could be called real life – and think of the money wasted on the guns.

Nevertheless, when in 1964 the Queen came to open the road bridge across the Forth, my mother can be seen in photographs smiling in the crowd behind her. She had a good working knowledge of royal relationships – who was Alice and who was Marina and where the Duke of Gloucester fitted in. Like many people – like me – she lived with a kind of dualism that allowed the coexistence of scepticism and affection. Obviously, a hereditary monarchy was all “a load of nonsense” and its wealth offensive, but it was also familiar and interesting, and for those reasons attractive and, in the right hands, lovable.

I can't be sure of the last word. Royalty and modern journalism – modern attitudes of all kinds – sit uneasily together. I went 40 years ago to a country house in Gloucestershire to interview Captain Mark Phillips, who was then married to Princess Anne, about his showjumping team. Of course, my interest in showjumping was spurious. I was there, my editor told me, to find some comedy in his situation. The piece was long, strained and unsuccessful, and the editor rightly put it on the spike. Now what I mainly remember is seeing Princess Anne in her kitchen pouring some breakfast cereal for her little son, and my surprise that it was Rice Krispies, the choice of so many quite ordinary human beings. Unconsciously, irrationally, I must have expected something more divine.

That kind of reverential superstition has disappeared. We know now that the Queen talked to little bears and liked to keep a marmalade sandwich in her handbag. She aged well. I began to feel we had things in common. When the royal yacht Britannia made her farewell visit to the capital in 1997, I went

down to the Pool of London to wave my hat and see her off. She was such a beautiful ship, and the band of the Royal Marines played Sunset as the bascules of Tower Bridge opened to let her through: I was wet around the eyes. When I heard that the Queen cried too, I was not surprised.

Then this week came the final picture, the one [with Liz Truss](#). My mother, who died at 94, had a similar black bruise on the back of her hand. The country we live in, the people we are – ultimately, we are so frail.

- Ian Jack is a Guardian columnist
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[The politics sketch](#)[House of Commons](#)

Starmer pitch perfect on love and grief as Commons meets to pay tribute to Queen

[John Crace](#)



The Labour leader understands that when we grieve for the Queen we are also grieving for ourselves



Keir Starmer delivers a tribute to Queen Elizabeth II in the House of Commons. Photograph: PRU/AFP/Getty Images

Fri 9 Sep 2022 14.59 EDT Last modified on Fri 9 Sep 2022 16.21 EDT

Death takes us to unusual places. Who would have imagined that [Boris Johnson](#) could have reinvented himself as the voice of the nation? Or that Theresa May could turn out to be a gifted after-dinner speaker with a nice line in gags? Or that the Met Office would decide to stop weather forecasting for the next 10 days? We can all just get wet instead. As a mark of respect. It's what the Queen would have wanted. Apparently. Cancel culture.

After a minute's silence at noon, [a packed Commons met to pay its own tributes to the Queen](#). To try to find the words the rest of us couldn't. To explain why a death that had been so anticipated had still come as such a profound shock. To make sense of the deep affection so many people felt for someone they had never met. Someone who for almost all her 96 years had kept her real self private to allow everyone else to impose their own needs and truths on her. The Queen had been whatever we wanted her to be.

It fell to [Liz Truss to open the speeches](#). The best that could be said was that she was serviceable. Then it was never going to be any different, even if she

had had more than three days in the job and had had more than passing contact with the Queen. The prime minister is not in touch with her own emotions, so how can she possibly connect with the nation's? She can only report her feelings, not experience them. So her grief inevitably feels secondhand.

Not that she didn't say all the right things. Truss echoed Churchill, describing the Queen's death as "stilling the clatter of modern life"; she declared that the Queen had more than fulfilled the promise she had made to the country on her 21st birthday; she joked about James Bond and Paddington; and she looked to the future with thoughts of the new king. A new Carolean Age. But it was all somehow flat and profoundly unmoving. Unintentionally deaf to the public mood.

Keir Starmer was pitch perfect. Emotionally and verbally literate. When he spoke of love, you felt it. He understands grief. That when we are grieving for the Queen we are allowing ourselves to grieve for ourselves. For the mothers and grandmothers we have lost. Or never even had. For the hopes and dreams that will never be fulfilled. For the family that remains out of reach.

The Labour leader gets the Freudian subtext. Death's psychological meaning. That no matter how we may try to fill the gap of someone's death, part of us will remain inconsolable. Which is how it should be. As that is how we perpetuate the love we do not want to let go of.

At times Starmer sounded spiritual – almost religious – as he talked of the capacity for the Queen to dwell with us in our pain. Almost as if he was inviting us to make the comparison between the empathy of a monarch and the coldness of an uncaring government. He was so powerful, so convincing, that even the Tory frontbench nodded along when he told us she was the person to whom we turned for comfort during the pandemic. She was a leader we could trust.

There was no chance Johnson was going to miss out on a chance to make his own tribute. Even if he wasn't going to bother to brush his hair or find an uncrumpled suit. Why break the habit of a lifetime for his first return to the Commons since he was kicked out of No 10?

These are the occasions he lives for. He may have been a disaster as a prime minister but he can write and deliver a speech. More than that, what made him unsuitable for No 10 makes him a great speaker. Like all narcissists, he suffers from a deep wound to the psyche. One that will never heal. So when he speaks from that wound, as he did here, he allows us to feel our own wounds.

Johnson unashamedly acknowledged the love he felt for the Queen. Unlike so many others, he talked in specifics rather than generalities. It was psychologically impressive. Though, as so often, it did all come as a stark contrast to how he had behaved. His staff had partied on the night before Prince Philip's funeral. He himself had lied to the Queen over the prorogation of parliament. Here was the classic Johnson mind-body split. The man who believes his motives to be pure yet whose stock in trade is personal advantage and betrayal.

It was ironic that the next person to speak was Harriet Harman. The MP in charge of the privileges committee that will ultimately determine whether Johnson has to stand down as an MP. But now was not the time for point-scoring. Rather she was gracious enough to congratulate Johnson on his speech, before going on to extol the Queen as a role model for women.

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The big surprise was May. She had predictably started off disconnected and without affect. Monotone, dull and boiler plate. Going through the motions you would expect of a former prime minister. Service, duty, war record and longevity. The Queen didn't just know most of the world's leaders. She also

knew their fathers. The Queen had touched her, she said. Though you would never have guessed it from the way she spoke.

Then she told three cracking anecdotes and didn't screw up the punchline. Not even once. Who knew? Most unlike her. The Commons loved her. As much for the relief as anything. Johnson had made them feel too much. And most MPs don't like that. They prefer to operate as insentient beings. May allowed them to release the tension with laughter.

After that, many MPs began to drift away. All that had needed to be said had long since been said. Though that didn't stop many from still queueing up to repeat themselves. MPs can never resist the sound of their own voice. Even when the most moving sound is silence.

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OpinionCats

The cat's miaow or purr-fect nonsense: can an app translate for your feline friend?

[Claire Cohen](#)

Like millions of others, I talk to my pet all the time, but I've always wondered what she's actually saying



'My cat is now my main conversation partner during daylight hours. Except, it's rather one-sided, isn't it?' Photograph: Gustavo Fabian Rubertoni/Getty Images/500px Prime

Sat 10 Sep 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 10 Sep 2022 16.53 EDT

There are frenzied episodes of growling. Chirps, seemingly in greeting. Purrs of apparent relaxation. And the miaows – for food, affection, to be let out of the window and then back in again. Then out again. Then back in again.

If you live with a feline, these noises will be the soundtrack to your life, something Britain's [12 million](#) cat owners have become even more familiar with while working from home. Having recently gone freelance, my cat is now my main conversation partner during daylight hours. Except, it's rather one-sided, isn't it? I chat away while she replies by sliding her green eyes from side to side, flopping on to a cushion, or noisily licking her backside. Then again, perhaps her name is to blame for the uncertainty: Maybe.

A new app promises help. A self-described "cat translator", MeowTalk works by identifying a sound from your furry friend and suggesting which one of 13 human phrases it corresponds to. In Japan alone, there have been [17m downloads](#) since launch and 250m miaows recorded. The recently added MeowRoom feature works like Amazon's Alexa – [founder Javier Sanchez](#) was formerly one of its engineers – listening for your cat's voice in a room and sending the translation to your phone when it's detected.

I buy the premium version for £2.49 a month immediately.

My husband scoffs. Historically speaking, cats have had a bad press – thought to be the companions of witches in the middle ages and burned alongside them. They are depicted as selfish, vindictive, imperious and caring only where their next meat hit is coming from. On Instagram, owners assign them "Jekyll and Hyde" personalities, painting them as spiteful one minute, adorable the next.

But couldn't this reputation for fickleness be unmerited? I want to hear from Maybe directly.

A few gentle prods fail to elicit a miaow, so I resort to recording her purrs – which the app's creators have admitted are harder to translate. Maybe, according to the app, is saying: "Let me relax", which seems like it could be accurate, seeing as she's lying sleepily on the sofa while I wave a phone in her face.

Later in the day, I record a few more. What starts as cockle-warming ("You are very special to me" and "We are a bonded pair") quickly becomes

Americanised – “Just chilling!” and “I’m super beat!” – and I wonder whether the app has confused Maybe with Garfield.

The next morning, at breakfast, she miaows loudly. Translation: “Hey baby, let’s go somewhere private!”, which I can only imagine means she’s talking directly to her tin of food. Still, I persevere.

The app’s founders – Sanchez, and Susanne Schotz, author of *The Secret Language of Cats* – aren’t the first to harness developments in voice recognition technology. After all, the human urge to communicate with animals is strong, if usually anthropomorphic, just look at Dr Dolittle, the scientists who tried to teach animals to talk – from apes to dolphins, and even the popular new Netflix documentary *Inside the Mind of a Cat*.

They are filling a void. We know relatively little about cats because they’re harder to analyse than other domestic animals. Put a dog in a laboratory and it will usually be fine, but take a cat out of its territory and it won’t act normally, making studies almost impossible. Cats are also bad at showing pain or distress, which is why owners were warned by vets to look carefully for signs of stress or depression during lockdown, when many cats were thought to be upset by the change in routine.

Worried, I downloaded an inferior translation app in the summer of 2020 and followed Maybe around the house in an attempt to see if she could be suffering from mental illness – only stopping when my husband suggested I might be the one showing signs of psychological disturbance.

Overnight, I leave the MeowTalk app running in the bedroom as I sleep. In the morning, my phone has recorded dozens of cat sounds and helpfully revealed that at 6.12am when Maybe jumped on to my face, purring loudly, she was actually telling me: “I need to relax.” I know the feeling.

One quirk of the app is that, by miaowing, humans can trick it into thinking they are cats. I chirp at my phone, “I’m in love!” the screen reads. After several minutes of cajoling, my husband does the same. His low yowl translates as “I’m in a bad mood”, which doesn’t seem altogether inaccurate.

What he does secretly enjoy, though, is listening back to Maybe's recordings. Sanchez and Scholtz have been contacted by grateful users who have been able to keep treasured clips of their beloved pet after they have died. Others have been able to take their cat to the vet after the app identified possible signs of illness.

As shown by my experience, the technology seems rudimentary. But perhaps they are on to something. Or maybe downloading the software is enough to encourage owners to tune in to what their cats have been trying to tell them all along.

- Claire Cohen is the author of BFF? The Truth About Female Friendship
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Edith Pritchett on millennial lifeLife and style

Vitamins, dating apps, vibrators: the targeted ads that track my life – Edith Pritchett cartoon

Edith Pritchett

Sat 10 Sep 2022 01.00 EDT

From playlists to gaming to online shopping and Tinder: the ads that track my life – Edith Pritchett cartoon

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[Pakistan](#)

UN chief appeals for ‘massive’ help as flood-hit Pakistan puts losses at \$30bn

Countries most responsible for climate crisis must ‘end war with nature’, says António Guterres



More than 33 million people have been affected by the devastating flooding across Pakistan. Photograph: Rehan Khan/EPA

Associated Press in Islamabad

Fri 9 Sep 2022 13.26 EDT Last modified on Fri 9 Sep 2022 13.58 EDT

The UN secretary-general, António Guterres, has said the world owes impoverished [Pakistan](#) “massive” help in recovering from the summer’s devastating floods because the country bears less blame than many others for the climate crisis.

Months of heavy monsoon rains and flooding have killed 1,391 people and affected 33 million while half a million people have become homeless.

Plane loads of aid from the United States, the United Arab Emirates and other countries have begun arriving, but Guterres said there is more to be done to help a country which contributes less than 1% of global emissions.

“We are heading into a disaster,” Guterres said. “We have waged war on nature and nature is tracking back and striking back in a devastating way. Today in Pakistan, tomorrow in any of your countries.”



Victims of heavy flooding from monsoon rains carry aid through flood water in the Qambar Shahdadkot district of Sindh province. Photograph: Fareed Khan/AP

The UN chief's trip comes less than two weeks after he appealed for \$160m in emergency funding to help those affected by the deluge.

“I appeal for massive support from the international community as Pakistan responds to this climate catastrophe,” he said shortly after landing in the country.

He said other countries contributing to the climate crisis obligated to reduce emissions and help Pakistan. “Pakistan has not contributed in a meaningful way to climate change, the level of emissions in this country is relatively

low,” he said. “But Pakistan is one of the most dramatically impacted countries by climate change.”

“Even today, emissions are rising as people die in floods and famines. This is insanity. This is collective suicide,” he said. “From Pakistan, I am issuing a global appeal: Stop the madness; end the war with nature; invest in renewable energy now.”

So far, UN agencies and several countries have sent nearly 60 planeloads of aid, and authorities say the UAE has been one of the most generous contributors and sent so far 26 flights carrying aid for flood victims.

Pakistan: hospitals struggle with influx of patients as third of country under water – video report

The first planeload arrived from the US on Friday, which Washington says is part of an upcoming \$30m in assistance. More US military planes are expected to arrive in the coming days as part of a humanitarian bridge set up by Washington to deliver much-needed aid across the country. USAID announced an additional \$20m on Friday in humanitarian assistance for Pakistan.

Guterres said that by some estimates Pakistan needs about \$30bn to recover from the floods.

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The floods have touched all of Pakistan, including [heritage sites such as Mohenjo-daro](#), a Unesco World Heritage Site considered one of the best-

preserved ancient urban settlements in South Asia. The civilisation dates back 4,500 years, coinciding with those of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia.

The UN heritage agency on Thursday announced it would send \$350,000 to help recover flood-damaged cultural heritage sites.

Speaking at a press conference with the Pakistani foreign minister, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Guterres underscored the importance of combatting climate change.

“It is happening now all around us and I urge governments to address this issue,” he said, adding that what he has done so far as the UN chief is “a drop in the ocean of the needs of the Pakistani people”.

He said a proposal for a donor conference for flood-hit Pakistan is under discussion.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/09/un-chief-appeals-for-massive-help-as-flood-hit-pakistan-puts-losses-at-30bn>

US news

US trio jailed by Iran and accused of espionage sue former captors

Sarah Shourd, Shane Bauer and Josh Fattal held for more than a year after being stopped while hiking along Iraqi border in 2009



Shane Bauer, Sarah Shourd and Josh Fattal in this May 2010 photo.
Photograph: Anonymous/AP

[Ramon Antonio Vargas](#)

Sat 10 Sep 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 10 Sep 2022 07.45 EDT

Three Americans who were jailed by [Iran](#) for more than a year and accused of being spies while hiking along the border with Iraq are suing their former captors, hoping to persuade a judge to award them damages for the torture they say they endured.

The lawsuit being pursued by Sarah Shourd, her ex-husband and fellow journalist Shane Bauer, and their friend Josh Fattal is being overseen by

federal judge Richard Leon in Washington, who in 2019 [ordered Iran to pay Washington Post journalist Jason Rezaian](#) \$180m for imprisoning him for more than a year on false espionage charges.

Any damages that [Shourd, Bauer, Fattal](#) and their families might receive through their lawsuit would come out of Iranian government assets that the US has seized through sanctions as part of the congressional Justice for Victims of State Sponsored Terrorism Fund.

Adding to the intrigue of a saga that began back in 2009 is that Shourd and Bauer had publicly presented themselves as opponents of US sanctions against Iran after they were freed. In 2016, he had called such penalties “totally irresponsible” and she had said they hit “the poorest of Iranians the hardest”.

Attorneys for the former couple and Fattal did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment, and neither did the Pakistani embassy in Washington DC, which represents Iran’s interests in the US.

The lawsuit recounts how Shourd and Bauer moved to Yemen and then Syria in 2008 while dating because they wanted to continue practicing their Arabic language skills while Shourd engaged in anti-war activism and Bauer supported himself through freelance journalism.

Fattal visited them in July of the following year and accompanied them on a hike to a waterfall in Iraqi Kurdistan that was popular with tourists. During that hike, they apparently crossed into Iran without realizing it, and a group of soldiers whom they mistook for Iraqis stopped them to rummage through their hiking gear, cameras, wallets and passports, the lawsuit said.

The soldiers forced the hikers into a sport-utility vehicle and drove them around for three days while the Americans feared they would be executed at any moment. They were eventually brought blindfolded into the infamous Evin prison in the capital, Tehran, and held in small, sparse cells.

The prisoners were interrogated in a manner that seemed aimed at trying to get them to admit they were US spies, the lawsuits contend. Bauer was

asked if he was an employee of the US mercenary firm Blackwater or whether he could use his training as a journalist to write newspaper articles for the guards. Shourd faced questions about whether she'd ever visited the Pentagon – she had not – and if she was on a US government mission.

At one point, a guard told Bauer that he knew the American wasn't a spy. "But ... it was up to the US government and the Iranian government to negotiate his release," the guard added, according to the lawsuit.

The plaintiffs' lawsuit recounts how they often heard the screams of other prisoners who were being tortured, making them fear that they would be next.

Bauer, Fattal and Shourd were all held in isolation, where they described barely clinging on to their sanity. Eventually, Bauer and Fattal were put together in one cell, the lawsuit said – but Shourd remained alone, denied treatment for a breast lump, precancerous cervical cells and other health problems.

The Iranian regime let Shourd free in September 2010, holding up her release as an act of clemency honoring the end of Ramadan after the intervention of the country's president at the time, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Bauer and Fattal were released a year later, apparently as a gesture meant to curry favor for Ahmadinejad as he prepared to fly to New York to attend a United Nations general assembly meeting. At the time, the Obama White House issued a statement saying: "All Americans join their families and friends in celebrating their long-awaited return home."

The three described experiencing symptoms of post-traumatic stress after returning to the US, making it difficult for them to readjust to their lives there. Shourd and Bauer – whose work has appeared in publications such as the New York Times and Mother Jones – married near the ocean in California in 2012. They divorced seven years later.

Family members of theirs also reported suffering high levels of distress not knowing whether their efforts to bring Shourd, Bauer and Fattal back to them alive would work.

Alongside her mother, Shourd sued the Iranian government in May, arguing that the daughter was held as nothing more than a political hostage while demanding compensation for the ordeal that they subsequently weathered. Fattal, his parents, and his brother followed suit in July. And Bauer, his parents, and his sisters did the same in August.

The Iranian regime had not responded to their complaints in court and no trial date had been set as of Friday.

Iran's government never replied to the lawsuit Rezaian filed against it in October 2016. But Leon heard the case in Iran's absence before awarding him \$30m in compensatory damages and \$150m in punitive damages meant to discourage the regime from ever again behaving similarly, [according to the Wilmer Hale law firm](#), which represented Rezaian.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/sep/10/us-americans-iran-spies-espionage-lawsuit>

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New York fashion week

Baguettes, bling and bodycon: Y2K nostalgia reigns at NY fashion week

As Fendi's Baguette bag turns 25, millennials and Gen Z resurrect 90s looks in search of better and simpler times



Sarah Jessica Parker holds her purple sequined Baguette while filming *And Just Like That* in New York. Fendi are celebrating 25 years of the bag and its legacy. Photograph: Jose Perez/Bauer-Griffin/GC Images

[Chloe Mac Donnell](#)

Sat 10 Sep 2022 02.00 EDT

Fashion week is often focused on the future, but designers in New York this season are being nostalgic, with echoes of the 00s and 90s ringing around the Big Apple.

Fendi kicked off day one of fashion week with an anniversary show celebrating 25 years of the Baguette. The original It bag came to prominence in 2000 when *Sex and the City*'s Sarah Jessica Parker as Carrie Bradshaw was forced at gunpoint to hand over her purple sequined version. "Give me your bag," the robber yells. "It's a Baguette!" wails Carrie.

In homage to the Baguette's legacy, Fendi's artistic director of womenswear, Kim Jones, invited friends of the fashion house including Marc Jacobs and Parker to present their own interpretation of the shoulder bag at a star-studded event. On the same day, Marc Jacobs' subsidiary line Heaven, beloved by Gen Z, launched a campaign starring 90s TV stars such as *Baywatch*'s Pamela Anderson and *Twin Peaks*' Kyle MacLachlan.



Carrie Bradshaw's 'Baguette' by Fendi at the V&A in London on 8 December 2020. Photograph: Tristan Fewings/Getty Images

On Sunday night, Tommy Hilfiger will return to the city after a three-year hiatus. Hilfiger, who dominated the scene in the 90s, said: "This is where fashion, art, music and entertainment was all coming together when I started out ... It's the perfect expression of what we stand for as we pay homage to our roots."

Throughout the pandemic, millennials and Gen Z embraced late-90s nostalgia and this devotion shows no sign of abating. Emily Gordon-Smith, from the trend analysis agency Stylus, has been tracking the trend. “It’s ramping up even more and becoming more nuanced,” she says. “For the youth cohort it feels like those decades were better and simpler times.”

The 90s theme is everywhere in New York. On the newsstand, W magazine celebrates its 50th anniversary with issues starring 90s models Cindy Crawford, Iman and Shalom Harlow. On billboards, Kate Moss’s daughter, Lila, features in a Calvin Klein campaign, 30 years after Moss first modelled for the brand, while Jerry Seinfeld fronts a campaign for the streetwear brand Kith. On screen, the Sex and the City spin-off And Just Like That... has been recommissioned, such is the appetite for its high drama and even higher heels.

There is a notable shift towards more streamlined silhouettes, too. The British designer Roland Mouret, who has dressed everyone from the Duchess of Cambridge to Beyoncé in his signature bodycon dresses, is having a resurgence. After entering administration in 2020, his label was acquired by the SP Collection group. On the high street, Zara has launched a collaboration with the 90s designer Narciso Rodriguez. Known for his slip and sheath dresses, he delved into his archives to bring minimalism to the masses.

The trend is evident in the next generation of designers too. Take Conner Ives and Miss Sohee, who are both part of The Vanguard, an initiative from Net-a-Porter that aims to champion and support new talent. Form-fitting silhouettes and glistening crystals feature heavily in their designs. Their references? The Y2K era they grew up in.

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Behind this trend is social media. While previous generations had to wait to see their favourite celebrities in magazines, Gen Zs have an archive at their fingertips, helping them create nostalgic edits, with a string of throwback Instagram accounts such as @90sanxiety. Think Polaroid snaps of the Spice Girls and pap shots of Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston. Secondhand sites such as Depop have created a wave of sellers who appeal to this cohort too. Some specialise in Y2K labels such as Blumarine, Morgan and Kookai.

With brands trying to juggle issues such as sustainability, Gordon-Smith says there is often less time for creativity. “Nostalgia touchpoints are easy design cues. Even places like Zara can look at its own archives and resurrect pieces. There are so many avenues brands and consumers can explore, it’s a complete warren of nostalgia.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2022/sep/10/baguettesbling-and-bodycon-y2k-nostalgia-reigns-at-ny-fashion-week>

[Republicans](#)

Doug Mastriano prayed for Trump to ‘seize the power’ before Capitol attack

The Republican candidate for Pennsylvania’s governor spoke during a video call hosted by a Christian nationalist group member



Doug Mastriano, Pennsylvania’s Republican candidate for governor, prayed during a video call a week before the Capitol attack for Trump supporters to ‘seize the power’. Photograph: Mary Altaffer/AP

[Martin Pengelly](#) in New York

[@MartinPengelly](#)

Sat 10 Sep 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 10 Sep 2022 02.01 EDT

A week before the Capitol attack, on a video call organised by a member of a Christian nationalist group, a [Pennsylvania](#) state senator who is the Republican candidate for governor in the battleground state prayed that supporters of Donald Trump would “seize the power” on 6 January 2021.

Doug Mastriano [attended the pro-Trump rally](#) in Washington that day, after which supporters, told by Trump to “fight like hell” to overturn his election defeat, stormed Congress in an attempt to stop certification of Joe Biden’s victory.

The riot was linked to nine deaths, including suicides in the aftermath of the attack among law enforcement.

Mastriano denies crossing police lines at the Capitol and affiliations with Christian nationalist groups. He is now one of a number of Republican candidates for state positions with sway over elections who support Trump’s lie that his 2020 defeat was the result of voter fraud.

Two months from election day, the polling website [fivethirtyeight.com puts](#) Mastriano just shy of seven points behind his Democratic opponent.

Mastriano’s 6 January prayer, [first reported by Rolling Stone](#) on Friday, was delivered during a Zoom call, titled Global Prayer for Election Integrity, organised by what the magazine called “a prominent figure in the far-right New Apostolic Restoration movement”.

As defined by Rolling Stone, “Christian nationalism is a central tenet of ... NAR [which] emerge[ed] from charismatic [Christianity](#) (think: Pentecostalism) and is anchored in the belief that we are living in an age of new apostles and prophets, who receive direct revelations from the holy spirit.

“NAR adherents hold that the end times are fast approaching and their calling is to hasten the second coming of Christ by re-fashioning the modern world in a biblical manner.”

Mastriano is a US army veteran who once [dressed up as a Confederate soldier](#). In his prayer, he listed historical events including the battle of Gettysburg in 1863 and the crash of United Airlines Flight 93, the plane which came down in a field in Pennsylvania on 9/11, after passengers attacked their hijackers.

He said: “In 2001, while our nation was attacked by terrorists, a strong Christian man from Paramus, New Jersey, Todd Beamer, said, ‘Let’s roll.’

“God I ask you that you help us roll in these dark times, that we fear not the darkness, that we will seize our Esther and Gideon moments. That … when you say, ‘Who shall I send?’ we will say, ‘Send me and not him or her’, we will take responsibility for our republic and not waver in these days that try our souls.

“We’re surrounded by wickedness and fear and dithering and inaction. But that’s not our problem. Our problem is following your lead.”

In the weeks before the Capitol attack, Mastriano was involved in failed attempts to overturn Trump’s defeat in Pennsylvania, the announcement of which confirmed Biden’s electoral college win.

On the Zoom call, Mastriano displayed what he said were “letters that President Trump asked me this morning to send to [Senate Republican leader] Mitch McConnell and [House leader] Kevin McCarthy, outlining the fraud in Pennsylvania, and this will embolden them to stand firm and disregard what has happened in Pennsylvania until they have an investigation”.

He also said: “We think about our elected officials in Pennsylvania who’ve been weak and feckless and we’ve handed over our power to a governor” – Tom Wolf, a Democrat – “who disregards the freedoms of this republic.

“I pray that we’ll take responsibility, we’ll seize the power that we had given to us by the constitution, and as well by you providentially. I pray for the leaders and also in the federal government, God, on the sixth of January that they will rise up with boldness.”

After the Capitol riot, when Congress reconvened, McCarthy was one of 138 Republican congressmen and nine senators who voted to object to results in Pennsylvania or Arizona or both.

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More than 1.1m sea turtles illegally killed over past 30 years, study finds

Demand for luxury goods is driving global trade in hawksbill and green turtles, researchers say, adding to calls for more protection



Critically endangered hawksbill turtles, which are prized for their beautiful shells, are one of two species that make up 95% of the illegal trade.
Photograph: Wild Horizon/Universal/Getty

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[Sofia Quaglia](#)

Fri 9 Sep 2022 09.43 EDT Last modified on Fri 9 Sep 2022 09.44 EDT

More than 1.1 million sea turtles have been illegally killed in the past 30 years, according to new data.

Despite laws to protect them, scientists at Arizona State University estimate that about 44,000 turtles across 65 countries were illegally killed and exploited every year over the past decade.

[Jesse Senko](#), an assistant research professor at Arizona State University and one of the lead authors of the study, said: “The numbers are really high and almost certainly underrepresented by several orders of magnitude because it’s just very hard to assess any type of illegal activity.”

Sea turtles are hunted for food, for use in traditional medicine and to be sold as artefacts, decor or jewellery. Turtle hunting and trafficking is part of a global illegal wildlife market worth as much as \$23bn (£20bn) a year, [according to the UN](#).



Jesse Senko holds a green turtle at one of his study sites in Baja California Sur, Mexico. Photograph: Cindy Vargas

To establish the magnitude of illegal turtle hunting, researchers examined more than 209 different peer-reviewed journal articles, archived media reports, questionnaires and conservation organisation reports. They looked at all whole turtles or turtle byproducts – heads, tails, shells – that were illegally killed, including those that had then been trafficked or attempted to be trafficked across borders.

The study identified nearly 43,000 turtles as being trafficked between 1990 and 2010, but this is probably a huge underestimate, Senko said.

South-east Asia and Madagascar are hotspots for sea turtle hunting, according to the report, published in the journal [Global Change Biology](#). Vietnam is where most illegal sea turtle trafficking starts, and China and Japan are the most popular markets for illegal turtle products, it found.

Developing countries would continue to supply the illegal turtles as long as higher-income countries continued to demand them as luxury goods, Senko said. “In several cultures, having a stuffed turtle in your house can be a status symbol,” he said.

About 95% of the poached turtles come from two main species: [green sea turtles](#) and [hawksbill turtles](#). “The green turtle is considered the most delicious – it’s the one that has the meat, that pulp, people most like to eat,” said [Roderic Mast](#), president of the Oceanic Society, who was not involved in the study. The hawksbill is prized for its beautiful shell, he said.

These species are listed as [endangered](#) and [critically endangered](#) respectively, but, in the areas they are being targeted, said Senko, there were relatively large and stable populations. This means the effect of illegal trafficking is somewhat contained.

Another more positive finding of the report is its calculation that illegal exploitation of sea turtles has declined by 28% over the past 10 years. The study’s researchers believe the decline is due to increased legal protection.

“I’m happy to see that it has diminished. But I don’t expect the harvest of turtles to ever entirely go away,” said Mast.

This new data on which turtles are being targeted and where could help pave the way for determining how conservationists and legislators should act to [protect sea turtle populations](#) in the future, according to Senko.

“We really need to look at those socioeconomic and cultural drivers behind the illegal take,” he said. “Because as long as there’s demand from wealthier countries, poorer countries are going to fill that with the supply of turtles.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/sep/09/more-than-11m-sea-turtles-illegally-killed-over-past-30-years-study-finds>

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